

THEATRE INSTITUTIONS AS MEDIATING STRUCTURES IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE OF ANKPA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KOGI STATE

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Abstract

The indispensable characteristics of mediating structures for a well-balanced society have steadily gained wide recognition over the last couple of decades among social scientists and policy experts globally. This can be seen from the roles of mediating structures outlined by different scholars. Nevertheless an essential point for the greater attention to the subject such as Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus whose 1977 monograph attracted attention to the subject matter. The duo popularized mediating structures further in their manifestos and highlighted its importance of mediating structures to the front burner. The consistent stable corrosion of natural communities by government policies and expansion has resulted in lack of the confidence of the people most directly affected by them. Despite their increasing desire for government services. The study in order to assess the impact of theatre institutions as mediating structures in Ankpa local government adopted the quantitative research methodology and sticking to the instrument of questionnaires for data collection, the data collected were analyzed using simple percentage. Ten (10) communities were selected and the researcher visited the communities and selected respondents who attended to the questionnaires as they were guided to fill the questionnaires. The data were analyzed through table analysis. The finding shows that theatre institutions as mediating structures have helped the local government to develop seriously in all ramifications. It is on this premise that the study recommends that theatre institutions as mediating structures should be allowed to flourish in our communities as their roles can never be underestimated. The research therefore concludes that theatre institutions can serve as mediating structures to bring the government and its plan in a democratic setting to the people and the people to the government.

Keywords: Theatre Institutions, Mediating Structures, Democratic Governance, Civic Engagement, Ankpa LGA

Introduction

The nation that the issue of whether traditional institutions should participate in modern governance has remained a subject of debate. In recent time, it is against this background that the traditional institutions in collaboration with the then colonial administration democratic governments served as mediating structures to entrench development to the society for good governance. Obviously, "The traditional institutions were over rated and attention was not given to the theatre institution as a mediating structure. The concept of theatre as a mediating structure connotes that theatre can serve as a bridge between different cultures, communities, ideologies and the state (government)" (Fajoyomi 34). Theatre institution has the ability to relay any type of message to the people and attracts democratic governance as well as portraying societal challenges to the authorities.

In this study, the researchers examine the role of theatre institutions as mediating structures in the democratic governance of Ankpa LGA of Kogi State, Nigeria. That is why Ejiofo argues that "Mediating structures in this context refer to institutions that facilitate communication and interaction between citizens and government, promoting participatory governance and deepening democracy" (Ejiofo 53).

Thus theatre can assist to break down barriers and promote greater development and advancement, understanding and social change. Similarly traditional institutions recognized the following as mediating structures in the society- the neighborhood, the family, religious institutions, voluntary organizations and community schools. But, it is observed by Orji & Olali that, “theatre institutions has the potentials to serve as mediating structures than all the aforementioned” (70). For instance, a command performance at Government house, community theatre, and other theatre performances would go a long way in promoting democratic governance by providing a space for citizens to express their opinions, debate local issues and hold leaders accountable. These institutions also facilitate intergenerational dialogue, cultural preservation and social cohesion.

Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus chose to focus on four mediating structures, which most people could relate to because the people are most importantly familiar with and which were relevant to the problems of the welfare state. Those mediating structures according to Berger and Neuhaus are: “... the neighbourhood, family, church and voluntary associations- are the kind key institutions that relate the political order to the “values and realities of individual life” and thus provide its moral foundation (14). Thus Berger and John failed to acknowledge the place of theatre in mediating responsibilities. But the current study contends that these are not the only mediating structures. The researchers argue that theatre practices are also viable mediating structures that can help in ameliorating societal challenges. Theatre has played this vital role of mediation over the years and right from its inception in Greece, Rome, England and other places around the world. Thus, “theatre institution can serve as viable mediating structures to attract development to any society from individual to the government way of conducting the individuals on their roles in the society and the stakes rulers to the individuals” (Oloko 43).

These mediating structures as outlined by Berger and Neuhaus above, are what the current study refers to as traditional institutions. They are traditional institutions not because they are localized as these institutions are found in the cities. They were referred to as traditional institutions (mediating structures), for they are closely and immediately directed to the people. In the case of the theatre, community theatre is a theatre of the people, by the people and for the people and has played the role of mediation over the years. So, they almost immediately mediate between the individual (the people) and the megastructures.

The positions by Berger, Tocqueville, Burke and Neuhaus above, popularize the traditional institutions as having key roles and responsibilities in the building and making of the individuals because the individual and the state are not oppositions. Apparently the individual and the state have a link and there must be no dichotomy between the two apparatus of the society. Much of modern thought has been hostile to mediating structures. For example, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Bentham each envisioned an ideal condition in which the state guards the rights and fulfills the needs of unencumbered, dissocialized individuals. Nonetheless, “recently in America the rhetoric of “community” has become commonplace, even fashionable” (Vaughan 23). At times this rhetoric has certainly been abused, as in the widely noticed by Robert Bellah and several others that used the language of community to justify an egalitarian state dedicated to the redistribution of property. But such rhetoric is clearly not always disingenuous, and the recent concern with “community,” “civil society,” and “mediating structures” signifies a genuine and profound presence of conservatism in America today. Indeed, “the strength of concern for mediating structures in any modern society is an excellent barometer for measuring the vigor of that society's conventional philosophy” (Hernderson 40).

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on Situated Learning Theory by Jean Lave

(www.learningtheories.com). According to the theory, learning is facilitated by the interactions and relationships between individuals, technology and the physical environment. Key components of SLT are community of practice, legitimate peripheral participation and mediated learning. Situated learning is a theory on how individuals acquire professional skills, extending research on apprenticeship into how legitimate peripheral participation leads to membership in a community of practice. Situated learning takes place as it is focused on the relationship between learning and the social situation on which it occurs. The perspective can be contrasted with alternative view of learning rather than defining (learning) as the acquisition of professional knowledge. Lave satiated learning in certain forms of social co-participation. Rather than asking what kind of cognitive processes conceptual structures are involved, they ask what kind of social engagement provide the proper context for learning to take place for proper mediating.

Situated learning was first proposed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger as a model of learning in a community of practice. At its simplest, situated learning is the learning that takes place in the same context in which it is applied. Lave and Wenger (191) argue that the learning should not be viewed as simply the transmission of abstract and decontextualized knowledge from one individual to another, but a social process whereby knowledge is co-constructed. They suggest that such learning is situated in a specific context and embedded within a particular social and physical environment. Lave and Wenger assert that situated learning is not an educational form, much less a pedagogical strategy in contrast with most classroom learning activities that involve abstract knowledge which is in and out of context. Lave and Wenger argue that learning is situated that is, as it normally occurs, learning is embedded within activity, context and culture. It is also usually unintentional rather than deliberate.

Knowledge needs to be presented in authentic contexts-settings and situation that would normally involve that knowledge. Social interaction and collaboration are essential components of situated learning-learners become involved in a 'community of practice' which embodies certain beliefs and behaviours to be acquired. And, this social interaction and collaboration are what the mega-structures and mediating structures need to co-exist in one place. As the beginners or novice move from the periphery of a community to its center, he/she becomes more active and engaged within the culture and eventually assumes the role of an expert.

The relationship between this theory and the topic is that both mega-structures, mediating structures and the individual must live in the society together and they must learn and have the background knowledge of the responsibilities of the different entities in the society. Another relationship between the topic and the theory is that the individual can move from the novice level to the center by serving as instrument to the mega-structures and mediating structures through sighting and hearing. This could be linked with participant observation because according to Emeka Nwabueze:

Participant observation is one type of data collection method typically used in qualitative research; its aim is to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a given group of individuals (such as a religious, occupational, sub-cultural group, or a particular community) and their practices through an intensive involvement, usually over an extended period of time (34).

The above assertion explains more reasons why the mediating structures should be encouraged in communities and societies. Reason being that they permit individuals to gain insights, get close and intimate familiarity with/about their roles and responsibilities to the community or the mega-structures and attract social change and development.

Theatre Institutions as Mediating Structures

It has been discovered over the years that theatre is the best form of mediating structure because it mirrors the society. Theatre facilitates interactions and relationships between individuals, technology and the physical environment. Because “Theatre has community of practice, legitimate peripheral participation and mediated learning” (Marc Hufty 85). Theatre takes information from the society, restructures this information into the best simple ways the society will understand and send the same information back to the society for assimilation and societal reformation. The above earlier mentioned mediating structures are all embedded in the mediating structure of theatre. The theatre in the course of representing what it got from the society, it ends up encapsulating all the above-mentioned mediating structures. Therefore, “theatre institutions as mediating structures has the potentials of (re)presenting to the kings and their subjects issues that affect the society and the way to come out of such issues” (Henderson & Berla 20). Beyond the performance in the building, theatre has the omnibus practice of taking performance to the people. For instance, the king's palace, government house, village square, market square, parks and many more where you do not have to wait for the people to come, that is through applied theatre, community theatre, theatre for development and other nomenclatures of the theatre that take information to the people.

The Concept of Governance

The complexity of governance is difficult to capture in a simple definition. The need for governance to exist anytime a group of people come together to accomplish an end. Though the governance literature proposes several definitions, most rest on three dimensions: authority, decision-making and accountability. At the Institute, the working definition of governance reflects the above-mentioned dimensions: “Governance determines who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voice heard and how account is rendered.” (Institute on Governance iog.ca/defining-governance/online).

In the same vein, www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/...education.../concept-of-governance/45) says: “Governance has been defined to refer to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation.” Governance also represents the norms, values and rules of the game through which public affairs are managed in a manner that is transparent, participatory, inclusive and responsive. Governance therefore can be subtle and may not be easily observable. In a broad sense, governance is about the culture and institutional environment in which citizens and stakeholders interact among themselves and participate in public affairs. It is more than the organs of the government.

Ultimately, the application of good governance serves to realize organizational and societal goals. The following examples help our understanding of each of the three dimensions of governance. Where a group is too large to efficiently make all necessary decisions, it creates an entity to facilitate the process. Group members delegate a large portion of the decision-making responsibility to this entity. In voluntary sector organizations this entity is the board of directors. In a public sector context this may be a board of directors, a committee or a project management team. One simple definition of governance is “the art of steering societies and organizations.” (Institute on Governance iog.ca/defining-governance/online) Governance is about the more strategic aspects of steering, making the larger decisions about both direction and roles.

These multiple actors are the organization's stakeholders. They articulate their interests, influence how decisions are made, who the decision-makers are and what decisions are taken. Thus, “Decision-makers must absorb this input into the decision-making process” (ECA 30). Decision-makers are then accountable to those same stakeholders for the organization's output and the process of producing it.

Hence **Governance** is “the way the rules, norms and actions are structured, sustained, regulated and held accountable the degree of formality depends on the internal rules of a given organization and, externally, with its business partners” (Dore 67). As such, governance may take many forms, driven by many different motivations and with many different results. For instance, a government may operate as a democracy where citizens vote on who should govern and the public good is the goal, while a non-profitable organization may be governed by a small board of directors and pursue more specific aims.

Presentation of Results and Analysis

According to the records available to the researchers from the headquarters of the Ankpa Local Government. There are 30 (thirty) autonomous communities in Ankpa. But to enable the researchers cover because of time and other exigencies 10 (ten) out of the thirty were picked. The different traditional theatre institutions in these communities were picked.

The research adopted the quantitative research methodology and sticking to the instrument of questionnaires and interview for data collection, the data collected were analyzed using simple percentage. Ten (10) communities were selected and the researchers visited the communities and selected respondents who attended to the questionnaires and interview questions as they were guided to fill the questionnaires. This was achieved through face to face interaction and the help of research assistants from the communities selected for the study. The data were analyzed through table analysis. The categories of respondents cut across the kings and chiefs of the communities, the elders (men and women) and youths of the communities. Because of the population of study, a WhatsApp was created where online questionnaires were distributed followed by physical questionnaires and personal interview was also adopted. Some elites of the selected communities were sent emails to enable the researchers get their responses.

Research Question I:

A. What impact has theatre institutions as mediating structures made in Ankpa Local Government?

Table 1 shows the response on items for research question

S/NO	ITEM (1.2&3)	Agree	%	Disagree	%	TOTAL
1	Do theatre institutions have any impact in the L.G.A	400	90	70	10	470
2	Do theatre institutions serve as mediating structures?	344	71.4	126	28.6	470
3	Do you think that their mediating deserves commendation?	301	74	169	26	470
	TOTAL	1045	79	365	21	1410

Analysis of Data

From the table above, total number of respondents that agreed 1045 (79%), while the number that disagreed 365 (21%). The implication of the researcher's analysis and findings is that theatre as mediating structure has great impact in Ankpa LGA.

Research Question II:

Table 2 shows the responses on items for research questions.

S/NO	ITEM (4,5&6)	Agree	%	Disagree	%	TOTAL
4	Do the communities need theatre institutions as mediating structure?	254	59.2	140	216	470
5	Are the theatre institutions competent in their mediation?	301	64.2	169	35.8	470
3	Do the theatre institutions as mediating structures serve the communities?	245	57	225	43	470
	TOTAL	900	60	434	40	1410

Analysis of Data

From the table above, total number of respondents that agreed 900 (60%), while the total number that disagreed 434 (40%). The analysis clearly showed that we need theatre institutions as mediating structures in Ankpa L.G.A.

Research Question III:

C. Theatre institutions as mediating structures help in ameliorating problems in Ankpa Local Government?

Table 3 shows how theatre institutions can help in solving communities' problems.

S/NO	ITEM (7,8&9)	Agree	%	Disagree	%	TOTAL
7	Do the theatre institutions help in solving the communities' problems?	309	61	161	39	470
8	Do the communities recognize the essence of mediating structures?	342	70.8	128	28.2	470
9	Are the problems solved by the mediating structures obvious to the communities?	371	79.1	99	20.9	470
	TOTAL	1022	70.4	288	29.6	1410

Analysis of Data

From the table above, total number of respondents that agreed was 1022 (70.4%), while the number that disagreed was 288 (29.6%). The analysis therefore, theatre institution as mediating structure has helped in ameliorating the problems in Ankpa.

Research Question IV:

D. Does theatre institutions as mediating structures help the government to get close to the people in Ankpa Local Government?

Table 4 Shows the responses on items for research question four.

S/NO	ITEM (10,11&12)	Agree	%	Disagree	%	TOTAL
10	Do the theatre institutions as mediating structures assist the government to get close to the communities?	286	54.4	184	46.6	470
11	Is the government very close to the people through mediating structures?	315	63	155	32	470
12	Does the individuals in the communities recognizes their role to the megastructures?	396	86.6	74	13.4	470
	TOTAL	997	68	413	32	1410

Analysis of Data

From the table above, total number of respondents that agreed was 997 (68%), while the number that disagreed was 413 (32%). From the above analysis, the researchers observed that theatre institutions as mediating structures helps in bringing good governance to the people of the L.G.A.

Research Question V:

- E. Of what relevance are theatre institutions as mediating structures to the people and the government of Ankpa at large?

Table 5: shows the response on items for research question Five.

S/NO	ITEM (13,14&15)	Agree	%	Disagree	%	TOTAL
13	Are the theatre institutions relevant as mediating structures in the communities?	68	20	274	80	342
14	Are the theatre institutions as mediating structures important to the communities?	77	22.6	265	77.4	342
15	Does the government accepts the role of theatre institutions as mediating structures?	45	13	297	87	342
	TOTAL	190	19	836	81	1026

Analysis of Data

From table (seven) above, the total number of respondents that agreed was 190 (19%), while the number that disagreed was 836 (81%). From the table and analyses above, our findings is that theatre institutions are relevant to the people of the LGA because it caused others to become developed and advanced in their respective fields of endeavours.

Discussion of Findings

These discussions are based on the data already collected and analyzed above.

Research Question One: What impact has theatre institutions as mediating structures made in Ankpa Local Government?

From the analyses based on research question no.1 (table three), it was observed that traditional theatre institutions as mediating structures have serious impact on the people and communities in Ankpa Local Government. The overall percentage scores of respondents that agreed were 79%, while 21% disagreed. The result, then, is that the theatre institutions as mediating structures play important roles as mediating structures. They play this role by mediating the communities and the government thereby helping the people to understand their roles and embrace the megastructures as presented to them by the government especially in democratic setting.

More so, a discourse of analysis of the same data revealed widespread approval and attitude of the people to see more of mediating structures in their communities as the present structures have tremendously bring the development and government nearer to the people. Respondents equally opined that more of the mediating structures can increase development in the communities. There would be more of mega-structures by the government and the individual get to know his or her right and roles as they relate to the mega-structures.

Research Question Two: Why do we need theatre institutions as mediating structures in Ankpa Local Government?

From the analysis based on research question no.2 (table four), it was noted that the communities enjoy the availability of theatre institutions as mediating structures and therefore, held that they need mediating structures in the communities selected for this study in Ankpa Local Government. The result is that largely positive interconnectedness exists between the communities, the local government and the people and thus increases the quest for the presence of more mediating structures in the communities.

Respondents believe that when there is presence of mediating structures like that of the traditional institutions they will go a long way in the restructuring and rehabilitation of the communities. This is adequately translated to be that the people of the communities like mediating structures because their experiences with the traditional institutions as mediating structures.

Research Question Three: How do theatre institutions as mediating structures help in ameliorating problems in Ankpa Local Government?

The analysis of data based on research question no.3 (table five) inferred that the traditional institutions as mediating structures helped greatly in the amelioration of certain problems. 722 (70.4%) respondents supported the assertion, while 304 (29.6%) opposed it.

The report affirms that the presence of theatre institutions as mediating structures have helped in so many ways in solving avalanche of problems of the communities selected for the study. They argue that before now people do not know their right as regards government presence in the communities but with the help of the traditional institutions and their enlightenment programmes here and there, people have now become aware that they have roles in the scheme of things when it comes to mega-structures.

Research Question Four: Does theatre institutions as mediating structures help the government to get close to the people in Ankpa Local Government?

The analysis of data based on research question no. 4 (table six) confirms that theatre institutions as mediating structures help in greater measure in bringing government nearer and closer to the people. 697 (68%) respondents agreed, while the number that disagreed was 329 (32%).

They assumed that increasing the mediating structures in the communities will help to increase the nearness of government to the people. By so doing it in turn, brings the government amenities and infrastructures to the people, thereby doubling the social responsibilities of the communities.

Research Question Five: Of what relevance are theatre institutions as mediating structures to the people and the government of Ankpa at large?

From the analysis of data based on research question No. 5 (table seven), 836 (81%) of the respondents said that theatre institutions as mediating structures are relevant and significant because of their roles as mediators, mediating between the people and the government.

The current study observed from the data that the relevance of mediating structures in the communities cannot be underestimated. The reason be that, “they have made the individuals in the communities to be conscious of their roles to the communities, their roles to their fellow community members and their roles to complement government presence in the communities” (Davis 50). It further observed that increasing the theatre mediating structures will help so many ways as the aforementioned have been seen as the impact of theatre mediating structure.

However, even though the vast majority of respondents as disclosed from the analyzed data are of the same opinion that the theatre institutions as mediating structures have played vital and important roles in construction and restructuring of the communities as can be seen already from the catalogue of analysis stated above. Other respondents were of the opinion that the theatre institutions as mediating structures need to be restructured themselves. This according to these researchers is termed as minority opinion.

Summary of Findings

The followings are the reasons for the creation and construction of social amenities by government in any modern society with the mediation of theatre mediating structures. Base on the aforementioned, therefore current study recommends thus:

Theatre as mediating structure in a democratic environment can help to develop a sense of modern society pride and ownership. Especially if they have worked together to build or improve spaces where people can come together, the people who use them can start to see them as centers of their community, and as belonging to them.

Theatre as mediating structure can equally help in building a true sense of community among people of diverse origins, backgrounds, and points of view. By getting to know one another, people with different histories and assumptions can establish relationships and begin to value their differences as well as their similarities.

Theatre as mediating structure can expand children's horizons through interactions with people who have different assumptions and expectations. Through contact with friends with different world views, children can broaden their own, and realize there are different ways of looking at and experiencing life, and different paths that people can take. This interaction may also increase the number of positive adult role models in children's lives.

Theatre as mediating structures can make the modern society a more pleasant place to live because more people have contact with one another. If you have ever lived in a neighborhood or small town where most people know one another, and where you're constantly greeted as you walk down the street, you know how pleasant that can be. It creates a sense of community, and makes you feel that this is your place and these are your people.

Theatre as mediating structures increases the general enjoyment of life in the modern society. The sharing of food, traditions, games, festivals, and family celebrations – whether with people from various cultures or with neighbors from similar backgrounds – simply makes life more fun. The opportunity for relaxed conversation with old friends or new acquaintances, a place to sit in the winter sun, a neighborhood festival – all of these enrich our lives.

Theatre as mediating structures improves the livability of neighborhoods. Good places for interaction are also good places to be. They're generally pleasant, close to or linked to services and shopping, and filled with friends or potential friends. That in itself improves neighborhood livability, but such spaces may also nurture the kind of neighborhood solidarity and good feeling that leads to neighborhood clean-ups, taking back the streets from drug dealers and gangs, and advocating for increases in services.

Theatre as mediating structures promotes individuals' understanding of one another's culture and humanity. As people get to know one another, they understand better that we're all human, with essentially the same hopes and fears, although these may be expressed in different ways, and our attempts to address them may be different. The differences in culture, in most cases, become interesting, rather than threatening, as people become more comfortable and friendly with one another. The sharing of food, traditions, and celebrations help to break down the barriers to the appreciation of diversity.

Conclusion

Building a true community takes the establishment of trust, respect, and common purpose among groups and individuals of different races, ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds. One element of accomplishing this goal is the creation of amenities where people can come together and mix naturally, getting to know one another, or at least getting used to one another's presence and style through the help of theatre mediating structures.

In addition to their social benefits, good amenities for their well-being can also lead to economic development, in that they are often good places to do business as well. Well-planned public outdoor spaces act as magnets, but also as gateways, welcoming and leading people into and through neighborhoods and areas they might otherwise never have seen if the theatre mediating structures are well constituted and recognized.

These theatre institutions as mediating structures will make sure that new private and public development, reconstruction or repair projects, park and open space management and other amenities, etcetera are designed with interaction in mind may involve incentives and regulations, economic and otherwise. Therefore, “Community organization may help residents to advocate for tax incentives, design regulations, and other methods to foster the creation of amenities for the well-being of the modern society via these theatre mediators” (Oloko 39).

Recommendations

The paper recommends for government to provide an enabling environment for theatre and entertainment to thrive. This could come through favourable tax regime to act as incentive for theatre practitioners. Again, adequate security of lives and property will restore the confidence of both practitioners and encourage new entrants into the theatre business.

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