

## **Enhancing Cultural Stewardship Through Inclusive Community Engagement in Nigeria Museums**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Cultural stewardship has over time come to enjoy deserved prominence in the face of community engagement in Nigeria museum. The challenges of providing a cultural sound educational knowledge include poor cultural awareness, lack of trained expertise, poor funding, poor documentation, poor support from government and government interference. In the search of methodology that will provide the basis for generation of museum growth and inclusiveness of participation in advanced technology, increase in interest, tourism exchange and development of acquisition skills. The attainment of this goal is of course, a prior and functional system of museum collaboration with local communities through consultation, education, outreach programmes and practice. The paper is a model effect to discuss and describe the various Nigeria communities based on traffics initiative programmes. The paper concluded that quality research should be carried out amongs professional and interactive learning experience should be promoted in order to enhance community involvement.*

**Keywords:** Culture, stewardship, inclusiveness, community participation, Nigeria Museums

### **INTRODUCTION**

The basic public history of cultural stewardship is centred on philosophical community engagement which tailored on sharing, event, traditions, objects, norms and art approaches to story narrative. The story narrative foster on national identity and cultural continuity within a particular community for interpretation, preservation and implementation of public history. The accessibility of public history is directed towards audience, understanding and inclusivity. In Nigeria, cultural stewardship serves as an institution of cultural bridge between the present and the past, fostering the Nation's rich heritage and appreciation. However, this is constraints towards funding, inadequate training, poor innovation approaches, poor technology, corruption and mismanagement.

As a cultural bank, museum aim at preserving the rich cultural values through community awareness, repositories of cultural heritage, historical documentation, housing, artwork and artifacts which help in safe-guarding and showcasing the historical heritage of Nigeria for appreciation, future generation and cultural understanding. Other important roles include education programmes. Curatorial exhibition with a greater opportunity granted to visitor to learn more about one's culture, beliefs, customs, tradition and Nigeria's past history through inclusive

artificial objects display with an aim of bringing history to life through community engagement and accessibility for people of all background.

In Nigeria, the historical analysis of museum cultural stewardship and community engagement originated in Lagos in 1970 by Emmanuel Nnakenyi with an aim on cultural interpretation of rich heritage material and homogenous museums audience. This evidence includes research, communication and dissemination of pertinent information about museums collection to the public, which mirror art societal issues, event and history through advancement, planning and relevance in museum object or artifact. It is on this note, the paper therefore examines, “The cultural stewardship through inclusive community engagement in Nigeria museum” with emphasis on addressing the causal factors including community consultation, educational initiative and outreach programme among others.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives and aim of the study indicate the research direction and what the study intend to achieve, the research problem would have solved. This study is aimed at examining cultural stewardship through inclusive community engagement in Nigeria museums with the following specific objectives include to;

- i. Evaluate the impact of cultural stewardship through inclusive community/museums engagement
- ii. Identify the factors responsible for cultural stewardship and inclusive community/museums engagement.
- iii. Establish the role for cultural stewardship and inclusive community/museum engagement
- iv. Ascertain the basic initiative cultural stewardship and inclusive community/museum engagement
- v. Make recommendation on the way forward.

## **CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TERMS**

Here, we are going to examine the works of various scholars and their basic contribution towards museum, community and stewardship engagement.

### **Community Engagement**

The term community has multiple connotations. Although these connotations have some common characteristics, if disparity has misled the judgement of various scholars of cultural behaviours. Esekpa (2022), noted that most authorities have drawn a cultural distinction between museums and community engagement as an ideal concepts and inclusiveness as a cultural instrument, while some sees it as a relative dichotomy but others such as Ugwu, and Aruma, (2019) regard as simple needs identification and planning, “cited in International Journal of Community and Co-operative Studies 2019”. Museum/community engagement involves the socio-cultural interaction of museums friends in a participating community, mobilizing themselves to engage in groups as museum/community friends for the common goals of addressing their problems, which aims at improving people’s living condition, object or artifact through conservation exhibition, education and collection, in a particular area”.

This implies that the socio-cultural involvement of museums and communities is tailored toward achieving a common goal such as recreation, enrichment of cultural personality of the concern communities, material provision (visual aids) and entertainment (Hejiagwu, 2002, p.4). Other socio-cultural involvement includes sharing of ideals, customs and efforts of a participating community member and inclusiveness of stewardship of the unity with those of non-

governmental organizations (NGO), government organisation, institutions relevant stakeholders and co-operate organisation to improve the life condition of a given community and improved the life of the future generation through learning and skill acquisitional programmes.

Desai (2011) observes that some people perceive participation as an end in itself and other believes that it aims at a goal which is achieve through co-operation, beliefs and trust among the community members. Desai (2011) further observes that whatsoever goal may be, the participation may show the socio-cultural importance of the voice of the people on a related issues that concern the community members in the various community or museums engagement. Moreso, a community can be viewed as a social organized unit of people with a shared social, cultural, political norms significantly characterized as a place, culture, identify, values, customs and religion. It can be either rural, urban and sub-urban. It can also be viewed as number of persons who shared common goal, interest in a given geographical location. This includes group of people, geographical communities (city, neighbour/hood and town). Some of the basic cultural community engagement elements includes needs fulfilment, membership, emotion and influence. The development stage of a community engagement includes community building which is term to be pseudo, community, chaos and emptiness with similarities one another in an inclusive health values and productive group behaviour with emphasis on exclusion of task, experience contingency and emergent group process. Therefore, from the aforementioned, community engagement entails basic relationship between museums, cultural norm and socio-cultural involvement of the local people in a given geographical area.

## **Museum**

There are diverse definitions in respect to the “concept museum”. Museum can be seen as institution for teaching, conservation, research and exhibition in one field or the other. It also involves objects collections, object preservation and object presentation. Such objects are geology, biology, astronomy and nature specimen which relates to man’s history, science or art. However, is an institution of studies, collection, exhibition, object conservation and educational purposes. This collection includes picture galleries, scientific objects, historical events, open air, industrial, commercial (specialized) and regional.

The development of modern museums in Nigeria today was as a result community engagement through “deterioration” and “cultural objects values” which necessitated stewardship and socio-cultural development. According to the American Association of Museum sees museum as;

“A non-profit permanent, established institution, not existing primarily for the purpose of conducting temporary exhibitions exempt from federal and state income taxes, open to conserving and preserving, studying, interpreting, assembling and exhibiting to the public for its institution and enjoyment object and specimen of education and cultural value including artistic, scientific (whether animate or inanimate), historical and technological material”.

This implies that museum can be zoological garden park, historic houses, sites, botanical garden, historical societies and planetaria. ICOM (1974) define “museum as a non-profit making institution in the service of society and of its development and open to the public, which acquire, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibit for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of man and his environment”.

Hudson (1974) observes that museum community engagement involves preservation, (intangible and tangible objects), function, material evidence, man and nature. This is done as a way of encouraging, studying, education and enjoyment. However, the aforementioned concept of museums is tailored toward community engagement (public institution) collection, preservation,

object exhibition, value education, studying and interpretation which attained to give a functional definition of the term museum community engagement.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Community is seen as a “heterogenous cultural system” with diverse beliefs, languages, political groups religious, customs, tribes and traditions. The pursuit interest between museums and community is centered on trust and co-operation as it strives for cultural stewardship and cultural inclusiveness. The concept Group Theory according to Babatunde (2015) owes its origin from Arthur Bentley theoretical postulation with behaviouralist school of thought in political science. Bently felt that the community is made up of people who cooperate with each other base on pursuit and interest.

The socio-cultural interest which we study will always divide the community into different interest stage, along lines with real, thought out of varying degree of definiteness. The community, itself is nothing other than complex of groups that compose it (Bentley, quoted in Babatunde, 2015.3).

In Nigeria, there are various issues regarding community engagement in Nigeria’s museums that have climbed to cultural strata with a multiplier effect of these have led to cultural stewardship and engagement. Most of it developed into stages and other terrorist group which activities have led to museum destruction. Garson (1973) observes that, the origin of group theory was culturally acknowledged that community is made up of political/cultural actor (institutional and non-institutional), who have diverse cultural history, socio-political and economic background with diverse beliefs, interest and culture. This implies that, community engagement in Nigeria museum is a set of conflicts of the groups and the state is seen as an actor of mechanism control to harmonize these redefine, interest and shape the National cultural heritage in other to address the surmounted problem and community differences.

Cahn (1995) observed that, the group tendency in Nigeria museums is tailored toward education orientation and learning in order to maximize their influence as they exercise their right to press freedom. Here it becomes necessary for museums to carefully highlight these differences based on community engagement and cultural stewardship through inclusiveness and development. Communities’ experiences group development at one point or the other. The development can be used as an indication of the present and cultural predictor of the futural museums engagement. In Nigeria, the level of community and museum engagement symbolizing co-existence, co-operation, trust and unity which is concerned about developmental activities in Nigeria as a whole.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative method of data analysis was applied in this study and it was accredited to Matveev (2002), which gives deeper information concerning the nature of communication process in research. In tackling the research question, the analysis of data was drawn from various cultures such as journals, textbook, magazine and online newspapers to evaluate the impact, factors, initiative, roles as well as proffer the way forward for cultural inclusiveness on community engagement in Nigeria museums.

## **WAYS IN WHICH MUSEUMS COLLABORATED WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

Cultural stewardship is seen as a philosophical engagement of people or group of people with the responsibility of conserving the cultural objects, resources, norms and tradition. Each athletic

offices have cultural ethical and moral cultural responsibility to their patient in order to provide the basic possible care. This care is centred on community consultation, co-operation, cultural event, digital platform programme, educational initiative and outreach programme.

### **1. Community consultation**

The engagement of museum and communities to create feed back, input and perspective on exhibition and programme are term to be consultation. This consultation programmes entails offering resonate relationship with interested communities through cultural values, sharing of sense creating ownership over the culturally rich heritage. Moreso, the co-operate role in conserving the country's cultural history and engagement within the communities is to promote awareness through community projects, educational outreach programme, school's visitation, events and community consultation which museum strive to make relevant

### **2. Educational Initiatives**

The engagement of museums toward cultural stewardship is the philosophical responsibility organised by the museum operators through educational workshops tour guiding and lecturing which help community members to learn about Nigeria historical sites movements and events; this program aims at drawing the community members closer to their culture by creating understanding, awareness and stimulating curiosity about the past. Education is enormous in terms of museum values, since it connotes psychology of learning with cultural experience of analysing complex concepts and presenting them in a simple way for the understanding of the participating communities. Museum is seen as a symbolic in that, it helps in consisting teachers by providing services to their visitor in term of educational materials such as teaching aids, guides, sheets and brochures study kits. Other services include information, display description, school visit, availability of services (talk guided and event) facilities visit, educational room worksheets, audio-visual material, model, shop and catering facilities.

### **3. Outreach Programme**

The cultural engagement of museum to reach out schools, communities and organization through outreach programmes is tailored towards resources and artifacts directly to participating communities which aim at making cultural history relevant and accessible to a wider audience. An outreach can be seen as a cultural programme designed for the purpose of bringing museum achievement and experience to remote places in order to transmit its knowledge. Jacob (2016) believes that outreach educational material are replicas to include books, games for learning, objects and observations. Children are considered to be important in museum audience. This is because museum is a formal learning environment per excellence. Here, the museum strives to ensure that school children are engaged in museum related activities early in life in order to serve futuristic purposes. Some of these changes include decreasing money for school trip, school curriculum, recreational centres, demographic shift, population shifts between rural and urban. This out reach is tailored towards a sound and shared understanding of who it must serve in order to achieve its organizational goal. Museum goes about this in many ways and on-going basis such as

- i. Engaging the audience strategically and meaningfully
- ii. Identifying the school both primary, secondary and emergency audiences
- iii. Conducting audience research
- iv. Surveying visitors
- v. Analysing visitors' book

Sandell (2002), believes that a good developmental approach is the one which responds to research, which encourages exploration, which makes most of partnership opportunity and which

is innovative. Such approach needs to recognize the barriers, perceived and real, that confronted users and non-users and for the museum and its partners to take measures to overcome them. A focus on engagement of community strategies evolves from values when presence of audience groups at the museum is increasing or decreasing information sources that a group has not served well or when a museum rethinks its audience during strategic planning.

#### **4. Cultural practice**

Some of the cultural events hosted by the Nigerians are; religious rituals, ceremonies, collaboration, custom, culinary tradition, cliguetee. Museums include performance and festival which provides opportunities for community members to associate with history, craft work, storytelling, traditional art, music and dance. However, cultural practice can be seen as a practice which is manifested based on custom and tradition that are unique to a certain tradition. These practices are usually maintained within a given cultural belief of any given environment. They include learning cultural identities, understanding people languages, knowing why people do it. This gave birth as a way of allowing communities in engaging with their situation which is crucial extremely in healthcare prevention and misunderstanding. It also gave way for others to study difference cultural practice which is based on need, creation of understanding, interconnection of students and neighbouring community members.

#### **5. Collaboration Project**

Most museums in Nigeria, collaborated activity with local communities in terms of exhibition, programmes, improved communication, increase in efficiency. Better decision making, creativity enhancement, motivation and quality improvement which engages in community participation, tradition and history. The inclusive major is usually carried out base on ownership, relevant and community members which gave opportunity for both museum and communities to work together. It can also be called a tea work, since it enhances processes, consistencies and effective communication skill which involves technologies, project collaboration tools, work styles and methods needed.

#### **6. Digital Platforms**

Websites, tools, virtual are mostly used amongst museum digital platform, to engage with the global community in promoting historical awareness. The digital platform connotes technological software which is used in streamlining business operations and IT system. It can also be used as a business model; this makes use of online infrastructural facilities for interaction with museums and communities. Some of the examples include channels and social media.

### **NIGERIA COMMUNITY BASED INITIATIVE PROJECT**

In Nigeria Museum, some of the based initiative projects include;

1. Act and Community Development link initiatives support. Based on the role played by the Nigerians in diaspora organization and individuals in Africa continents development. This Nigerian Community Associations aim at highlighting the initiative act within African Child Trust (ACT) in respect to the support of community members mostly in museum development and return of artifact.
2. Nigeria and non-governmental organisation (NGO) contributed through economic, social and cultural development in poverty reduction through scholarship, health insurance scheme, school support, women empowerment, health insurance scheme, school support, women empowerment, loans saving, vocational support and training of museum professionals/staff.

3. The centre for black culture art which focuses on the preservation of historical event within the Yoruba people in Nigeria.
4. Living History Museum in Jos, which tailored on exhibiting the cultural and historical heritages of Plateau State in Nigeria.
5. Owo Museum in Ondo State; This stream up with a combine effort of both the community local history and the government as a way of encouraging the sustainability of indigenes history.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF MUSEUMS AND COMMUNITY INCLUSIVENESS**

1. Historical narrative is basically ensured as a reflective and accurate diverse perspective
2. The collaboration of community stakeholders in cultural project help in promoting a sense of unity amongst the community members.
3. Pride and sense of ownership in conservation of their heritage is promoted amongst the local communities.
4. It leads to adequate and sustainable conservation and deeper appreciation of local history.
5. It fosters local and international transfer, dialogue, knowledge as it passed down traditionally and stores from generation to generation

## **CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA MUSEUM**

Some of the major challenges inclusiveness include;

1. Lack of support from the government and political interference for cultural initiative.
2. Poor level of documentation, resulting to limited historical access archives for research and public awareness
3. Funding issues often hinders the cultural implementation of public historical project.
4. Preservation of cultural sites due to lack of expertise and resources
5. Lack of cultural awareness mostly on the cultural importance of history amongst the general population.

## **INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN MUSEUM GROWTH IN NIGERIA**

1. Cultural advancements in technology which help to facilitate preservation and digitization of historical record
2. Increase in cultural heritage interest and history within and outside the country
3. Cultural and tourism exchange programs through heritage potential economic growth
4. Increase in skill professionals demand in the field of public heritage and public history management
5. Collaboration with international organization and institutions for capacity building and knowledge sharing
6. It provides opportunity for cultural growth and development in all field

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, we have been able to argue most closely on stewardship through community engagement in Nigeria museums. This is focus merely on co-operation, increase in accessibility technology, conservation of cultural objects and engagement of community youth audience through interactive learning experience. The paper also entails that stewardship as a philosophical community engaged which connotes culture shared event as an inclusive approach toward

development from generation which is through virtue reality tour, school visitation, exhibition and interactive timelines which enhance public experiences. This can be obtained through social media, podcast, cultural institutions, digital channels and blogs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The paper therefore recommends the following:

1. The quality of research should be carried out among the expertise in order to archive management and public programmes
2. Communities should be involved in museum activities as a way of fostering cultural pride.
3. Interactive learning experiences should be promoted as a way of encouraging the various communities.

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