



POWER SHORTAGE AS A THREAT TO THE GROWTH OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE BUSINESSES IN NIGERIA: FINE AND APPLIED ARTS VULNERABLE GROUPS IN FOCUS

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Abstract

Frequent service breakdown and a transmission collapse have remained the trademarks of Nigeria power distribution industry. Many valuable time and resources are wasting daily due to power failure. This is limiting the growth of Nigerian economy; people are finding it difficult to rely on power as a means of sustaining their businesses most especially the small and medium industries that accommodate largest percentage of ordinary citizens. Hence, this paper focuses on power shortage in Nigeria as a great threat to the growth of small and medium business. It is an attempt to deal with some vulnerable groups such as: pot maker (pottery), textile artist, graphic artist, sculptor, painter, decorator and other entrepreneurial skills embedded in Fine and Applied Arts. The paper also focuses on economic implications of power shortage on these businesses. The theoretical framework of this work hangs on social theory of modernization propounded by Kiyukanov (2015) and states that, societies go through stages of development, moving from traditional to modern societies as they adapt technology, institutions and values. Interrogative investigations through key informant interview (KII) with historical findings were used under qualitative research method. Recommendations are put up to sensitize the business owners and the government in order to find possible solutions to the problem of the electricity supply in the Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria, Power, Business, Vulnerable, Fine and Applied Arts.

Introduction

Power generation is still very erratic as Nigerians spend so much on diesel and petrol for running their power generating machines. It is becoming difficult for Nigerian to live their lives without regular supply of electricity. Once the government of the day cannot meet their demand in this area, individual citizens, private businesses and government agencies look out for power generating plants as an alternative power supply. Fueling, maintenance and servicing of these plants become a great task for the common people who have been battered as a

result of poor output of the organization in charge of generating and distributing electricity in Nigeria through Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN). Over the years, Nigerians have discovered that, one thing that is new about organization is the new name that replaces the former National Electric Power Authority (NEPA). Even the subsequent changes in the ownership of the electricity companies through privatization does not bring about anything different from the old epileptic experiences.

Power holding company of Nigeria has gone a long way to meet the needs of Nigerian populace despite its challenges since when it



was established under different names. However, the history of electricity development in Nigeria can be traced back to the end of 19th century when the first generating power plant was installed in the city of Lagos in 1898, from then until 1950, the pattern of electricity development was in the form of individual electricity power undertaking scattered all over the towns. Some of the few undertakings were Federal and Government bodies under the Public work department, some by the Native authorities and others by the Municipal Authorities. By 1950, in order to integrate electricity power development and make it effective, the then colonial government passed the electricity Corporation of Nigeria (ECN) ordinance no. 15 of 1950. With this ordinance in place, the electricity department and all those undertakings which were controlled came under one body. The ECN and the Niger Dam Authority (NDA) were merged to become the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) with effect from 1st April, 1972. This is currently referred to as the Power Holding Company of Nigeria as new name.

Despite the problems faced by the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) the company has played an effective role in the nation's socio-economic development thereby steering Nigerian into greater industrial society. This culture failed to continue because of inconsistency of many governments in Nigeria. Mohammed (2007) opines that, electricity generation and supply in Nigeria is in bad condition, not so much because of doubts about the resources the PHCN commands but because it is

disorganized. Waste of resources, failure of coordination, complacency, indiscipline, corruption, and lack of effective leadership and the inevitable neglect of national interest, centralization and so on are the major problems militating against the development of this sector. Government subvention to this company is amounted to about N27 billion per annum. In addition to this, it has generated annually its own internal revenue of about N25 billion per annum from sources within and outside the country. Going by this, it is believed that Power Holding Company of Nigeria must perform, but what we are seeing is a different thing entirely.

The problems of PHCN has gone beyond poor management, it now includes ageing equipment. Bello (2011) posits that, the disturbing level is obsolete equipment at the disposal of Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) that responsible for the deteriorating electricity supply in the country. It has been observed that, the bad state of some PHCN plants may cause a total collapse, if the organization decides to take the volume of gas that is actually required as they are too weak to bear such volume. Few years ago because of the ambiguous challenges of Power Holding Company of Nigeria, government took active step to sell Nigeria electricity company out to individual private company with the hope that, the change of management company from governmental agency to private sector would improve power distribution.

Adeoye (2024) states that, Elumelu's philosophy of "Africapitalism" is based on the premise that the continent cannot grow solely through the government, and that



private sector should actively invest even when especially socio-economic conditions are tough. Whereas, it is still the same problem, if not worst because these private companies still rely on the same source of electricity that failed under Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) to give Nigeria good result over time. Presently, the electricity sector in Nigeria is overseen by the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), which regulates the generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity in the country through private sector. The sector is made up of various players, including generation companies, transmission companies and other stakeholders. Till today, the electricity sector in Nigeria is still facing challenges such as inadequate generation capacity, transmission constraints, and issues related to revenue collection and metering among others. Soneye (2024) acclaims that, NNPCCL is transforming from a traditional oil and gas company into an integrated energy company with interests in power generation and revitalizing industries in Nigeria. Klyukanov (2015) theory of modernism emphasizes a functionalist approach to inequality and focuses on the transitional from traditional to modern society, this is what is applicable to issue of electricity in Nigeria.

Concept of Power Shortage

Electricity is one of the basic forms of energy, it associates with electric charges that produces current. It can also be described as a form of energy from charged elementary particle, usually supplied as electric current through cables, wires and so on, for lighting, heating and driving machines. When

electricity is off and there is no electric supply to a place, it brings about a feeling of negative emotion. However, power shortage can be defined as a short or long term loss of the electric power to an area. Other names that are synonymous with power shortage are power outage, power failure, power cut and black out.

There are many causes of power failure in an electricity network, examples of these causes include, faults at power stations, damage to electric transmission lines, substances or other parts of the distribution system, a short circuit, or the overloading of electricity mains. Power failure pose critical danger at sites where the environment and public safety are at risk most especially in certain institutions such as hospitals, sewage treatment plants, communication plant, mines and so on. Types of power outage include, a transient fault which is a momentary loss of power typically caused by a temporary fault on a power line, a brownout outage is a drop in voltage in an electrical power supply and blackout refers to the total loss of power to an area and is the most severe form of power outage that occur.

Meaning of Fine and Applied Arts and Its Career Prospects

Fine and Applied art can be simply described as medium of expression where artists create products that are beautiful and the same time functional to satisfy the needs of the people. Materials such as, clay, wood, colour, cement, metal, bronze, brass, skin, calabash, raffia, stone, ivory, clothe, and many more can be easily manipulated by artist to achieve his creative advancement using different methods. This allow artists to beautify the



environment and also provide useful items to complement human existence. Based on the creative versatility of artists, it is very expedient to see many of them establishing themselves as entrepreneurs specializing on various areas of visual arts and produce objects that are functional. Through this, careers are created and many people get engaged and proffer solutions to peoples' problems. Most time, they form organizations to achieve a set goals using art profession as their base. Ifeagwu, Ojelade, and Chigbu (2004) assert that, art organizations are therefore art oriented, commerce driven and structured entities most of which are profit oriented. More so, Fine and Applied Arts which can be interpreted to be a vulnerable platform for career development accommodate Fine art as an aspect and Applied art as another aspect associated with different functions that give room for artists to provide for the needs of Nigeria citizens most especially when the nation is passing through economic challenges in areas such as: Cloth weaving, Cloth dyeing/batik, Sewing, Printing, Visualizing, Sign-writing, Pot making, Clay processing, Glazing, Fountain making, Block making (interlocking, flooring and laying of tiles, P.O.P ceiling decoration, pillar and vulnerable fitting), Painting, Balloon decoration and so on.

Power Shortage as it Affects Vulnerable Groups Under Fine and Applied Arts

The presidential Task Force on Power (PTFP) and the World Bank had identified the lack of electricity as a major factor inhibiting development in Nigeria. The nation's economic had been badly affected

and this remains a burden on the lives of every citizen most especially the people at grass root who depend solely on petty businesses. Fine and Applied Arts extraordinary creativity and versatility make it a saving grace for many enterprising Nigerians. There are many areas in Fine and Applied Arts that can easily be used to boost the hidden potentials in ordinary Nigerians. This is the reason Adeshina (2013) opines that, art is a product of creative thought and human interpretation of ideas and emotion translated into meaningful object or thing. Vulnerable areas in Fine and Applied Arts can be identified as following: Cloth weaving, Cloth dyeing/batik, Sewing, Printing, Visualizing, Sign-writing, Pot making, Clay processing, Glazing, Fountain making, Block making (interlocking, flooring and laying of tiles, P.O.P ceiling decoration, pillar and vulnerable fitting), Painting, Balloon decoration.

With modern equipment that use electricity as the main source of power, above mentioned areas of specialization under Fine and Applied Arts are viable. Each of these areas has one machine or more that use electricity for their production. Therefore, such machines increase productivity and reduce the stress of working with mere hands. In a situation where there is no electricity supply most of these areas of specialization will suffer and apart from this there will be low productivity which will eventually leads to poor profit. Going by this, each specialization identified above will be brought to light by enumerating the damage that might be possible caused due to the shortage of power.



Cloth Weaving: Modern weaving involves the use of sophisticated machines for the making of cloths. The weaving starts from the processing of thread from raw cotton which is known as SPINNING and special machine is meant to do this with electricity as source of power. Oyelola (2010) posits that, adapted “Adire” factory prints are produced in large quantity through industrial machine powered by electricity. So if power is not available printing machine, spinning machine and weaving machine will be redundant. This will affect production and end product will be badly affected.

Cloth Dyeing: Cloth dyeing at a level involves a process of removing wax on already dyed cloth. There are machines that are used in de-waxing cloths and most of these machines use electricity. Apart from these machines there are other areas in cloth dyeing where the use of electricity is highly needed such as, boiling water for mixing dyes and dewaxing by using electric cooker or boiling ring, ironing of cloth is another vital area where the use of power is necessary. Imagine if there is no power supply people in this field will lose a lot of man hours and may not be able to meet their customers’ demands and supplies.

Sewing: Sewing has advanced to a level where industrial heavy machines are meant to put together cloths. These machines use electricity regularly to make sewing of cloth fast and easy. In a situation where power is not available these machines will not work at all and production has to stop completely.

Printing: Printing remains a versatile area that accommodates a lot of artisans and professionals such as, visualizers,

lithographers, and machine operators. The works of these people depend solely on use of electricity to operate most of their equipment when printing, cutting and trimming of papers. Persistence power shortage will affect their production.

Sign-writing: Sign-writing is another area in art with a lot of activities that involve the use of equipment that get their power from electricity in form of illuminating transparency. With power failure, production will be greatly affected and profit will fall drastically.

Pot Making: Machines such as, throwing wheels. Kilns and clay rollers use electricity during pot making processes. Absence of electricity in a situation like this will not allow adequate production to take place. During glazing of pot electric kiln is most preferred, this makes Ayeyemi (2023) avers that, after firing, the ware is dipped in a glazing chemical liquid. It will thereby be re-fired to give a glass like external appearance inside electric kiln.

Glazing: After the required chemicals and other materials have been applied to the hardware, the next thing is to put them inside the electric kiln for the glazing proper. If there is power shortage the processes will be obstructed completely.

Fountain Making: After the design and construction of a fountain, the water that runs through is powered by electricity. Power outage or power shortage will not allow free flow of water and the purpose it is meant to serve will not be met.

Block Making: Most of the machines used in block production are powered by electricity.



Block making starts from mixing of sand with cement, to molding and to the stage of lifting the new blocks from the production point to the field. All these processes involve machines that work with electricity. In a situation where electricity is not regular, this will add to the burden of the producers and make their work tedious with little or low production.

Balloon Decorations: This aspect of applied art is very new. Many people around us today adorn their ceremonies ground with balloons. Cloths and other materials make venues to have good look. Most of the paraphernalia needed in putting up such decoration use electricity especially inflating different colourful balloons to adorn the environment. When there is no electricity, the usual glamour expected from such designs will not be achievable. (Ayeyemi 2024, Okunlola 2010, Wenger 2006, Atanda 2017, Oyelola 2010)

Economic Implications of Power Shortage on Small and Medium Businesses:

Largest percentage of Nigeria business relies on electricity. This is a phenomenon that cut across every Nigerian homes most especially the self-employed citizens that live on personal business. Majority of these businesses cannot afford buying generating plant and also maintaining it. That is why power outage is causing a lot of problem to national economy. Ahiuma-Young (2011) postulates that, the government estimates that lack of power costs the Nigerian economy \$100 billion dollar every year through lost output and high costs for local businesses. Many artisans have abandoned their primary professions due to lack of regular supply of

electricity. Sitting down for days without electricity has resulted to loss of money valuable hours and people in this sector are finding it difficult to feed their families talk less of embanking on projects. Consequence of this is causing government to lose huge amount of money because the income is not forth coming.

Moreover, the Nigerian youths that fall between this area are now riding motor-cycle popularly known as “Okada” just to survive. Others who cannot struggle to make ends-meat have resulted to robbery and many lives have been wasted through this. If revenues coming to the government through paid taxes are not regular, this will definitely affect the provision of infrastructure. Unemployment emanated from this scenario is now encouraging youths’ violence in Nigeria and this is creating a great security challenges to the people and the government.

Conclusion

Power outage has been identified in so many quarters as a major factor obstructing development, while stable electricity is a force that pushes nation’s economy forward. However, electricity remains an important aspect that deals directly with the people. Based on this, electricity that touches people lives directly should be an essential ingredient that needs to be provided by every government and other stakeholders so as to make living easy and affordable for the people as government is all about people. However, artists who contributing to the growth of nation’s economy through their products will have access to power and improve on their productions. Adeshina (2013) acclaims that, artists who use their



creative ideas to effect economic changes will be able to do more if electricity is stable. Whereas, Adeoye (2024) supports the submission of Elumelu that, economic of a nation cannot grow solely by government without private sector economic collaborations. This makes Soneye (2024) to proclaim that, NNPC is transforming from a traditional oil and gas company into an integrated energy company to boost the nation's industrial productions. Therefore, it is important to note at this juncture that, constant supply of electricity can activate the development of local productions in Nigeria and create economic prosperities for the people and the government at all time most especially in Fine and Applied Arts that remain very attractive to the younger generations who are very inquisitive to make meaning contributions to the national economy. This will in turn encourage local production as this work will create avenues for the Nigeria youths in particular as reliable contribution to the existing literature in the field arts.

Recommendations

- Maintenance culture should be the priority of the government and power consumers.
- Paying of taxes and electricity bills should be the responsibility of every citizen in order to get a stable power supply from government agency.
- All the materials and equipment needed have to be provided by government and sectors concern for adequate generation, distribution and transmission of power.
- Private sectors should partner with electricity distributed company to meet up with its responsibilities in Nigeria.
- Damage of the power agencies properties should be totally discouraged for better performance.
- Business owners should see themselves and government as partners in progress at all times.
- Government should monitor all their expenses on power distribution companies so that they will no longer go to the wrong hands.
- Corruption and thefts in every sector should be stopped.

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