

Cultural Policy Implementation Inconsistency and its Implications in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria has a long history of cultural policy formulation and was among the first African nations to draft a national cultural policy in the late 1980s. However, the implementation of this policy over the decades has been fraught with inconsistencies. This paper examines the phenomenon of cultural policy implementation inconsistency in Nigeria – defined as the failure to consistently apply and uphold the provisions of the cultural policy across different administrations and contexts – and analyses its implications for national development. The study is guided by three key questions: What is cultural policy implementation inconsistency? How has it affected cultural policy implementation in Nigeria? And what are the implications of these inconsistencies on development? Adopting a qualitative approach, the paper draws on scholarly literature, policy documents, and institutional reports from bodies such as UNESCO, the African Union, and Nigeria’s Ministry of Information and Culture. Findings reveal that frequent administrative changes, political interference, and inadequate commitment have undermined cultural policy execution, resulting in suboptimal contributions of the cultural sector to Nigeria’s social and economic development. The discussion situates Nigeria’s experience within broader theoretical frameworks of public policy implementation and cultural administration, noting both historical and contemporary perspectives. The paper recommends strengthening institutional frameworks, ensuring continuity across political transitions, and aligning with international best practices (including UNESCO conventions and the African Union’s cultural frameworks) to achieve consistent policy implementation. In conclusion, it argues that sustaining commitment to cultural policy implementation is essential for culture to realize its potential as a driver of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Cultural Policy Implementation, Policy Inconsistency, Cultural Development, Creative Economy

Introduction

Culture is widely recognized as a pillar of sustainable development and social cohesion. International bodies like UNESCO affirm that culture, encompassing heritage, creativity, and the arts, is integral to identity and economic growth. Indeed, the African Union’s Agenda 2063 under Aspiration 5 envisions “an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics,” underscoring that Africa’s cultural renaissance is essential for the continent’s transformation. Nigeria, a culturally diverse nation, has long acknowledged the importance of culture by formulating a National Cultural Policy as early as 1988 (Federal

Republic of Nigeria, 1988). This policy, which defined culture as “the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges of their environment” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1988, p. 1), was pioneering and aimed to harness the country’s rich cultural diversity for nation-building and development. Over the decades since its adoption, Nigeria’s cultural policy has undergone various revisions and administrative reconfigurations. The implementation process is as crucial as the policy itself – arguably even more so – because a policy document’s impact is only realized through effective execution on the ground.

However, Nigeria’s experience with cultural policy implementation has been inconsistent. Successive governments have differed in their commitment and approach to cultural development. At times, cultural affairs have been given prominence, such as through a dedicated Ministry of Culture, but at other times culture has been merged into other portfolios or deprioritized. These shifts raise concerns about cultural policy implementation inconsistency, a concept referring to the lack of steady, continuous application of policy directives, often due to changing political priorities, bureaucratic lapses, or mismanagement. In Nigeria, such inconsistency is evident in fluctuating administrative structures, variable funding, and uneven attention to different aspects of culture. For instance, while there have been notable achievements in preserving cultural heritage and promoting the arts, gaps remain in leveraging all segments of culture (from festivals to creative industries) for development. The inability of some cultural sectors to significantly contribute to development in recent times has been linked to these inconsistencies in policy implementation (Oamen, 2011).

This paper seeks to examine the nature of cultural policy implementation inconsistency in Nigeria, investigate how it has affected the cultural sector’s performance, and explore the broader implications for national development. Key research questions include: (1) What constitutes implementation inconsistency in the context of cultural policy? (2) In what ways has inconsistent implementation manifested in Nigeria’s cultural policy trajectory? (3) What are the implications of such inconsistency on cultural development and the country’s socio-economic progress? The study draws on a qualitative review of relevant books, journal articles, policy reports, and official documents. Foundational literature on cultural policy and administration (e.g., UNESCO conventions, African Union charters, and seminal works by Nigerian cultural scholars) is integrated with recent studies and reports. Notably, institutional perspectives from UNESCO, the African Union, and Nigeria’s Ministry of Information and Culture provide contemporary insights, such as UNESCO’s recommendation for periodic policy reviews and the African Union’s advocacy for cultural renaissance.

By analysing these sources, the paper underscores the importance of consistent policy implementation. It argues that implementation is the “essence” of cultural policy – without which even a well-crafted policy remains ineffectual. The Nigerian experience serves as a case study of how misalignment between policy formulation and execution can impede the cultural sector’s contribution to development. The discussion will also highlight examples of how consistent implementation (or the lack thereof) has tangible impacts on cultural participation, economic outcomes, and national identity. In doing so, the paper aligns the original author’s perspective – that Nigeria’s cultural policy has yet to fulfil its promise due to implementation lapses – with scholarly and policy conventions. The tone throughout is analytical and formal, aiming for clarity and rigour in line with scholarly standards. The structure of the paper follows a logical progression: after this introduction, a literature review situates the study in existing research and theoretical frameworks. This is followed by a conceptual analysis clarifying key terms, and a section on the theoretical framework guiding the inquiry. Subsequent sections examine the importance of cultural policy implementation, detail the inconsistencies observed in Nigeria’s case, and discuss the implications of these inconsistencies. The paper then offers recommendations for improving consistency and effectiveness, before concluding with final thoughts on ensuring that cultural policy implementation in Nigeria becomes a vehicle for sustainable development rather than a stumbling block.

Literature Review

Nigeria’s cultural policy journey cannot be examined in isolation; it resonates with broader themes in cultural administration and public policy implementation. This literature review

explores two main areas: (a) scholarship on cultural policy and its implementation in Nigeria (and comparable contexts), and (b) theoretical perspectives on policy implementation consistency and its role in achieving policy goals.

Cultural Policy in Nigeria and Africa: Nigeria's National Cultural Policy (first formally adopted in 1988) was formulated in the wake of global and regional recognition of culture's role in development. UNESCO's 1982 Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies had affirmed that culture is fundamental to social progress, influencing many nations in Africa to develop cultural policies in the 1980s (UNESCO, 1982). Nigeria emerged as one of the early African countries to articulate a comprehensive cultural policy framework, emphasizing the preservation of cultural heritage, promotion of arts, and integration of culture with education and development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1988). The policy's objectives reflected aspirations to use culture as a tool for national unity and economic growth by celebrating Nigeria's diverse ethnic traditions while fostering a shared national identity (Afolabi, Onikoyi, & Okpadah, 2022). According to Afolabi et al. (2022), the 1988 policy underscored creativity, national pride, and moral values, aligning with a vision of efficient cultural resource management. This aligns with observations by Forbes (2010) that African nations have been "eager to integrate cultural objectives into national development strategies" (Forbes, 2010, p. viii). In theory, such integration suggests a high-level commitment to culture-led development.

Despite these ambitions, scholars have noted that culture in Nigeria and many other developing countries often occupies a marginal position in governance. Buratai (2010) argued that there is a tendency to marginalize and trivialize culture as merely a backward-looking endeavour or a form of entertainment without lasting value. He observed a perception in policy circles that culture is "something which does not have enduring value" (Buratai, 2010, p.86). This marginalization can lead to inadequate support for cultural programs and a lack of urgency in implementation. Olanrewaju (2014) similarly pointed out that the incoherence of the political system in Nigeria – frequent changes in government priorities and lack of coordination – adversely affects the consistency of cultural policy implementation. He notes that non-coherence in governance creates an environment where cultural policy is applied irregularly or selectively, undermining its effectiveness.

Another critical voice is Dandaura (2010), who highlighted an attitudinal problem: a persistent suspicion among Nigeria's political class that investing in culture and the creative industries is a drain on the national purse. This scepticism stems from a failure to recognize the capacity of culture to generate tangible economic value. Dandaura (2010) described how many officials view creative and cultural ventures as not "generating reasonable wealth for the nation" (p.15), thus justifying low budgetary allocations and attention. This perception becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy – if little is invested, little is returned – further entrenching the notion that culture is unproductive. Yet, this contrasts with evidence from other contexts and global reports. For example, UNESCO and international agencies have documented the significant contributions of cultural and creative industries to GDP and employment. A UNESCO report noted that globally the cultural and creative industries generate about US\$2.25 trillion in revenue annually and nearly 30 million jobs, employing more youth (ages 15–29) than any other sector. In the European Union, these industries account for over 7 million jobs, and even in developing countries they contribute to poverty reduction and inclusive growth (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2023). Yarri Kamara (2002) emphasized this potential, stating that "cultural industries have the potentials to contribute significantly to the economies of developing countries" (Kamara, 2002, p.7). Nigeria's cultural sector – from Nollywood films and Afrobeats music to tourism tied to cultural festivals – indeed holds such potential, as seen in its burgeoning creative economy in recent years (Faidi, 2024). The disconnect, therefore, lies not in the lack of potential but in the lack of consistent and coherent efforts to unlock it.

Implementation gaps have attracted scholarly attention in Nigeria. Nweke and Nwoye (2013) provide a public policy perspective, arguing that government plans and actions (such as cultural policy) are meant for the benefit of citizens, and that effective implementation is key to realizing those benefits. From their analysis rooted in Habermas's discourse ethics, they contend that Nigeria's nation-building efforts are hampered when well-formulated policies are

not carried through. In the context of cultural policy, they conclude that although Nigeria's policy exists and is being acted upon, inconsistency in implementation has prevented it from generating the level of results initially envisaged (Nweke & Nwoye, 2013). In other words, inconsistency dilutes the impact of the policy, resulting in missed opportunities for cultural contribution to national development.

Comparative insights from other African countries further illuminate this issue. Many African nations share similar colonial histories and post-colonial struggles in defining cultural policies. Some, like Senegal and South Africa, have managed relatively more stable cultural policy regimes with periodic updates and dedicated institutions, which have led to vibrant cultural scenes and international arts profiles. Others have faced frequent policy shifts. The African Union's Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006) – which Nigeria ratified in 2008 – was created to encourage member states to institutionalize culture in governance and ensure continuity in cultural development programs (African Union, 2006). The Charter, coming into force in 2020, calls for integrating culture in all development initiatives and protecting African cultural values against homogenizing globalization. Yet, the effectiveness of such continental instruments again rests on how consistently countries implement the agreed principles.

In Nigeria's case, literature suggests that while the policy content has often aligned with international best practices (e.g., advocating cultural rights, preservation of heritage, promotion of creative industries, and inclusion of culture in education), the implementation phase is where slippages occur. Scholars have described Nigeria's cultural policy implementation as an ongoing, uneven journey – with moments of progress (such as the establishment of cultural institutions and hosting of national festivals) and moments of regression (such as the downgrading or merging of the culture ministry, and long delays in policy revision). These observations set the stage for examining the specific concept of implementation inconsistency and why it arises.

Theoretical Framework: Policy Implementation and Consistency
The challenges identified in the literature can be further understood through theories of public policy implementation. A core consideration is the implementation gap – the divergence between policy intentions and outcomes. Classic implementation theory (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973) notes that even well-designed policies can fail if the execution is flawed by bureaucratic inefficiencies or lack of commitment. In the context of cultural policy, implementation inconsistency can be viewed as a type of implementation gap characterized by stop-start efforts and changing directives that prevent sustained progress.

From a management perspective, implementation inconsistency is largely a human and institutional issue. It often stems from what could be termed “policy instability” – frequent changes in administrative structures, leadership, or priorities that disrupt continuity (Hill & Hupe, 2014). In cultural administration, this might manifest as rotating culture ministers with different agendas, restructuring of ministries, or shifts in focus (e.g., sudden prioritization of tourism over culture or vice versa). These alterations can negate professional management procedures and deviate from international best practices (which typically call for stable governance systems for culture).

Another relevant theoretical lens is the multiple streams framework (Kingdon, 1995), which explains how certain issues gain prominence on the policy agenda. In Nigeria, culture has struggled to remain a consistent priority on the national agenda amid competing interests (economy, security, education, etc.). Cultural policy, as observed by Klammer, Petrova and Mignosa (2006), often focuses on identity, diversity, and support for the arts – issues that usually rank below economic and security concerns on a political agenda (Klammer et al., 2006, p.15). The Nigerian case exemplifies this: economic concerns (like revenue generation via tourism) have at times been placed above the foundational work of cultural development. Klammer et al. (2006) also highlight that cultural policy designs vary across countries, with some adopting centralized structures (e.g., a strong Ministry of Culture) and others decentralized. Nigeria's oscillation between different administrative setups for culture reflects an uncertainty in choosing a model and sticking with it.

The concept of policy coherence is crucial here. A coherent cultural policy implementation would mean that all components – from preservation and promotion to funding and education – move in tandem towards stated objectives, regardless of changes in political leadership. Theoretical work on governance (Peters, 2018) suggests that policy coherence and consistency are facilitated by institutional mechanisms such as long-term planning, stakeholder engagement, and legal safeguards that prevent ad-hoc changes. In Nigeria, the lack of entrenched autonomy for cultural institutions or legal protection for the Ministry of Culture's status has made it vulnerable to mergers and re-alignments at the discretion of each administration.

A fundamental theoretical consideration in cultural policy is the intrinsic vs. instrumental value debate (Throsby, 2010). Intrinsic value refers to culture's inherent worth (identity, creativity, heritage), while instrumental value refers to what culture can do (economic growth, social cohesion). Inconsistent implementation often arises when there is a narrow instrumental view – for instance, seeing culture only as a means for tourism revenue – rather than a holistic appreciation. Oamen (2011) cautioned that treating culture purely as an “immediate money-making industry” is misguided, as cultural development requires patience and investment beyond immediate financial returns. He stressed that “money and cultural management are two separate issues” (Oamen, 2011, p.138) – implying that if policy is driven only by short-term economic expectations, governments may lose patience and shift focus when quick gains are not seen. This theoretical standpoint reinforces the idea that a cultural policy should be implemented consistently for its own multi-faceted goals (social, educational, economic) and not abandoned or re-oriented hastily if one dimension (like revenue) lags.

In summary, the theoretical framework for this study combines public policy implementation theory with cultural policy-specific insights. It emphasizes that consistency in implementation is not just a bureaucratic preference but a foundational requirement for policy success. Consistency provides the “brace” that holds the implementation process together (to use the original author's metaphor). Without it, even achievements made can be weakened or reversed. The framework also acknowledges that external influences (such as international cultural agendas and recommendations by UNESCO or the African Union) play a role in shaping national policy actions. Sometimes, countries implement policies to align with global expectations without fully internalizing them. As Forbes (2010) noted, African states' eagerness to have cultural policies as part of development plans may sometimes reflect a desire to satisfy international recommendations (e.g., UNESCO's call for all nations to have a cultural policy) rather than a deep-seated commitment to the policies' ethos. This might lead to superficial implementation that falters over time. Thus, an effective theoretical understanding of Nigeria's situation must consider both domestic governance issues and the broader normative environment in which cultural policy implementation occurs.

Conceptual Analysis: Cultural Policy and Implementation Inconsistency
Cultural Policy: A cultural policy is essentially a government's statement of intent and strategy for the cultural sector. It typically outlines objectives and measures for preserving heritage, supporting the arts, promoting cultural industries, and ensuring citizens can participate in cultural life. Cultural policy is “people-centric” – it concerns managing the way of life of a society (its culture) for both its intrinsic value and for broader social, political, and economic benefits. In Nigeria, the cultural policy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1988) was conceived as a focused document to manage the country's multicultural reality. With over 250 ethnic groups and a rich tapestry of languages, arts, and traditions (Federal Ministry of Information & National Orientation, n.d.), Nigeria's policy recognized the need to celebrate diversity while forging unity. It aimed to provide a framework for nurturing creative talents, safeguarding heritage, and integrating culture into education and development plans. Notably, it also identified administrative structures (like a national council for arts and culture, museums, etc.) and funding mechanisms as part of the policy framework.

Policy Implementation: Implementation refers to the execution of policy – the process of translating policy goals into concrete actions and outcomes. In the cultural realm, implementation includes establishing and funding cultural institutions, organizing festivals and programs, enforcing cultural heritage protection laws, supporting artists and creatives, and

integrating culture into educational curricula, among other actions. It is during implementation that the “value addition” of a policy occurs; a policy document by itself changes little, but when its provisions are put into practice, we see the results (or lack thereof). Effective implementation requires not only resources (financial, human, infrastructural) but also consistent management and political will. As the introduction noted, many citizens judge a policy not by reading its text but by observing its outcomes in society. For example, a person might not know the details of the cultural policy document, but they will notice if museums are well-maintained, if local cultural festivals receive support, or if creative industries are thriving – all of which are signs of policy being implemented.

Implementation Inconsistency: This term denotes a pattern of irregular or uneven application of policy measures over time. It can take several forms:

- **Administrative Inconsistency:** Frequent changes in the institutional home or leadership for the policy. In Nigeria, this is seen in the shifting ministerial arrangements for culture (discussed in the next section). Each reorganization often resets priorities and interrupts ongoing programs.
- **Financial Inconsistency:** Fluctuations or unpredictability in funding. A cultural policy might call for steady investment in the arts, but if budgets are cut arbitrarily or funds are released sporadically, implementation suffers.
- **Programmatic Inconsistency:** Selective focus on certain aspects of the policy while neglecting others. For instance, one administration might heavily promote cultural tourism but ignore heritage preservation or cultural education, skewing the overall policy intent.
- **Policy Continuity Issues:** Lack of follow-through on long-term initiatives. Cultural development often requires sustained efforts (e.g., multi-year projects for archival, monument restoration, or institution-building). When these are started but not seen through to completion due to a change in government or interest, inconsistency occurs.

In Nigeria, implementation inconsistency has been both a cause and effect of deeper issues. On one hand, it is caused by human factors – e.g., leadership changes, political interference, misunderstanding of culture’s role, corruption – and on the other hand, it exacerbates problems like public apathy and institutional weakness. A noteworthy human factor is the duality of tradition and modernity that many Nigerians experience. As highlighted in the original text, some Nigerians (especially youth caught between traditional values and global modern culture) show *faint interest or apathy* towards indigenous culture. When policy implementation is inconsistent – say, cultural programs are not continuously engaging communities – this apathy grows. People lose interest in participating if they perceive culture to be something the government itself is not serious about. Furthermore, issues like corruption can directly disrupt implementation (for example, if funds meant for cultural projects are misappropriated, planned activities may stall, sending discouraging signals to cultural practitioners and audiences).

The view of Nigeria’s political class is a crucial part of this conceptual picture. As Dandaura (2010) noted, many politicians have seen culture as a luxury or a non-productive sector. This suspicion means that when tough choices are made, culture often gets side-lined – a clear instance of inconsistency when a government that previously supported a cultural initiative suddenly withdraws support on the grounds of cost-cutting or shifting focus. The consequence is that cultural policy often doesn’t get a chance to prove its worth. Nweke and Nwoye (2013) remind us that public policies are for public good; if implemented properly, even those not immediately yielding profit (like cultural programs) can have far-reaching benefits such as national cohesion, creative innovation, and international image building. In fact, Nigeria’s Nollywood film industry and Afrobeats music have shown that given a conducive environment, cultural endeavours can become major economic contributors and global ambassadors of Nigerian identity – these grew largely from grassroots and private efforts, somewhat independent of direct cultural policy actions, but they flourish better when policy and infrastructure support are present.

To summarize, cultural policy implementation inconsistency in Nigeria refers to the misalignment and discontinuity in executing the cultural policy. This inconsistency is rooted in both conceptual misunderstandings (undervaluing culture) and practical governance problems (administrative changes, lack of accountability). It results in a situation where, despite having a well-articulated policy and even some successes, the cultural sector's overall contribution is below potential. Understanding this concept sets the stage for examining concrete historical instances of inconsistency in Nigeria's cultural policy implementation and analysing their implications, which we turn to next.

Cultural Policy Implementation in Nigeria: Historical Context and Inconsistencies
Nigeria's trajectory in implementing its cultural policy provides a vivid illustration of inconsistency. To appreciate this, it is important to recount the major developments in cultural administration from the mid-20th century to the present, highlighting where continuity was achieved and where it was broken.

Before Nigeria's cultural policy was formally adopted in 1988, cultural administration was rather fragmented. In the 1950s through 1970s (the late colonial and early post-independence period), responsibilities for culture were shared among various ministries and agencies – such as education, information, and local government – without a unified strategy (Olanrewaju, 2014). This meant that there was no single authority or coherent plan for culture; some aspects (like antiquities preservation or festival organization) were carried out, but in an ad-hoc manner. This early fragmentation can be seen as the beginning of inconsistency: without a dedicated focus, cultural development lacked direction.

A turning point came in 1972 when a dedicated Department of Culture was established within the Federal Ministry of Information. This was effectively a Culture Division tasked with coordinating cultural affairs. It marked official recognition that culture needed focused management. By 1979, the government created the Nigerian Film Corporation and the National Council for Arts and Culture (among other bodies), anticipating the forthcoming cultural policy (Afolabi et al., 2022). The National Cultural Policy for Nigeria was then drafted through the early 1980s, influenced by inputs from UNESCO and local experts, and finally adopted in 1988 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1988). The adoption signified a commitment to act on a comprehensive cultural agenda.

In 1990, Nigeria established for the first time a full-fledged Ministry of Culture (Federal Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare, initially). This was a direct implementation of a key recommendation of the policy: to create administrative structures dedicated to culture and provide funding for implementation (see Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1988, para 10.1). The early 1990s thus saw a relatively stable phase where culture had a champion at the federal level. In 1991, to bolster cultural tourism, the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) was moved under the culture ministry, and the ministry was renamed Ministry of Culture and Tourism. This integration recognized the symbiotic relationship between culture and tourism – essentially aligning with the cultural policy's understanding that tourism in Nigeria is largely culture-based (heritage sites, festivals, arts, etc.).

From 1999 to 2015, Nigeria generally maintained a separate federal ministry for culture (though the name and scope varied). For instance, by mid-2006, the ministry was known as the Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation (Federal Ministry of Information & National Orientation, n.d.), reflecting an expanded mandate to also inculcate cultural awareness and civic values. During this period, some milestones were achieved: there was a major review of the National Cultural Policy initiated (around 2009–2012) to update the 1988 policy, and numerous cultural programs (like the National Festival of Arts and Culture, NAFEST, and the Abuja Carnival introduced in the 2000s) were actively promoted by the ministry. The existence of a dedicated ministry allowed for sustained attention – for example, national museums and heritage sites got budgetary allocations, and Nigeria participated robustly in international cultural events (like UNESCO cultural conventions, global expos, etc.). That said, even within this period, there were internal inconsistencies: frequent ministerial reshuffles led to shifts in emphasis (some ministers prioritized Nigeria's intangible heritage,

others focused on tourism marketing; some championed the film and music industries, others paid more attention to cultural infrastructure). Nonetheless, the institutional framework remained in place, providing some continuity.

A significant disruption came in 2015 with a change of federal administration. The incoming government decided to merge the Ministry of Culture and Tourism back into the Ministry of Information, creating a consolidated Ministry of Information and Culture (and for a while, “Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism”). Culture was effectively downgraded to a department or portfolio within a larger ministry whose primary focus was information (media, public communications). This administrative change is a prime example of implementation inconsistency: it reversed the 25-year practice of having an autonomous culture ministry. The rationale given was to streamline government and perhaps a perception that culture could be managed together with information. However, cultural professionals and stakeholders in Nigeria widely viewed this as a setback. It meant that cultural affairs would compete with information/communication matters for attention and funding under one minister. The cultural sector’s voice at the federal executive table was diluted.

Concurrently, an odd rebranding occurred: the government began referring to the ministry as the Ministry of Tourism and Culture instead of culture and tourism, apparently to signal an emphasis on tourism as a revenue-generating sector. This was essentially a cosmetic change – swapping the order of words – but symbolically important. It suggested that those in charge believed tourism should lead and culture follow, rather than the other way around. Cultural policy experts criticized this move, noting that it betrayed a misunderstanding of the relationship between culture and tourism (Forbes, 2010). Delicia Forbes had argued that to stimulate and promote cultural tourism, the strategy “must be based on the country’s unique culture...diversifying tourism” on a cultural foundation (Forbes, 2010, p.48). In other words, culture is the substance that tourism packages and sells. Forbes further described cultural tourism as the consumption of cultural manifestations – from art, heritage, folklore, and festivals to music, dance, drama, literature, and lifestyles (Forbes, 2010, p.48). All these “consumables” are cultural products, making it evident that tourism in Nigeria (and indeed most of Africa) is inherently cultural. Thus, as cultural commentators quipped, “culture gives birth to tourism,” not vice versa. The name swap did not bring additional funding or innovation; it only created confusion and, arguably, a distraction from real issues.

What real issues were side-lined? For one, the funding and personnel needs of the cultural sector remained acute. By focusing on tourism promotion (like advertising tourist sites or events) without simultaneously investing in cultural development (like training artists, conserving heritage, improving museums and theatres), the government risked killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Even as the ministry’s name changed, key cultural institutions under its purview continued to struggle with limited resources. Nigeria boasts a range of parastatals for culture: the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, National Council for Arts and Culture, National Gallery of Art, National Institute for Cultural Orientation, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), the National Troupe and National Theatre, and the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (which bridges culture and tourism). These agencies are foundational to implementing various aspects of the cultural policy – from preserving artefacts to promoting arts, from research and training to actual productions and events. Consistent policy implementation would require strengthening these institutions, clearly defining their roles, and ensuring they work in concert. Instead, due to inconsistency and periodic neglect, many of them have not fully realized their mandate. Some suffer from underfunding (e.g., museums in Nigeria often lack modern facilities), others from governance issues, and nearly all from fluctuating support over time.

Corruption is another factor that has intersected with implementation inconsistency. When funds are allocated for cultural projects but misused, not only are immediate objectives unmet, but trust in the system erodes, leading to further apathy and reluctance to allocate future funds – a vicious cycle. The original author hinted that even when funds are available, they may be embezzled “to the detriment of the purpose they were meant for.” For example, if a budget is set for renovating a national theatre and those funds vanish, the infrastructure remains

dilapidated, upcoming events get cancelled, and the policy's implementation is effectively stalled. This kind of inconsistency – where the policy says one thing (support infrastructure) but the reality does another – severely hampers progress.

The stalled policy review process itself is a case of inconsistency. After the initial policy of 1988, a review was long overdue. UNESCO recommends that cultural policies be reviewed periodically (often every 5-10 years) to adapt to new realities (UNESCO, 2021). Nigeria began a review in the late 2000s, producing a draft by 2013, but it lingered in draft form for years. It was not until 2024-2025 that a comprehensive effort was made to finalize an updated cultural policy, with the formation of a 100-member committee and support from the Nigerian Economic Summit Group and UNESCO experts (Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism & Creative Economy [FMACCE], 2025). The fact that it took 37 years to revise the national cultural policy – despite massive changes in the cultural landscape (digital revolution, creative economy growth, demographic shifts) – underscores how inconsistency and low priority hindered Nigeria's cultural policymaking. A consistent approach would have seen regular updates and continuous stakeholder engagement rather than an abrupt scramble decades later.

In summary, the history of cultural policy implementation in Nigeria is marked by periods of momentum and periods of reversal. The establishment of structures and conduct of cultural programmes indicate that when the political will exists, implementation can move forward. But the frequent reorganizations, shifting focus (like privileging tourism over core culture), long delays in policy updates, and lapses in support reveal a pattern of inconsistency. Each inconsistency has had consequences, which we will explore in the next section on implications.

Implications of Implementation Inconsistency in Nigeria
Inconsistency in implementing cultural policy is not merely a bureaucratic concern – it has real implications for the cultural sector's vitality and the broader socio-economic development of Nigeria. The consequences of Nigeria's erratic approach to cultural policy can be observed in several interrelated areas:

1. **Diminished Cultural Participation:** One major implication is a decline in active participation in cultural activities, especially among indigenous communities and the youth. Cultural policy, when consistently implemented, should energize citizens' engagement with their heritage and arts – through festivals, cultural education, community projects, etc. In Nigeria, inconsistent support and messaging have led to waning participation. For example, when a government enthusiastically supports a national arts festival one year and then cancels or ignores it the next, communities lose motivation to prepare and take part. Many young Nigerians have grown up with an educational curriculum and media environment that often celebrate Western culture over local culture. Without persistent efforts to promote Nigerian cultures (languages, crafts, performances) as valuable and “cool,” youths naturally gravitate toward global cultural products. Religious factors also play a role: certain conservative religious views have discouraged participation in traditional festivals or arts, branding them as pagan or unproductive. A steadfast cultural policy implementation could counteract these trends by continuously affirming the importance of indigenous culture, integrating cultural programs in schools, and creating modern interpretations of traditions to appeal to youth. Instead, inconsistency has meant that these measures are not seen through, leaving a vacuum where foreign cultural influences dominate. The loss of indigenous knowledge and practices among younger generations is a direct implication, raising concerns about cultural continuity in Nigeria's diverse society.
2. **Loss of Institutional Memory and Expertise:** Frequent changes and lack of continuity lead to deficiencies in experience and institutional memory. When implementation is stop-start, the agencies and personnel involved do not accumulate the depth of experience needed to solve problems and innovate. For instance, if a particular program – say community theatre training or a museum upgrade project – is started but then discontinued, the staff who worked on it may be reassigned, documentation might be shelved, and the insights gained are lost. Then a few years later when a similar initiative is re-introduced, people often have to “learn from scratch” or repeat past mistakes.

Consistency, on the other hand, would allow steady refinement of approaches and development of best practices suited to Nigeria's context. The absence of a stable, long-term approach means that data collection and monitoring are also hampered. As noted earlier, inconsistency prevents the gathering of adequate and reliable data on cultural indicators. Nigeria lacks robust statistics on things like cultural employment, economic contribution of the arts, attendance at cultural institutions, etc. – information that is crucial for planning and making a case for investment. Without consistent implementation, the mechanisms to collect and use such data (like cultural observatories or research departments in ministries) have not been maintained. This in turn makes it difficult to measure progress or adjust strategies, perpetuating a cycle of policy decisions being made in a vacuum or based on anecdotal evidence.

3. **Economic Opportunity Costs:** Perhaps the most discussed implication is the economic loss resulting from underdeveloped cultural and creative industries. Nigeria, often dubbed the “Giant of Africa,” has an enviable pool of creative talent and cultural assets. Nollywood is one of the largest film industries in the world; Nigerian music is globally popular; the country has dozens of tourist-worthy cultural festivals (Osun-Osogbo sacred grove festival, Argungu fishing festival, Carnivals, etc.), as well as heritage sites and art markets. If properly harnessed, these could significantly boost employment, incomes, and Nigeria's GDP. In fact, estimates in recent years indicate the creative industry contributes around 1.5–3% to Nigeria's GDP (depending on definitions), and the government has set ambitious targets to increase this share (Nigerian Economic Summit Group, 2021). However, due to inconsistency, Nigeria likely has missed out on fully capitalizing on the creative economy boom. UNESCO's global findings (noted above) that cultural industries represent about 3% of world GDP and millions of jobs suggest a benchmark. Because of irregular support and infrastructure gaps, Nigeria has not yet captured its proportional share of that growing pie. For example, the music and film sectors until recently operated with minimal government input – they succeeded despite policy, not because of it. There was little provision of film grants, training schools, or export promotion for creative goods; as a result, growth was slower and more chaotic than it could have been with a consistent enabling policy environment. Similarly, in tourism: Nigeria attracts far fewer cultural tourists than countries like Kenya or Senegal, partly due to a lack of consistent investment in tourism infrastructure and heritage site management. Inconsistencies like suddenly shifting ministry priorities or failing to follow through on tourism master plans have made Nigeria an underperformer in cultural tourism relative to its potential. The name-swap episode (Tourism over Culture) is symbolic of this misstep – focusing on the “output” (tourist revenue) without nurturing the “input” (cultural experiences) can cause the whole engine to stall. If culture is not continuously empowered, tourism can't thrive sustainably, akin to tapping water from a well without refilling it.
4. **Stunted Development Outcomes:** Beyond direct economic measures, cultural policy inconsistency has social and developmental implications. Culture, when leveraged, contributes to social cohesion, education, and even conflict resolution. A consistent cultural policy could help address issues such as ethnic tensions by promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding. Nigeria's cultural policy, for instance, envisioned national festivals where all ethnic groups share their arts, fostering unity. Some of this has happened (NAFEST rotates among states annually to showcase cultures), but irregular support means these initiatives have not scaled up in influence. When governments fail to consistently celebrate and include all cultural groups, feelings of marginalization can grow. Also, local languages and histories might not be systematically preserved or taught, leading to cultural erosion and identity crises. There is also an international relations angle: countries often engage in cultural diplomacy, projecting their culture abroad to build soft power. Nigeria has a wealth of cultural soft power (its music, film, literature, fashion are increasingly global), but inconsistency in cultural policy means there's no strong official strategy to promote Nigerian culture internationally. As a result, much of Nigeria's cultural globalization is left to private entrepreneurs and diaspora communities, which, while valuable, may not align with national branding goals. A more consistent cultural policy approach could support international cultural exchanges, touring exhibits or performances, and bilateral cultural

agreements, enhancing Nigeria's image and influence – opportunities currently underutilized.

5. **Reinforcing Misconceptions:** Ironically, inconsistency can reinforce the very misconceptions that cause it. When a policy is implemented haphazardly and results are not evident, sceptics in government point to the lack of results as proof that the policy (or the sector) is ineffective, rather than recognizing that it was their inconsistency that led to the poor results. In Nigeria, for instance, if cultural programs fail due to neglect, some policymakers might say, “We invested in culture but it yielded nothing, so culture is a waste,” thereby justifying further neglect. This circular reasoning traps cultural policy in a perpetual state of underachievement. The notion that “culture does not generate money” has been proven wrong in many contexts (including within Nigeria's own informal sectors), yet it persists in part because inconsistent implementation has not delivered obvious success stories at scale within government-run initiatives. Consistent policy execution could break this cycle by allowing successes to materialize and be recognized, thereby building confidence among decision-makers and the public that culture is indeed a viable contributor to development.
6. **Deviations from International Standards:** Nigeria's inconsistency in cultural policy implementation also means it has not fully met some of its international commitments or leveraged international support effectively. UNESCO's conventions (such as the 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage, or the 2005 Convention on Cultural Diversity) require state parties to take certain actions, report on progress, and integrate those norms into national policies. Inconsistent follow-up can lead to Nigeria lagging in these obligations. For example, if Nigeria identifies elements of its intangible heritage for safeguarding (like certain rituals, crafts, or performance traditions) but does not consistently fund or support the communities practicing them, those traditions could fade before any UNESCO assistance or recognition has tangible effect. Similarly, the African Union's cultural initiatives (like the AU Agenda 2063 and the Charter for Cultural Renaissance) call for member states to institutionalize culture in all development endeavours. Nigeria's fits and starts mean it cannot always provide strong examples or reports on how culture is integrated into its development plans (such as its national economic plans or its strategies for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals). This could mean missed opportunities for regional leadership in culture or for attracting partnerships and funding (countries that show clear cultural development strategies might attract more international cultural collaborations, grants, or tourism).

In reflecting on these implications, it becomes clear that implementation inconsistency has wide-ranging negative effects. It blunts the transformative power of culture, leaving a rich resource underutilized. However, recognizing these implications is the first step towards addressing them. The Nigerian government's recent moves to finally update the national cultural policy and create a standalone Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism, and Creative Economy in 2023/2024 (FMACCE, 2025) indicate an awareness that past inconsistency needs correction. With President Bola Tinubu's administration emphasizing a “Renewed Hope” agenda for the cultural sector and aligning the new policy with international standards (Nnabuife, 2025), there is an opportunity to mitigate these long-standing implications. The next section will discuss recommendations that emerge from this analysis, suggesting how Nigeria can achieve a more consistent and effective cultural policy implementation going forward.

Recommendations

Addressing the inconsistency in cultural policy implementation requires strategic changes at both the policy and institutional levels. Based on the foregoing analysis, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance consistency, effectiveness, and ultimately the impact of Nigeria's cultural policy:

1. **Institutionalize a Dedicated Ministry of Culture:** The Nigerian government should maintain a standalone Ministry of Culture (or appropriately titled Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Heritage) with a clear mandate and sufficient authority. This ministry should not be merged or subordinated to other ministries in the future. Keeping culture as an independent portfolio ensures it receives focused attention. It also aligns with the

original cultural policy prescription that an administrative structure be established specifically for cultural policy implementation. As long as culture remains tied to or frequently swapped with other ministries (like information or tourism), inconsistency is likely. A permanent ministry can develop long-term plans and see them through. To reinforce this, legislation could be considered to protect the status of the ministry (making it less easy to dissolve or merge via executive fiat). The sustenance of the Ministry of Culture is vital: only through a stable home can culture get the “required management attention to encourage tourism boost and overall cultural development,” as the original author noted. International best practice shows that many countries with successful cultural sectors (France, China, South Korea, South Africa, etc.) have dedicated cultural ministries or departments that survived multiple administrations.

2. **Secure and Consistent Funding Streams:** Financial planning for culture should be long-term and insulated from abrupt cuts. The government should commit to a baseline percentage of the national budget for culture and creative economy development. While budgets inevitably fluctuate with the economy, having a rule such as “at least X% of annual budget to culture” or a multi-year budget framework can protect key programs. Additionally, creating a Cultural Trust Fund (perhaps funded by a small levy on tourism, entertainment, or telecommunications, as these sectors benefit from cultural content) could provide a buffer resource to fund cultural projects even when government budgets tighten. It is also recommended to engage the private sector through public-private partnerships, sponsorships, and an improved policy on corporate support for the arts (e.g., tax incentives for companies that sponsor cultural events or build cultural infrastructure). UNESCO advocates for states to facilitate private investment in culture, such as tax breaks for creative enterprises – Nigeria could implement and consistently uphold such measures (for example, implementing the provision in the cultural policy about enhancing revenue generation from the private sector by granting tax relief to art investors). Consistent funding will ensure that initiatives like museum upgrades, festival grants, artist training programs, and cultural education schemes do not stall midway.
3. **Regular Policy Review and Update Mechanisms:** To avoid the huge gap of decades without policy revision, Nigeria should institutionalize a periodic review cycle for the National Cultural Policy (for instance, a minor review every 5 years and a major overhaul every 10 years). This aligns with UNESCO’s recommendation for periodic policy reviews (UNESCO, 2021) and the statement by experts that such policies ideally should be reviewed every 5–10 years (FMACCE, 2025; Nnabuife, 2025). A standing committee or stakeholder forum could be established to monitor implementation progress annually and suggest adjustments. By having a built-in mechanism for assessment and revision, the policy can adapt to new challenges (such as digital media, changing demographics, or global cultural trends) in a timely manner, rather than becoming obsolete. The recent 2025 policy drafting exercise, which involved over 100 experts, is a good model for inclusive and comprehensive updating; similar broad-based consultations should be standard for future reviews. Consistency in implementation will be easier if the policy content itself is up-to-date and reflective of current realities, as stakeholders will find it relevant and be more committed to implementing it.
4. **Holistic Implementation Strategy – No Aspect Left Behind:** The government should develop an implementation roadmap that covers all four pillars of state action as outlined in the policy: preservation, promotion, presentation of culture, and provision of infrastructure/funding. It’s important that none of these is neglected. For example, preservation of culture (like safeguarding heritage sites and indigenous knowledge) should happen alongside promotion (like marketing cultural festivals) and alongside presentation (like supporting artists to create and showcase works), all supported by an administrative and financial backbone. Past inconsistency often meant picking one area (e.g., promotion of tourism events) and ignoring others (e.g., preservation or capacity building). A balanced scorecard for cultural policy can ensure that each administration knows the targets across different areas. For instance: number of heritage sites restored, number of cultural education programs in schools, growth in creative industry jobs, frequency and reach of national cultural events, etc. By monitoring these, the government can’t quietly drop one facet without it being noticed. In particular, the synergy between culture and tourism should be managed by policy, not by ad-hoc

political preference. Tourism should be treated as a beneficiary of solid cultural development. Therefore, developing local cultures (through community cultural centres, support for traditional festivals, training of local tour guides in cultural knowledge, etc.) will enrich tourism offerings. The recommendation is to “develop culture to empower tourism,” not sacrifice culture for tourism (as concluded in the original analysis). Both sectors should be developed hand-in-hand, with culture providing content and tourism providing market and revenue – a point to be institutionalized in planning.

5. **Enhance Cultural Education and Youth Engagement:** To counteract the declining participation and interest, cultural education must be consistently integrated from primary through tertiary levels. The Ministry of Education in partnership with the Culture ministry should ensure that history, arts, and cultural studies are robust parts of curricula. After a period of removal, history has been re-introduced in Nigerian schools – this should be consolidated and include local cultural heritage content. Additionally, programs like cultural clubs, youth art competitions, and inter-school cultural festivals can be supported annually. When young people regularly engage with their own cultures in dynamic ways, they are more likely to value and carry them forward. Nigeria’s cultural policy implementation should tie into youth development policies (as per AU Agenda 2063’s emphasis on engaged youth). Another idea is digital engagement: use technology and social media platforms creatively to promote Nigerian culture to the youth, as part of implementation. For example, virtual museum tours, online traditional cuisine challenges, or music and dance showcases on popular apps can stimulate pride and interest. These efforts need consistency – a one-off campaign won’t suffice, but a sustained digital cultural outreach strategy can gradually change mind-sets. In terms of resources, establishing at least one cultural centre or museum in every state (even if small) could provide local hubs for cultural education and tourism, ensuring that implementation is grassroots and not just federal.
6. **Anti-Corruption and Transparency Measures:** To ensure that inconsistency due to malfeasance is curbed, stronger transparency in cultural funding is required. Publishing annual reports of the Ministry’s expenditures and achievements, as well as independent audits of major cultural projects, will build trust and allow the public to hold implementers accountable. When stakeholders see that funds earmarked for culture are indeed spent on culture (and see the results), they are more likely to support and participate. Establishing a culture sector monitoring group (including civil society, artists’ associations, and academics) could provide oversight and feedback. This relates to the idea of pressure groups the original author mentioned were lacking – encouraging the formation of NGOs or coalitions interested in cultural policy (akin to environmental or health advocacy groups) can create a constituency that constantly pushes for consistent implementation. Such groups can remind the government of commitments, publicize lapses, and celebrate successes, thereby keeping culture in the public discourse beyond the whims of any single administration.
7. **Capacity Building and Professionalization:** Another recommendation is to invest in training and hiring qualified cultural managers and policy experts within the public sector. If implementation is to be consistent, it needs a cadre of professionals who understand the cultural sector’s unique demands. Regular training programs (possibly with UNESCO or other international support) in cultural policy, heritage management, museum studies, etc., for ministry staff and parastatal employees will enhance competence. Likewise, reconstituting boards of cultural parastatals to include experts and culture professionals (and not just political appointees) can ensure continuity of vision even when political leadership changes. The government should tap into Nigeria’s own experts in universities and cultural institutions – e.g., involve academics who have studied cultural policy in advisory roles. The mention in the conclusion of the original text about engaging experts in implementation and evaluation is apt: engagement of cultural policy implementation and evaluation experts will bring a level of rigor and fresh perspective. They can help design monitoring frameworks to evaluate what’s working and what isn’t, which can be used to keep implementation on track (for instance, setting up a mid-term evaluation of a five-year cultural development plan, and adjusting course based on findings).

8. Leverage International Support and Frameworks: Nigeria should more actively leverage frameworks like UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the African Union's cultural initiatives as support systems for consistency. For example, the 2005 Convention encourages policies for the creative sector and provides a platform for international cooperation. Nigeria can seek technical assistance or funding through UNESCO's programs (the International Fund for Cultural Diversity) to support its policy implementation. Working within AU initiatives – such as the AU Cultural Exchange programs or the Grand Agenda for African Culture – can also provide peer learning. The recommendation for a “cultural policy implementation tour” that the original author made is essentially about learning from best practices elsewhere. Officials and cultural managers should periodically visit countries that have successfully implemented cultural policies (whether it's Ghana's heritage preservation efforts, Rwanda's cultural tourism model, China or France's cultural industries support, etc.) to gain insights and inspiration. Borrowing ideas that can be adapted to Nigerian realities will inject innovation and break the mould of doing things the same inconsistent way. International engagements also keep momentum – when Nigeria commits to showing progress at UNESCO or AU forums, it creates an impetus for domestic follow-through.

Implementing these recommendations requires political will at the highest level, as well as advocacy from cultural stakeholders. The encouraging sign is that Nigeria's leadership in 2025 has publicly committed to revitalizing the cultural sector. There is talk of the new cultural policy aligning with a “creative economy” focus, which means recognizing the economic side of arts and culture more seriously (FMACCE, 2025). If this momentum is harnessed and maintained by following the above recommendations, Nigeria could enter an era of more consistent and fruitful cultural policy implementation. Over time, the payoff would be a robust cultural sector contributing to national pride, social unity, and economic diversification.

Conclusion

This study has explored how inconsistency in implementing Nigeria's cultural policy has undermined the policy's goals and limited the cultural sector's contribution to national development. Through an examination of the historical context, literature, and theoretical perspectives, it is evident that while Nigeria has long recognized the importance of culture – as reflected in its pioneering 1988 policy and various cultural initiatives – a gap has persisted between policy formulation and practice. Successive disruptions, whether administrative (merging and demerging ministries), financial (irregular funding), or strategic (shifting focus to tourism at the expense of culture), have prevented the cultural policy from achieving a steady trajectory of growth and impact. The implications of this inconsistency have manifested in reduced public engagement with culture, loss of potential economic benefits, erosion of cultural heritage among younger generations, and Nigeria's underperformance in leveraging culture as a tool for social cohesion and international presence.

However, the analysis also highlights that these outcomes are not inevitable. With deliberate reform and commitment, Nigeria can correct course. The cultural policy's implementation is its essence – as the original author aptly noted, a cultural policy means little if not carried out. Ensuring that implementation is consistent and sustained is therefore the cornerstone of realizing the policy's lofty objectives. Government support – in terms of stable institutions, funding, and political will – emerged as a decisive factor. Culture needs to be nurtured continuously, much like a stream that must be fed by its source; neglecting the source (culture) while expecting the stream (tourism or creative economy) to flow is a flawed approach, as Nigeria's experience shows.

The recommendations put forth emphasize consistency: keep a dedicated ministry, regularly update the policy, finance it reliably, involve communities and youth, and integrate expertise and oversight. If implemented, these steps can strengthen the cultural sector's foundations so that it can indeed deliver development benefits. Importantly, the current moment (mid-2020s) offers a window of opportunity. The Nigerian government's active collaboration with

UNESCO and other stakeholders to finalize a new cultural policy and the broader recognition of the creative economy's potential indicate a shift towards a more positive narrative for culture. There is a growing awareness that what might have been perceived as a failing of culture was in fact a failing of management and support. As one government facilitator noted, the creative industry had moved far ahead of governance, and now policy must catch up to the sector's energy (Nnabuike, 2025).

In conclusion, Nigeria's cultural policy can be a powerful instrument for development if the nation commits to "walking the talk" consistently. Culture in Nigeria is not in short supply – the rich traditions, talents, and creative outputs abound. The missing link has been a steady hand to guide, invest in, and promote these cultural resources. By learning from past inconsistencies and actively implementing the solutions discussed, Nigeria can ensure that its cultural policy is not just a document on the shelf, but a living force that enriches the lives of its citizens, strengthens its economy, and projects a vibrant image of Nigeria to the world. Consistency in implementation will breed consistency in results – yielding cumulative benefits that can transform the cultural landscape over time. As Nigeria stands on the cusp of updating its cultural policy after decades, the hope is that this time, the journey from policy to practice will be diligent and unbroken, allowing culture to truly impart its promised impact on development.

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