

# Cultural Policy in Action: An Examination of the Centres for National Culture in Ghana

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8100054>

Received: 02 October 2024; Accepted: 07 October 2024; Published: 02 November 2024

## ABSTRACT

The cultural sector provides hundreds of thousands of employment opportunities in Ghana and serves as a driver of the tourism industry in Ghana. Globally, the cultural sector is estimated to be in excess of a trillion dollars; therefore, it is a significant sector for socioeconomic development. Culture is a multidimensional concept; hence, cultural policy plays a significant role in operationalising and actualising the culture of Ghanaian society. The cultural sector employs tens of thousands and contributes about 1.53% to the Ghanaian Gross Domestic Product. Extant literature exists on cultural policies in developed economies, with few scholars having examined the cultural policies of Ghana with a focus on performing arts. However, a lacuna exists in the literature on the operationalisation and impact assessment of the cultural policies in sub-Saharan Africa. The research article evaluates the role and challenges of the actions of the Centre for National Culture, the implementing agency of the Ghanaian Cultural Policy, using a qualitative approach by deploying historical, textual analysis and ethnomethodology approaches. The study focused on textual analysis of documents of the National Commission on Culture and sampled seven management members to understand the working experiences, factors and challenges that they face in operationalising the Cultural Policy as an agency. The study sampled respondents from the Central Regional Directorate of the Centre for National Culture (CNC).

**Keywords:** Culture, Ghana, Centre for National Culture, Cultural Policy and Cultural Sector.

## INTRODUCTION

The cultural sector is a multi-billion industry and in recent times, its economy has achieved considerable attention in international economic development discourse (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture 2014). Cultural goods and services globally are valued in excess of \$2 trillion with an annual growth of five, according to the UNCTAD (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture 2014, 8). In 2008, the global exports of cultural goods and services amounted to \$592 billion and between 2009-2012, Ghana exported cultural products (handicrafts) of \$12.54 million (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture 2014, 8-12). In Ghana, the creative and cultural sector employs 784,149 (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture 2014, 32).

Culture is a multidimensional concept; hence, cultural policy plays a significant role in operationalising and actualising the culture of a country (Mulcahy 2006). The word, culture, comes from the Latin word *colere*—i.e., to till. Thus, culture is a process of conscious and methodological acquisition of intellectual sensibility; the cultivation and refinement of the mind; the artistic and intellectual side of civilisation; and the distinguished customs, mores, norms, productivity, achievements and noesis of a society or a community (Mulcahy 2006, 319–320).

The American Heritage Dictionary defines culture as “the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of work and thoughts; the predominant attitudes and behaviours that characterise the functioning of a group or organisation” (Mulcahy 2006, 320). Therefore, culture is summarised as “The integrated pattern of thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions associated, wholly or partially, with racial, ethnic, or linguistic groups, as well as with religious, spiritual, biological, geographical, or sociological characteristics” (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention 2014, 3).

Currently, there has been a surge in cultural policies by scholars and policymakers, driven by policy developments on the international, regional, national and local strata of the globe and the economic potential of the arts and culture sector (Throsby 2010, x; Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005, 2). Despite the focus fundamentally centring on the political economy, the study of the media and popular cultures with no emphasis on cultural industries and policies, there has been a growing emphasis on culture and development sustainability, creative/cultural industries, and the role of cultural policy in the development of the arts and culture sector, an agenda pioneered by the United Nations and the role of the creative industry (Lettau, Mtaku, Debrah and Kagan 2023; Asare 2020; Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005, 12; Yim 2002).

According to UNESCO, cultural activities contributed 1.53% of Ghana's GDP in 2010. Of the contributions of the cultural activities, a little over two-fifths came from central cultural activities and about three-fifths from equipment and supporting cultural activities (UNESCO 2010). Accordingly, the central activities contributing to GDP significantly include sales of books and newspapers, architectural activities and advertising, with wired and wireless telecommunication activities as the most considerable contributions of cultural activities to GDP—49.0% (UNESCO 2010).

Extensive works centre on the cultural policies of developed economies such as Europe, the United States, the United Kingdom and Asian nations (Volkova 2018; Frenette 2017; Szulborska-Lukaszewicz 2016; Lindsay 2016; Crane 2016; Otmazgin 2012). Although few scholars have examined the cultural policies of sub-Saharan countries such as Ghana and Nigeria, these works focus on the performing arts and discovering commonalities and differences in cultural policies in West Africa (Asare 2020; Ayibadeinyefa 2011).

A dearth of literature on the operationalisation and impact assessment of cultural policies in sub-Saharan African countries exists; therefore, there is a need to assess the operationalisation and impact of Ghanaian cultural policy since its inception. In answering the task of the paper, the research article evaluates the role and outcomes of the Centres for National Culture, the body mandated to actualise the cultural policy at the regional levels in Ghana. Therefore, the paper seeks to contribute to the literature on cultural studies in Ghana as it attempts to assess the relevance and impacts of the Centres for National Culture (CNCs).

## RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature shows gaps, as existing literature has yet to consider the role of the Centres for National Culture (CNCs) in the operationalisation of the Ghanaian Cultural Policy. Existing literature on the case of Ghana centres on the performing arts and the linkage of culture and education. Therefore, the review provides some insight into the topic.

Culture is vague. Culture is at the foundation of the condition of public life and civil society (Mulcahy 2006, 322). Culture is one of the most complex abstractions of empirical research, and its function of cultural policy in cultural impact assessment is imprecise (Häyrynen 2004). Cultural identity is a significant issue and it originates from the discontinuation between 'conventional' culture and 'au courant' culture (Yim 2002, 38). Culture is intra-inter-ethnic and can transcend the ephemerality of time. It usually manifests differently in ethnic and national spaces. Culture at its foundation is based on norms, values, modes, rules, obligations, expectations, language and other aspects identifiable by distinct practitioners of the said culture (Lettau, Mtaku, Otchere and Kagan 2023).

The evolution of cultural policy is an associated change in cultural policy goals. The cultural policy is a sector of immense diversity. It encapsulates "a large, heterogeneous set of individuals and organisations engaged in the creation, production, presentation, distribution, and preservations of and education about aesthetic heritage, and entertainment activities, products and artefacts" (Wyszomirski 2002, 187 cited in Mulcahy 2006, 322). Cultural policy conception considers public involvement in the cultural space through the prism of

‘governmentality’—i.e., the mechanism of individual management by the state (Mulcahy 2006, 320). Cultural policies are hegemonic features safeguarded when the dominant culture utilises social mechanisms through education, philosophy, religion, aesthetics and art to normalise and naturalise its dominance over the heterogeneous groups that constitute society (Mulcahy 2006, 320). Cultural policy is, therefore, the summation of the state’s actions concerning “the arts (including the for-profit cultural industries), the humanities and the heritage” (Schuster 2003, 1 cited in Mulcahy 2006, 320).

Cultural policy inclines to the alterations of the diverse contexts in which the policy is formulated. The related change predominantly emphasises the establishment of cultural identity, the development of culture and the arts, and the furtherance of the quality of cultural life and cultural industries (Yim 2002, 37). The discourse on arts management and cultural policy focuses on cultural systems and ways to assist cultural institutions in achieving sustainable organisational development. Nonetheless, the cultural systems in Ghana are extraneous and need more professional administration procedures in the culture and communication flow between the public and private cultural sectors (Asare 2022, 29). The performing arts serve as an avenue for creating sustainable jobs and wealth. The creative economy structure laid the foundation for Ghana’s cultural policy and encapsulates the social, economic and cultural connections that promote social cohesion and cultural diversity (Asare 2022, 251).

With cultural policy development, culture and the arts have become a predominant concern for government policy. Cultural policy fundamentally concerns establishing cultural identity, advancing the excellence of the arts, furthering cultural welfare, projecting regional culture and amplifying cultural exchanges with other states (Yim 2002, 41). A cultural policy serves as a mechanism for reunifying and recovering a state’s cultural identity, as culture and the arts are perceived as solutions to social problems (Yim 2002, 43-45). A cultural policy focuses on resolving issues of cultural identity. Nevertheless, the aspects and factors of cultural identity differ depending on the features of the countries where cultural identities are formulated and transformed. The variations influence the manner of the government’s dealings on matters of cultural identity (Yim 2002, 37).

Thus, cultural policy involves a government’s strategies and activities that advance “the production, dissemination, marketing and consumption of the arts” (Rentschler 2002, 17 cited in Mulcahy 2006, 320). A cultural policy goes beyond the traditionally associated arts policy to encompass a broader array of activities. A cultural policy should consider the functionality of the education community as there is a natural closeness between culture and education (Mulcahy 2006, 321). An affinity between cultural and educational actors broadens the space in support of the arts and culture; exposure to cultural activities at any strata of the educational system dramatically advances the potentiality of possible participation and the broader encouragement for a public cultural policy (Mulcahy 2006, 321).

Cultural policy reflects the integrality of people’s lives and serves as an avenue for income generation. In Ghana, the cultural policy is a document that advances social cohesion, fosters peaceful coexistence and promotes arts and culture as an effective means of peace, harmonisation and strengthening of the Ghanaian identity (Asare 2022, 253). Cultural policies have been concerned with providing financial assistance for the arts, cultural heritage and institutions such as museums and galleries. There has been a growing interest in the creative industries as sources of innovation and economic dynamism. Understanding the nature of cultural and economic values created by the cultural sector is essential to practical policy-making. The cultural policy covers the arts, heritage, cultural industries, urban development, tourism, education, trade, cultural diversity, economic development, intellectual property and cultural statistics (Throsby 2010, i).

Cultural policy is an increasingly significant component of government policy formation at both national and international strata. The cultural policies of countries initially concentrated on the creative arts. However, in contemporary times, the intensification of the creative economy and the development of the cultural industries

have changed the policy direction, emphasising economic opportunities in the arts and culture sector (Throsby 2010, x). The fast-changing information and communication technology transformation has contributed significantly to the change.

Cultural policy should be assessed as a framework that operates as a cultural issue coordinator when evaluating diverse factors impacting society. Häyrynen posits that the development of the cultural entity should be approached and evaluated concerning cultural, political and economic indicators (Häyrynen 2004, 1). Recognising the limitations that ‘conventional’ approaches impose on culture is essential to ensure any cultural assessment practice’s credibility, validity and efficiency of any cultural assessment practice (Häyrynen 2004, 3). In determining the documentation and exactness of cultural impacts, there should be no ambiguous indicators, a formal nature of cultural indicators, a lack of contextualisation and an objective aimed at the desired effects.

The apotheosis proposition of cultural policy is “to recognise culture (cultural groups, artefacts, phenomena or attitudes), and to allocate resources and legitimacy to – or sometimes even to deny and remove them from – the recognised cultural entities.” (Häyrynen 2004, 3). Cultural policy focuses on supporting and promoting selective arts and heritages partially due to the limitations of the existing systems, legal instruments and other institutional conventions.

The cultural policy community emphasise a potential annexe of its administrative responsibilities risky for the conveniences of the existing system (Häyrynen 2004, 3-4). Cultural Impact Assessment has predominantly focused on searching for ‘necessary conditions’ to realise the economic and political expectancies of hegemonic core interests rather than presenting concerns about the effects such economic and political opportunities have on cultures (Häyrynen 2004, 6). Häyrynen’s work is significant to the study as it outlines the approach to evaluate cultural policies and provides a window on the factors to consider in evaluating a cultural assessment impact. However, its focus is lost on the Cultural Policy of Ghana and the role of the Centre for National Culture.

Other influential scholars like Simo Häyrynen (2004), Amos Darkwa Asare (2020/2022), David Throsby (2010), David Hesmondhalgh and Andy C. Pratt (2005), Meike Lettau, Christopher Yusufu Mtaku, Eric Debrah Otchere and Sacha Kagan (2023) and Olli Jakonen and Miikka Pyykkönen (2023) have focused on the discursive nature of cultural policies. Olli Jakonen and Miikka Pyykkönen focus on the economic reasons for the Finnish cultural policy; David Hesmondhalgh and Andy C. Pratt examine the linkage between cultural industries and cultural policy; David Throsby explores the economics of cultural policy, and Simo Häyrynen examines the role of cultural policy in cultural impact assessment. The works of these scholars examine the cultural policies of non-African countries. In contrast, Amos Darkwa Asare., Christopher Yusufu Mtaku, Eric Debrah Otchere, and Sacha Kagan focus on African cultural policies.

The commercialisation of cultural production commenced in the nineteenth century in societies that had transitioned from feudalism to capitalism. This commercialisation intensified during the Industrial Revolution, especially from the early twentieth century (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005, 3). Cultural policy in capitalist societies focused on the commodification of arts. Factors of intensification prosperity in the Global North, increasing leisure, advancement in the literacy rates, intensified relevance of cultural hardware (hi-fi, TV sets, personal computers) for consumer goods and the linkage between the new medium of television and the new discourse of consumerism underpinned this commodification of arts during the Industrial Revolution (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005, 4).

Specific fundamentalist ideas influence most cultural policies, and such core ideas are “ the romantic notion of the isolated artist-genius who works for the love of art, typically suffering poverty in a garret room; culture is a

pure public good, one that should be equally available to all; the true value of art is transcendent and can be determined by experts, commonly accompanied by the idea that the monetary value of art is false and the ‘market’ cannot decide; and ‘an idealist’-humanist notion that culture is ‘good for the soul’ and that exposure to ‘culture’ has a ‘civilising effect’ (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005, 10).

Today, cultural policy promotes the economisation of culture and the entrepreneurialisation of cultural works. Most cultural policy changes have been discursive and representational, with a few being structural and institutional (Jakonen and Pyykkönen 2023, 126). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in intensifying the dialogue on the significance of cultural workers and entrepreneurs within the cultural production system.

Cultural policy and its institutional schemes aim at advancing the conditions of professional artists to increase their income earnings and social security (Jakonen and Pyykkönen 2023, 127). The perception of the cultural industry as a singularity beneficial to the economy and society emerged in the second half of the twentieth century (Jakonen and Pyykkönen 2023, 128). A cultural policy includes the cultural goods and services produced for sale to consumers, and such goods and services emphasise “their production requires creativity; they involve symbolic meanings or messages through their cultural content and they at least potentially include elements of intellectual property.” (Jakonen and Pyykkönen 2023, 128).

Thus, the cultural industry is “those forms of text, music, film, broadcasting, publishing, crafts, design, architecture, visual arts, performing arts, and cultural heritage activities that produce economic (surplus) value for individuals, organisations, and communities/ societies (Jakonen and Pyykkönen 2023, 128). Thus, the cultural industry embraces market-based arts and cultural activities generating economic value and having measurable impacts such as wages and employment (Jakonen and Pyykkönen 2023, 128-129).

Today, cultural policy analysis has shifted from focusing on cultural industries to creative industries and economy because “[I]t was the greater economic significance of the “creative industries” that gave the discourse its broad appeal across policy domains. This is what has allowed for an ever-expanding definition and demarcation of the creative economy” (De Beukelaer and Spencer 2019, 4 cited in Jakonen and Pyykkönen 2023, 129).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper used the qualitative research approach as it helps to clarify research goals during the design stages. A qualitative research approach helps focus on quality—i.e., the what, how, when and where—it focuses on “the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of the topic”. (Berg 2001, 3). The selected methods for the paper were historical perspective (interviews), text analysis and ethnomethodology. The methods are appropriate because ethnomethodology focuses on the competencies of the participants as a unit. At the same time, the historical perspective and interview provide a better comprehension and appreciation of the narratives in the literature and detailed insight into individual experiences (Roulston and Choi 2018; Flick, von Kardoff., and Steinke 2004); the textual analysis offers an understanding of cultural trends and meanings. The textual analysis is executed using content analysis. (Smith 2017). Ethnomethodology helps to uncover group motives and communal norms (Sharpley 2018; Whittle 2017).

Culture is an important mechanism that assists in explaining historical events and their persistent impacts. Culture is important because of its association with other factors that are themselves vital sources of historical persistence. An example of a source of historical persistence is the Centre for National Culture (Nunn 2012, 4). The historical perspective provides a better understanding of particular systems of activities that impact actualising the Cultural Policy; it affords the researcher to understand different behavioural reasons and

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activities of cultural implementers in the cultural sector (Nunn 2012, 1).

The textual analysis focuses on gathering information about how institutions in particular contexts make sense of the external world and understand the broader context of the Centres for National Culture. The approach centres on meanings, revelations and experiences, with a focus on sense-making, description and details. The textual analysis helps to understand better particular systems of activities that impact actualising the Cultural Policy; it affords the researcher to understand different behavioural reasons, the broader cultural spectrum and activities of cultural implementers in the cultural sector (Smith 2017; Nunn 2012, 1). The strategy of historical perspective employed in the study is an analysis at the 'micro-level' focused on the systematic differences in understanding how the cultural policy should be operationalised among individuals.

Additionally, ethnomethodology, a sociological perspective, is used to understand the concept of cultural policy operationalisation better. Ethnomethodology studies social life in situ and from the perspective of the Centres for National Culture. It concerns language, meaning and social interactions (Maynard and Clayman 2003, 173). Ethnomethodology focuses on people in the cultural sector who share, recognise and employ similar 'approaches' to operationalise the objectives of Ghana's Cultural Policy. Therefore, ethnomethodology deals with the study of the practical actions through which cultural workers accomplish 'organisation'. It treats social facts as endogenous accomplishments of knowledgeable members of the cultural sector. The use of ethnomethodology considers social structure and organisational structures and re-specifies them as an ongoing accomplishment of the cultural sector actors (Whittle 2017, 3). Meaning is available in the social act before consciousness or awareness of that meaning and has its objective existence within the field of experience (Maynard and Clayman 2003, 173).

In the cultural space, the use of ethnomethodology is to seek empirical knowledge of what approaches are involved and how they are used to operationalise Ghana's Cultural Policy. Hence, ethnomethodology is used to undertake systematic and fine-grained studies of how the Centres for National Culture assist in the actualisation and impact of the Cultural Policy. The key concept in ethnomethodology for the study focuses on the documentary method of interpretation—i.e., the cyclical process through which each 'form' of social action makes sense. Ethnomethodology in this study explains how cultural sector actors' thoughts and perceptions enable the practical structures of cultural implementation importance. The knowledge and reasoning of those engaged in the cultural implementation focus on when and how they operationalise Ghana's Cultural Policy. Operationalisation is explored as an array of material objects and their manipulation distributed in space and time (Atikson 1988).

The study relied primarily on Ghana's Cultural Policy and the National Commission on Culture's (NCC) newsletters as the primary sources of evaluation (indicator) and utilised interviews as tools for data collection. The research population consists of all Centres for National Culture (CNCs) and workers in Ghana's cultural sector. In attempting to understand the operationalisation of the Cultural Policy, the Central Regional Directorate of the Centre for National Culture was selected as a case study for the interview section. Here, top management members of the CNC, Central Region, were interviewed as the study used a purposive sampling technique. The use of purposive sampling was to ensure better matching of the sample to the study's objectives as it improves the rigour of the study and the veracity of the data and results—credibility, transferability and dependability (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters and Walker 2020, 652). Purposive sampling as a technique helps to select participants that possessive useful information and knowledge of the subject matter, and it is a way of identifying and selecting cases that will use limited research resources effectively (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters and Walker 2020, 652-655).

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Justifying conclusions is a comprehensive approach that starts with data analysis. Data analysis involves organising and classifying the collected data, tabulating them, summarising them, comparing the results with other relevant information, and presenting the results in an appropriate, easy-to-understand manner. Culture

serves an intrinsic role in influencing how we define categories for organisation purposes, classify and interpret data, and determine which comparisons have meaning. Therefore, engaging stakeholders during the analysis is essential.

## Historical Perspective

The Cultural Policy in Ghana has undergone a dynamic evolution shaped by historical, political, and socio-cultural factors. The roots of Ghana's cultural policy can be traced back to the pre-independence and post-independence eras, with a focus on nation-building and identity formation. The government recognised the need to preserve and promote Ghana's diverse cultural heritage as a crucial component of national development (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture 2014; People's Daily Graphic 1988).

As early as 1951 (during the pre-independence era), an indigenous arts organisation, the Asante Arts Council, had been established by Dr. Atta Yaw Kyeremateng to preserve traditional culture that many Ghanaians perceived was "suffering from foreign adulteration and possible annihilation" (Schauert 2015, 45). This desire also resonated with the political leadership across Africa in the 1950s as many independent states worked to recapture African culture and history that had been "mutilated and reinvented by colonial interest". In Ghana (formerly Gold Coast), this strategy started with the National Theatre Movement, which became the first national cultural policy (Agovi 1990; Buah 1998).

The Nkrumah government, interested in the vision of the Asante Arts Council, established the Institute of Arts in 1961 mandated to promote the national identity of Ghana through arts. With the overthrow of the Nkrumah administration, the National Liberation Council, a military-police regime under Colonel Kotoka, renamed the Institute of Arts into the Arts Council under a decree (NLCD 238 and 279) (CNC Greater Accra Region 2024). However, with time, the Arts Council outlived its reference and was dissolved, birthing the National Commission on Culture through a decree, PNDCL 238. The decree gave birth to the various Centres for National Cultures across the regions, with the Centre for National Culture in the Central Region inaugurated in 1994 (Anokye 2024; Schauert 2015; Coe 2005).

Every CNC is further mandated by the Act to establish centres in every district capital in the region. The functions of a regional CNC are (a) to implement and monitor policies of the government relating to the development, promotion, preservation, and appreciation of culture and the arts in the region; (b) to identify, organise, and mobilise the artistic resources of the region and develop the commercial potential of those resources; (c) to organise systematic programmes to project regional peculiarities in the national culture and arts; (d) to pursue activities aimed at contributing to the development of national culture and the arts; and (e) to supervise the activities of the district centres for national culture, whose functions, with necessary modification, become the same as the functions of a regional CNC (National Commission on Culture 2004).

The past thirty years have seen the CNCs become very instrumental in identifying, organising, and mobilising artistic resources as well as undertaking systematic programmes aimed at developing and promoting national culture and arts. They provide facilities for an exhibition hall, an open-air theatre, two halls for dramatic performances, a museum, an art gallery, and a studio for puppetry, sculpturing, and weaving. The Accra, Cape Coast, and Kumasi centres have resident groups of musicians, actors, and folkloric groups responsible for the popular Ananse-krom, Kotokurabakrom, and Adwabremu agoro traditional storytelling programmes for the general public and schools (Addo, 2013; Fio, 2017).

Many of their activities have supported mostly the youth in obtaining marketable and entrepreneurial skills towards economic empowerment and independence. The major training programmes cover a wide expanse of vocations in both visual and performing arts and other handicrafts such as sculpture, painting, furniture art, basketry art, jewellery, graphic design, textiles, photography, metal art, interior decoration, publishing, fashion, architecture, and ceramics. The erstwhile PNDC military government established the current Centre for National Culture under PNDCL 238, which established the National Commission on Culture.

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## Textual Analysis

The study examined documents from the National Commission on Culture as they summed up the annual reports of the various Centres of National Culture in Ghana. The texts are analysed using both the descriptive and analytical approaches (text extraction) by focusing on specific data points from the examined documents. The approach allows the researcher to understand the broader contexts of the examined documents and to make inferences and meanings.

The National Commission on Culture (NCC), the mother institution mandated to operationalise the Cultural Policy in actualising the Cultural Policy in 2017, instituted the Wear Ghana Festival, which is usually slated for March each year. During this period, the various Centres for National Culture visit schools and other relevant stakeholders to create awareness of the need to patronise locally manufactured goods and products, such as food, shoes, sandals and clothes. The Festival seeks to project the various cultural identities and showcase the significance of the various products that identify these cultural identities—textiles, beads, shoes, sandals and other apparel.

The Wear Ghana Festival focuses on promoting the fashion industry and showing the numerous job opportunities through the creation of a common platform for artists in the cultural and creative spaces to interact, exchange ideas and transact businesses. For example, the Central Regional Directorate, during Wear Ghana Month 2024, gave a twenty per cent discount to its clients who came to sew their fabrics and also encouraged all staff to wear Ghanaian-made dresses throughout the month (CNC, Central Regional Directorate 2024). The Wear Ghana Festival seeks to achieve the specific objective of creating “awareness of the traditional values and generate pride and respect for the nation’s heritage” (National Commission on Culture 2004, 11).

Again, in 2023, the Greater Accra Directorate instituted the ‘Health Cultural Dance’ as an effort to mitigate the effects of stress levels faced by Public Service Workers. The Dance seeks to create a dynamic, effective and efficient working culture and environment. This Dance takes place every October (National Commission on Culture 2023, 9). The Accra Directorate also organised the annual Kpataashi (Kitchen) Food Competition aimed at promoting awareness of Ghanaian indigenous foods. The Competition targets youth and seeks to develop the interest and taste of young people in Ghanaian food and way of life, displaying the differentiation and uniqueness of various ethnies while reinforcing cultural identity and cohesion (National Commission on Culture 2023, 8).

The Central Regional Directorate, one of the active Centres since 2017, has instituted the Christiana Carl Oparebea Marketable Skills Training aimed at equipping young people in the Cape Coast Metropolitan and its various districts. Between 2019 and 2023, the Skills Training has trained over one thousand youth in bead-making, crocheting, sewing, decoration, makeup and painting. The Skills Training is targeted at reducing social vices among the youth and providing them with employable skills in order to reduce poverty, unemployment and teenage pregnancy (Central Regional Directorate 2023).

Also, the Upper West Regional Directorate in 2023 organised a Regional Cultural Week and graduated twenty-two young ladies in weaving. These beneficiaries were trained at no cost to themselves as a means of job creation and economic empowerment for women (National Commission on Culture 2023, 2). The institutionalisation of the Skills Training and graduation of trainees aims at achieving the main objective stipulated in the Cultural Policy: “To enhance Ghanaian cultural life and develop cultural programmes to contribute to the nation’s human development and material progress through...promotion and the use of traditional modern arts and crafts to create wealth and alleviate poverty.” (National Commission on Culture 2004, 10).

Additionally, the Western North Regional Directorate, in operationalising the Cultural Policy in 2023, collaborated with the Sefwi Wiawso College of Education and the Sefwi Wiawso Traditional Council to sensitise the youth on the dangers of HIV through drama. The drama was used to sensitise the populace on the need to check for one’s HIV status, discourage discrimination against persons living with HIV and reduce the prevalence rate of 2.1 per cent, which is above the national prevalence rate. The collaboration resulted in



giving out free HIV tests, condoms and consultation for participants present (National Commission on Culture 2023, 4).

### **Interview and Ethnomethodological Section**

The study sampled seven participants from the Central Regional Directorate of the Centre for National Culture (CNC, Cape Coast). The data was collected from February 2 to April 4, 2024, using both interviews as instruments for data collection. The sampled respondents had worked within the cultural industry for at least 3 years and a maximum of 28 years. All sampled interviewees are either former or current management members of the Directorate who have played crucial roles in the operationalisation of the Cultural Policy in the Central Region.

Educationally, the majority of the sampled interviewees have at least a first degree and, at most, a doctorate as the highest level of education, except one whose educational level is an O Level. All interviewed participants were senior officers, and the interviews ranged from 22 minutes at least to at most 45 minutes. Respondents were sampled from the Departments of Administration, Finance and Performing Arts and Literary Works and most of them had worked for at least 15 years aside from the respondent from the Performing Arts and Literary Works, who had been employed three years ago.

### **Working Experience & Familiarity with the Cultural Policy.**

Interviewees were sampled on their journeys in the cultural sector and their knowledge of the Cultural Policy. Most of the interviewees have heard of the cultural policy but have not read the policy document, nor have they read the entire document. Respondents have also not read the Cultural Policy in the last year at least.

**Respondent 1:** “It has not been easy as we are promoting our culture. It seems our culture has been left behind. We are concentrating on other aspects that do not even promote our culture. Even from our commission to the ministerial level, they are not doing anything to achieve our mandate. They always talk about tourism, tourism, tourism, but if you look at the nutshell, it is the culture that is used to promote tourism more because, without the culture, tourism is nothing.”

**Respondent 2:** “My experience with the Centre began as a side guide because of my background in tourism, but I got to know a lot about the arts of which most of them I was not familiar (performing arts and visual arts). But with my encounter with people, I got to appreciate the inclusion of the arts in a whole cultural sector. Since then, I have got to know more about the arts especially the communication aspect of how the arts communicate. I have learned a lot from people, and I still continue to appreciate others’ experiences in the arts as well... I have learned a lot from the ups and downs of it and I am still learning.”

**Respondent 3:** “The cultural policy is a twenty-five-page document, and it applies the role the Commission play or the culture play about the day-to-day activities and the contribution of culture in the national development and all that.”

**Respondent 4:** “Culture is said to be the totality of our life, even though some considered it to be just drumming and dancing. But then some anthropologists have given a deeper explanation of culture as those forms of behaviour, practices and thought that are nurtured, held cherished and maintained as desirable and important to our lives. However, culture is an effective tool for development if handled well because we can benefit immensely if we are able to combine effective neo-liberal development with relevant traditional cultural values. Hence, a need for a policy to help achieve this and that is what the cultural policy seeks to do by giving direction to implementors of the policy.”

### **Consideration of the Cultural Policy in Executing Plans as a Management Member.**

Respondents were sampled on how well they consider the Cultural Policy in their decision-making processes and activities selections. While most agree that it forms an integral part of their considerations and decisions,

respondents 3 and 4 succinctly summarised the importance of Cultural Policy to Culture Promotion. Respondent 2 argues that while the policy is their 'Bible', it needs lots of alterations to reflect the current trends, therefore indirectly indicating that it is less likely to form an integral part of making decisions.

**Respondent 3:** "As cultural practitioners, that policy should guide us because it is legally binding for the Centres for National Culture."

**Respondent 4:** "The culture policy is more or less the bible of the Centre based on which decisions are made. Therefore, as a member of management, in making decisions I have to consider the six broad dimensions that the policy stated clearly when implementing the cultural policy."

**Respondent 2:** "Even though, as I said, it's going under review, we expect a lot of changes and a lot of inclusions as the work has evolved. That is the basis of our operations, so we cannot operate without referring to the policy. So, in any of our activities, especially policies we are the implementing agencies of the Commission and most of our duties is to provide inputs for the formulation of the policies."

### Areas of Focus in Implementing the Cultural Policy

Additionally, the respondents were asked what areas become their priorities when implementing the Cultural Policy. Others focus on drawing the attention of other management members in their decisions; the conscientizing of culture as people's understanding of culture is bleak, wealth creation through artistic products and others focus on their departmental core functions as the areas of foci when implementing the cultural policy.

**Respondent 1:** "Looking at the policy, if, as a management member, you are going contrary to that, then we have to draw your attention to whatever decision you are taking. Will it benefit the Centre? Will it benefit the staff? Will it benefit the stakeholders? If not, we should look for other alternatives, something that will benefit all of us."

**Respondent 2:** "One thing I have understood from our operation is that people's appreciation of our culture from afar is bleak, but when you draw closer to them, you try to educate them and explain some aspects of what they do in our daily lives, they are marvelled. It means that our appreciation, I do not know whether it is through our educational system or what, we do not appreciate the little things that we do in our lives as Ghanaians, but that is our culture. In the early 90s, we came into contact with 'Cultural Studies'."

**Respondent 4:** "One of my main priorities in implementing the cultural policy is 'making artistic products contribute to wealth creation both for creative individuals and the nation as a whole', which forms part of the specific objectives of the policy. Over the years, I dwelled more on this aspect, which has enabled many artisans to be brought to the limelight."

**Respondent 5:** "From the top, we have about four main branches which have to do with youth development, education, culture, creative art, and so many others under which music forms a minor section. Unfortunately, I am interested in musical culture..."

### How Issues Are Raised or Addressed with Communities in Culturally Appropriate Manner.

The study further examined how cultural implementers of the public sector raised and addressed them. Respondents assert that issues are raised by observation in the settings of habitation. While the approaches to raising and addressing issues are diverse, there seems to be a discourse between formulators and implementers of cultural policies, especially as the implementers are mostly not the drivers of the policies themselves. Interviewees asked for closer collaborations between the formulators and implementers to adequately address or bring issues to the fore in a culturally appropriate manner. Nonetheless, cultural issues are addressed by building the human capacity of cultural officers through workshops and training sessions, as well as packaging programmes to the needs of the communities where such issues have been identified.

Furthermore, issues identified are addressed through seeking sponsorships as the cultural industry players are financially incapacitated. For example, in 2022, the Internal Generated Fund (IGF) of the Directorate amounted to less than GH¢ 100,000 (US\$6,000), yet government allocation to the Directorate in 2023 amounted to GH¢1,900 (US\$136), a meagre sum for the administration and day-to-day activities of the Directorate.

Additionally, the approaches to addressing identified issues in a culturally appropriate manner as implementers of the Cultural Policy in the Central Region include liaising with traditional rulers and opinion leaders to undertake programmes in the form of sketches, skits and drama, using music to educate people on current trends of lifestyle and topical issues such as COVID-19 and teenage pregnancy and using edutainment—i.e., the use of entertainment to educate people on social vices and practices not beneficial to the populace. The use of drama is quintessential as it helps to conscientise people on the realities of issues and practices.

### **Significant Factors Influencing the Decisions of Cultural Implementers**

The participants were further asked to list the two significant factors that influence their decision. The question was necessary to understand what are the influencers for specific decisions of cultural officers who make the final decision of operationalising the Cultural Policy.

**Respondent 3:** “What do you want to achieve? Your targets and then the goals that you have set for yourself—the objectives behind the programme and your audience. Your audiences, you are organising a programme; what do you want them to benefit at the end of the day? You should have an objective before drawing any programme, so your audience should benefit at the end of the day.”

**Respondent 4:** “Social influence; for example, the environment, experience norms and values, educational level, language and then economic influences.”

From the responses, it is observed that the objectives of a programme or an activity in the cultural space and the expected influence are the main driving forces influencing the decision of implementers of the Ghanaian Cultural Policy.

### **Potential Challenges in Implementing the Cultural Policy**

Additionally, respondents were interviewed to understand the possible conflicts affecting them in executing the Cultural Policy. The most significant challenges affecting the smooth operationalisation of the Cultural Policy are lack of funds and resources to execute most of the activities slated for the year, logistical constraints, the low educational background of cultural officers in the various centres, the perception that some departments are mere supporting departments and the Centre for National Culture is driven by the arts (visual and performing arts), the lack of not reviewing the Cultural Policy, financial indiscipline and the lack of research about the people and their culture to understand which segments to project. The challenges of the Centre are explicitly summarised by Respondent 1 when she asserts:

“...Our cultural policy needs to be reviewed. Our new scheme of service needs to be reviewed. In fact, whatever has been written does not favour some departments...We are doing most of the work because when you go to the Ministry, they do not do much. It is the Cultural Centres that do most of the work, and they take all the glory. We should look at the 100% retention and we get our full IGF retention because we do not have any money. Our bills, even our office expenses, we do not have money to take care of them...requesting for A4 sheet has been a problem.” We do not involve the department. When you are in an institution you do not feel belongingness. It is like you are not there. It is a major challenge. Information that you are supposed to get is a challenge...We should all learn financial management. We should look for people who are well equipped to come and train the management level.”

Respondents were also asked, in implementing the cultural policy, whom they identify as the top-3 stakeholders. In answering the question, it was observed that stakeholders are chosen based on the priority of the management members and their understanding of the cultural settings. For example, Respondents 4 and 6

consider their top three stakeholders as the Cultural Officers of the Centre for National Culture as the first stakeholders in implementing the Cultural Policy; however, Respondent 4 considered the Ghana Museums and Monument Board and Bureau of Ghanaian Languages are the second and third while Respondent 6 considered Information Department and District Assemblies in the same respective.

Nonetheless, in general, the stakeholders considered critical to the promotion of the Cultural Policy include traditional authorities, higher governmental agencies such as the Regional Coordinating Council, the media, musicians, educators, opinion leaders and the general public.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ghanaian Cultural Policy is a relatively new document and has not been actualised to achieve its objectives. The Policy Document has been necessitated by the need to promote, protect and preserve the cultural identity of Ghana. The Centre for National Culture (CNC) is an agency of the National Commission on Culture (NCC) mandated to promote, protect and preserve the various regional cultures of Ghana through research and using culture as a tool for economic empowerment for national development. In operationalising the Cultural Policy, cultural officers have to be trained on the jobs while furthering their education because the majority of the officers have limited education and knowledge and, thus, are unable to reflect the changing dynamics in the cultural space. In operationalising the Cultural Policy, implementers focus on their understanding of culture to undertake tasks and programmes aimed at actualising the objectives of the Policy; however, traditional rulers, the media, opinion leaders and the general populace are considered the significant stakeholders in actualising the goals and objectives outlined in the Ghanaian Cultural Policy. While the Centre for National Culture, Central Regional Directorate has achieved significant successes spanning over three decades, the agency is hindered by challenges such as financial inadequacy, the lack of effective human relations and communication among players in the cultural space, logistical constraints, limited infrastructure and the absence of legislation that empowers the Centre to perform its duties effectively.

Aside from understanding how the implementers of the Cultural Policy understand the operationalisation of the Policy, future studies in exploring how the Centres for National Culture could be the agent of consciousness and improve the cultural fabric of Ghanaian society and an exploration of why Ghanaians think exogenous factors are adulterating their culture could be conducted.

**Declaration of conflicting interests:** The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Ethical approval:** This paper is methodological; therefore, ethics approval was not needed.

**Funding:** The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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