

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY THEATRE IN AJAGWUMU COMMUNITY THEATRE, DEKINA LGA, KOGI STATE.

Adukwu, Martins Adukwu

Theatre Arts Department,
Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba.

Jonathan O. Okpanachi (Ph.D)

Theatre Arts Department,
Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba.

Prof. William Onogu

Theatre Arts Department,
Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba.

Abstract

Community Theatre's efficacy in engendering transformation has never been in doubt. However, community theatre practice especially in the 21st century has consistently focused on addressing socio-political and cultural issues, and its scope has not expanded to meet or address global economic concerns in tandem with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Nigerian Government's drive for entrepreneurship education. In this regard, the central aim of this study is to discuss the potency of community theatre in building entrepreneurial skills in the rural areas. The paper adopts qualitative research methodology in its data gathering and analysis. Relying on Richards G and Robert Chambers ideas on Participatory Development Theory and John Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory, findings shows that, the participatory nature of community theatre is capable of involving the rural dwellers in a 'hands-on' learning experience process, whereby, through play, local entrepreneurs and intending entrepreneurs can learn skills to enhance productivity and innovation. The paper therefore recommends that applying the theories - which encompasses the traditional nuances of participation and communication; performance-oriented approach to build entrepreneurial skills would enhance sustainable development in the society. The study concludes that community theatre's ability to engender development is all encompassing and not only relegated to addressing socio-political and cultural issues, but can also be employed to build entrepreneurial skills in the rural areas.

Keywords: Theatre, Community Engagement, Analyzing, Community Theatre, Building, Rural Areas, Entrepreneurial Skills.

Introduction

There is a growing interest in understanding and supporting vocational and entrepreneurial skill acquisition. Public policy makers have come to recognize it as a strategy for enhancing local, regional and national economies; as a workforce development strategy that expands employment, as well as a vehicle for solving some social problems that neither government nor the private sector have historically addressed. The growing interest in vocational and entrepreneurial skills development can be attributed to several factors, including the changing job market and economy, personal and professional development, societal and environmental factors.

In 2006, the Olusegun Obasanjo led administration directed all Nigerian higher education institutions to include entrepreneurship education as a compulsory course for all students with effect from the 2007/2008 academic session. Consequently, the National University Commission introduced entrepreneurship studies as a compulsory subject for all university undergraduates in Nigeria. In 2014, the then Minister of Education, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau disclosed while declaring open the Annual National Entrepreneurship Week (ANEW), that, “the introduction of Entrepreneurship Education as a compulsory unit under the General Studies, GST, programme in Nigerian universities places emphasis on the nation’s yearning to assist the youth gain economic independence” (np, Vanguard Online). As a result, educators at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels have become interested in how entrepreneurship might be taught. Scholars, too, have become intrigued with understanding the mechanisms through which entrepreneurship develops. Nigeria adopted entrepreneurship education to accelerate economic growth and development. This is reflected in Nigeria’s national policy on education which states that “education is the most important instrument for propelling change, as no fundamental change can occur in any society except through educational revolution that impact on the intellects” (National Policy on Education, np). Entrepreneurship education is not a new phenomenon in the annals of Nigeria; it has always been an age-long tradition, a culture and a habit that has consistently been transferred from one generation to another within the diverse ethnic nationalities that made up Nigeria (Akhueomonkhan, Innocent., Lukman Raimi. & Abayomi Olumade Sofoluwe, 2).

The concentration of entrepreneurship education in the higher institution poses a greater challenge in rural areas. Limited access to quality education and training programs hinders skill acquisition. The rural areas which lack economic critical mass, are often geographically remote, have fewer entrepreneurship support organizations, suffer from a higher cost of business inputs, lack financial capital, have a lower-skilled workforce, experience fewer of the serendipitous encounters among individuals that spawn creativity and innovation, and generally lack the kinds of bridging social capital that fosters entrepreneurship (Lichtenstein, A. Gregg & Thomas S. Lyons, 225). As such, as suggested by Jolley, G. Jason., Ikenna Uzuegbunam & Glazer, Jay cited in Lyons & Lichtenstein, “rural areas require a more deliberate focus on nurturing entrepreneurial talent to overcome the challenges present in rural areas”(223). Despite these challenges, entrepreneur development that is focused on the individual, and the business, can be effective in building a community of entrepreneurship in rural areas that is capable of surmounting obstacles and creating opportunities through a participatory approach called community theatre.

As a collaborative form of theatre, community theatre is a theatrical performance that involves local community members in all aspect of production. It often focuses on themes and issues relevant to the community, providing a platform for their voices to be heard and stories to be told. Community theatre can be a powerful tool for social change, cultural dialogue, conscientization and mobilization, fostering dialogues and understanding among community members. According to Eugene Van Erven, Community theatre is a worldwide phenomenon that manifests itself in many different guises, yielding a broad range of performance styles. It is united... by its emphasis on local and/or personal stories (rather than pre-written scripts) that are first processed through improvisation and then collectively shaped into theatre under the guidance either of outside professional artists—who may or may not be active in other kinds of professional theatre—or of local amateur artists residing among groups of people that, for lack of a better term, could perhaps best be called ‘peripheral’ (2). He continues:

Community theatre yields grass roots performances in which the participating community residents themselves perform and during the creative process of which they have substantial input. Not only the participants are considered 'peripheral', community theatre as an art form is as well. While there exist generic connections with drama and theatre in education, radical people's theatre, theatre of liberation, theatre for development, youth theatre, reminiscence theatre, and adult and informal education, it is generally distinguished from high art, mass culture, and mainstream as well as avant-garde theatre... (2).

As a result-oriented form of theatre, community theatre has been utilized for a wide range of purposes, including political activism, social justice, economic empowerment, and cultural preservation. In the realm of politics, community theatre has been used to mobilize communities around specific issues, such as voter registration and human rights. Socially, community theatre has addressed issues like health education, environmental awareness, and conflict resolution promoting positive change and community engagement. Economically, culturally and educationally, the importance of community theatre is far-reaching. By engaging community members in the creative process, community theatre interventions have been able to reach and impact diverse audiences, fostering a sense of community and promoting positive social outcomes.

Based on the foregoing, this work is conceived to justify the potency of community theatre in building entrepreneurial skills in the rural areas of Kogi East by engaging community members in interactive performances and workshops.

Statement of the Problem

Community Theatre is a development practice that utilizes performance as a participatory tool. It is not in doubt that Community Theatre's efficacy in engendering transformation in its ramifying dimensions is germane in underscoring the essence of its impacts in any community theatre process. However, what calls for serious concern in the light of the global economic meltdown and rise in poverty, especially in the 21st century is that, community theatre has consistently focused on addressing socio-political and cultural issues as its scope has not expanded to meet or address global economic concerns in tandem with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Furthermore, the Nigerian Government's drive for entrepreneurship education in schools as an ambitious development agenda to tackle frontally and head-long the multifaceted socio-economic challenges stifling economic growth and sustainable development in most developing and under-developed countries will be boosted through the application of community theatre as a development and skill acquisition tool.

Therefore, the problem of this study borders on the urgent necessity to make Entrepreneurial skill development attractive to community theatre practice by using the platform to build entrepreneurial skills for the good of the community.

Research Methodology

This study employed an ethnographic approach of qualitative research methodology to investigate the influence of community theatre on entrepreneurial skills in Ajagwumu of Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi East, with a focus on analyzing the effectiveness of community theatre

as a tool for promoting entrepreneurship, creativity, and economic development in rural communities.

Data collection was conducted through participant observation, open-ended and unstructured interview. Additionally, Visual Image/Video (VID) method of data collection was also employed. The data gathered was utilized to develop improvisational skit that showcases the essential skills identified through the research. The skit served as a tool for knowledge translation and dissemination, enabling community members and rural entrepreneurs to engage with and internalize the entrepreneurial skills and concepts.

Theoretical Framework

The theories adopted for this study are Richards G and Robert Chambers ideas on Participatory Development Theory and John Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory.

Participatory Development Theory

Participation as an approach to development began in the first instance, as an approach intended to subvert development convention. Participatory Theorists like Robert Chambers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau criticized the modernization paradigm on the ground that it promoted a top-down ethnocentric and paternalistic view of development. They argued that the strategic model proposed a conception of development associated with a western vision of progress. The top-down approach of persuasion models implicitly assumed that the knowledge of governments and agencies was correct, and that indigenous populations went either ignorant or had incorrect beliefs. This theory encourages the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of development. According to Richards G:

This approach is not a modern concept as most people think, having first appeared in the development literature in the 1950s. Participatory development became the logical direction to take concerning so many failed, wasted, and damaging top-down approaches to projects and programs. Participation thus became known as being synonymous with democracy, equity, and popular success (20).

Richards sums up the definitions of participatory development as “the empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and in designing policies and programs that serve the interests of all as well as to effectively contribute to the development process and share equitably in its benefits” (20).

The expose on participatory development given by Richards makes it clear that Participatory Development is a concept of empowerment of individuals and communities so that they can prioritize, implement and solve their problems, in addition to challenging the wider political causes of such problems.

Participatory development is a people-centered, decentralized, and adaptive approach to the process of development. This practice is characterized as a need; directed and focused on development at the grassroots or community level. This is in contrast to the sterile, top-down, and centralized development approaches. According to Chambers, new ways have been discovered to enable those who are poor, marginalized, illiterate, and excluded to analyze their realities and

express their priorities. The realities they express through conditions, problems, livelihood strategies, and priorities often differ from what is perceived by development practitioners (98). This approach ensures that interventions are context-specific, culturally relevant, and responsive to community needs through a step by step approach deployed by the facilitators which ensures the following:

- **Inclusion** - of all people, or representatives of all groups who will be affected by the results of a decision or a process - for example a development project.
- **Equal partnership** - recognizing that every person has skill, ability and initiative and has an equal right to participate in the process, regardless of their status.
- **Transparency** - all participants must help to create a climate conducive to open communication and building dialogue.
- **Sharing power** - authority and power must be balanced evenly between all stakeholders to avoid the domination of one party.
- **Sharing responsibility** - similarly, all stakeholders have equal responsibility for decisions that are made, and each should have clear responsibilities within each process.
- **Empowerment** - participants with special skills should be encouraged to take responsibility for tasks within their specialty, but should also encourage others to also be involved to promote mutual learning and empowerment.
- **Cooperation** - is very important; sharing everybody's strength reduces everybody's weaknesses.

Experiential Learning Theory

John Dewey is an American philosopher and educator. He is renowned for his contributions to the field of education, particularly through his Experiential Learning Theory. Dewey's theory emphasizes the significance of experience in the learning process, positing that education should be grounded in real-world experiences and active engagement rather than passive reception of information. Dewey believes that learning is a dynamic process where individuals interact with their environment, reflect on their experiences, and construct knowledge through this interaction. John Dewey's Experiential Learning approach challenges traditional education models that prioritize rote memorization and passive learning, advocating instead for a more participatory and reflective educational experience. The key contributions of Dewey include; Philosophy of Education (Progressive education, learning by doing, and democracy and education). Pragmatism (Instrumentalism, experience and nature). Democracy and society.

According to Dewey cited in Robert T. Grady, "all human experience is social and involves contact and communication. Therefore, humans are a social being that only exist within a social environment. Living and interacting within a social environment has fostered the development of mankind into the complex entity that it is today. This includes the present body of knowledge, which is the focus of the educational system" (2). To Dewey, traditional education often does not allow learners to grasp the relationship between the content and real life situations. However, placing students into real life situations allows them to learn from their experiences and gain knowledge that they can apply later in different situations. Thus, the basic skills necessary for being a productive citizen (such as reading, writing, and arithmetic) are best presented within the context of an experience in contrast to stand-alone lessons.

Dewey also proposes that learning from experiential education facilitates the ability to be a life-long learner. As such, he asserts that extracting the full meaning from present experiences allows students to do the same in future experiences. Learning involves acquisition of knowledge and the ability to acquire more knowledge in new situations. To accomplish this, student involvement in an experience is very important. Dewey states that, "...there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active co-operation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying" (67). Thus, experiential education has the ability to provide students with knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge in many situations.

The researchers chose both theories because the integration of Participatory Development Theory and Experiential Learning Theory provide a robust framework for building entrepreneurial skills in rural areas through community theatre practice. Participatory development theory emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in the development process, which aligns perfectly with community theatre's collaborative and inclusive nature. This approach ensures that rural community members are actively engaged in identifying their needs, designing solutions, and implementing entrepreneurial initiatives, in conjunction with the facilitators. Experiential learning theory complements this by emphasizing the significance of hand-on, experiential learning, where community members can learn entrepreneurial skills through direct experience and reflection in the participatory community theatre process. Community theatre practice offers a unique platform for experiential learning, allowing participants to experiment with new skills, reflect on their experiences, and apply their knowledge in a practical context. By combining both theories, this work showshow inclusive community theatre practice and experiential learning can create a participatory, inclusive, and effective approach to entrepreneurial development in rural area for sustainable economic growth.

Conceptualizing Community Theatre

Community Theatre can be conceptualized as a form of dramatic expression or practice that is deeply rooted in the local culture and concerns of a specific community, wherein the creative processes and artistic practices are democratized and re-contextualized to serve the unique needs and desires of that community, often diverging from the dominant paradigms and agendas of mainstream theatre. This theatre embodies a distinctive paradigm of dramatic practice that is characterized by its emphasis on community ownership and participation to address the specific socio-cultural contexts and concerns of the community.

Community theatre employs a paradigmatic model of community theatre performance that leverages indigenous materials and traditional communicative modalities to convey intended messages to its audience. This approach is situated within a cultural framework that privileges local knowledge systems and traditional markers of communication, thereby facilitating a nuanced and contextually relevant mode of message delivery. The above observation corresponds with Ola Johansson who argues that Community Theatre "is a highly mobile and challenging phenomenon which cuts through cultural layers of time and space as well as demographic and generational difference" (5). Community theatre practices deviate from the traditional proscenium arch model of elite theatre, by embracing a more immersive and participatory approach which is achieved through the incorporation of various performance modalities, including oration, drumming, dancing, singing, storytelling, and dramatic dialogue, which collectively create a dynamic

interactive sphere. Furthermore, the post-performance discussions and spontaneous responses from the community members, who often join the performers, serve to dissolve the performer-spectator dichotomy, fostering a sense of communal ownership and collective engagement. As Wiler and Feiner points out:

The ultimate goal of this cultural intervention is to increase opportunities for marginalized and oppressed groups to represent themselves and the world around them as a means of asserting their own identity and achieving “cultural, social, economic, and political equity (122).

Community theatre is as an attempt to extend the value of drama beyond the classrooms, to facilitate development using the instrumentality of improvisation and drama. Every successful community theatre must boast of critical and result-oriented inputs from the host community; the community must be ready to divulge information that will facilitate the production of drama, performance of culture and formulation of the action plan. Regardless of any form of assistance the community renders to the facilitators, the intentional or unintentional withholding of useful information is considered the first major setback to the success of any community theatre. Erwen reveals that:

It should be clear that in the first place it (community theatre) privileges the artistic pleasure and socio cultural empowerment of its community participants. Its material and aesthetic forms always emerge directly (if not exclusively) from ‘the’ community, whose interests it tries to express. Community theatre thus is a potent art form that allows once largely silent (or silenced) groups of people to add their voices to increasingly diverse and intricately inter-related local, regional, national and international cultures, whether these are evolving in insular Southeast Asia, provincial Europe, on the metropolitan southern Californian coast, coastal Central America, rural East Africa, or suburban Australia (3). (Emphasis mine).

The community theatre approach provides a unique platform for the expression and articulation of community sentiments, concerns, and ideas. By engaging community members in a collaborative and participatory process, this theatre modality facilitates the distillation of collective views into a dramatic performance that showcases practical solutions and suggestions for addressing community challenges. This creative and inclusive process enables the exploration of new development opportunities and avenues for community empowerment and growth.

Concept of Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurship Development.

According to Ikeme & Onu cited in Sunday A. Ojeifo, “Entrepreneurship has been simply captured as the use of human courage to seek investment opportunities and establish a profit-oriented enterprise” (2). Gana cited in Ojeifo, defined it as willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities (2). Hisrich and Peters, simply captured the term as the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. They went further to explain that entrepreneurship is the personalized version of actualizing one’s desire, ambition, and expression

(8). Entrepreneurship, in the opinion of Anorue and Madu, locates and assesses business chances, meets the essential measures and executes activities to take the edge of those opportunities while leading the way by elevated attainment incentives (200-217). Entrepreneurship generally involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for self-reliance.

The term entrepreneurship education is used interchangeably with entrepreneurship training and skill acquisition. Conceptually, entrepreneurship education refers to a specialized knowledge that inculcates in learners the traits of risk-taking, innovation, arbitrage and co-ordination of factors of production for the purpose of creating new products or services for new and existing users within human communities. Mauchi1, Karambakuwa, Gopo, Kosma, Mangwande, & Gombarume, assert that entrepreneurship education can be defined “as the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and the knowledge, skills and attitudes to act on them” (1307).

In the words of Shane and Venkataraman “the thrust of entrepreneurship training entails identifying the sources of opportunities, the processes of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities; and the set of individuals who discover, evaluate and exploit them” (218). Witte and Wolf, and Raimi et al., cited in Akhuemonkhan, I. A et al, submits that:

Entrepreneurship education when effectively and efficiently taught has the likelihood to precipitate self-employment among learners and accelerating sustainable growth and development. This is evident in a number developed nations like Japan and America that utilized entrepreneurial (facilitative) education for improving their human capital as opposed to the traditional approach of teach-and-listen approach, which is prevalent in the developing third world nation (9).

Entrepreneurship education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes in widely different context. The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes. These behaviors can be practiced, developed and learned; hence it is important to expose all students\trainees to entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship development on the other hand is the process of improving entrepreneurs' skills and expertise in the development, management, and organization of a company venture while keeping the risks in mind. This is accomplished through training programs and workshops focused at improving entrepreneurial aptitude. Entrepreneurship development is a planned process that includes a variety of instruments that focus on the individual's skill development in a variety of methods. A number of key ideas have influenced the evolution of entrepreneurship. These include taking risks, innovating, being creative, and being environmentally conscious. To be successful in business, people must comprehend each of these concepts. "Entrepreneurship development," according to the African Development Report, “is the process of improving entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution-building programs. It seeks to broaden the pool of entrepreneurs in order to accelerate the creation of new ventures” (np). The emphasis is on the individual who wants to start or build a business, with an emphasis on growth potential and innovation. Through market innovations, entrepreneurship promotes economic growth and

development, and there is a bi-directional relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth and development.

The Ajagwumu Community Theatre and Entrepreneurial Skills Development.

The Ajagwumu community theatre was modeled on the template of community theatre practice comprising of several stages such as community mapping, data collection, data analysis, prioritization, scenario formation, rehearsals, performance, and post-performance discussion, follow-up. On arrival and settling in, community mapping was embarked upon by members of the University team in a familiarization stroll; noting landmarks and boundaries. The map guided the team in the distribution of members to cover several areas of the community for data collection. Thus, the team afterwards adopted the flooding approach, wherein groups were created to reach out to community members in their homes, streets, and corners for interaction and data collection. Significantly, this was the first participation point of the community members who in this case were the respondents. Community members further participated in the validation of data collected at the end of the data collection exercise as well as the prioritization of community problems that the data collection exercise listed.

The community problems were therefore listed in their order of impact from the perspective of the community members as follows: lack of quality education, insufficient primary health care, absence of functional market, teenage pregnancy, and unemployment. With this information, members of the University team were grouped into 5 to brainstorm and form drama scenes. Evening entertainment sessions that featured dance competitions, role play, riddles, and jokes were effective in assembling the people, integrating the team with the community, and sustaining their interest in data validation and prioritization. Each group produced drama episodes that highlighted the identified problems. The group handling unemployment suggested entrepreneurial skill development as one of the ways to combat poverty and unemployment.



Plate 1: One of the researchers posing with signboard of the primary school where the team camped.

Firstly, the Ajagumu community theatre was used to assist rural entrepreneurs to build their marketing skills through a participatory skit aimed at assisting the entrepreneurs understand the

various methods necessary for marketing their goods and services. Marketing is everything a business does to find out who its customers are and what they need and want. It is how to satisfy them and make a profit by: providing the products or services they need; setting prices that they are willing to pay; getting the products or services to them; informing and attracting them to buy the products or services. While participating in the drama workshop alongside the facilitators, local entrepreneurs were guided to learn of the five interlinked components covering promotion, preparation, participation, evaluation and follow up. The aim was to assist entrepreneurs to make the best use of marketing to improve their market access, business growth and self-empowerment.

By providing practical guidance on marketing, communications and promotional activities, the Ajagumu community theatre experience was used to enhance entrepreneur's access to better quality market opportunities. According to Romero and Gray cited in Thomas S. Lyons et al, "selling and marketing products and services was identified as the second most important business skill to have, following closely behind pricing, another skill in the marketing bundle" (10). By mastering the skill of marketing through a repeated drama skit, done with the rural entrepreneurs enriched with all the various style of marketing, rural entrepreneurs would be able to increase their customer base, boost sales, and ultimately achieve their goals. Selling and marketing are interconnected, with marketing laying the groundwork for sales by creating interest and generating leads. Together, they form a vital component of any successful business strategy.



Plate 2



Plate 3

Plates 2 & 3: Rehearsal moments that focus on learning different marketing skills.

In addition, Technology-enabled business management skill has emerged as a fundamental business skill. In the current business environment, technology (e.g. computers, mobile applications, 3-D printers, social media tools, etc.) has become ubiquitous (Schulman and Rogoff, cited in Lyon et al, 10). For this reason, it is important for entrepreneurs to understand how to use technology to start, grow and sustain their businesses. Rural entrepreneurs can have far greater access to resources and markets because of technology. The internet makes geography irrelevant for many transactions, and community theatre can be employed to teach rural entrepreneurs this skill by leveraging on its performance aesthetic. The application of participatory development theory and experiential learning theory can effectively teach rural entrepreneurs technology-based business management skills by involving them in the learning process through a participatory approach, allowing them to share experiences and insights. Hands-on learning experiences enable them to practice using digital platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, e-commerce etc.

For instance, the local blacksmith at Ajagwumu who participated in the rehearsal process showed willingness in learning how to share his products online and build an online market. According to him, the rehearsal, performance and post-performance discussions spurred the interest in him.



Plate 4



Plate 5

Plate 4 shows a visit to the blacksmith's house while plate 5 shows a group photograph with some local entrepreneurs few minutes after an evening rehearsal. In Plate 5, the blacksmith is 1st to the right.

Furthermore, the community theatre at Ajagumu helped to build communication skill in the rural entrepreneurs. Public speaking is a valuable life skill that can help individuals communicate effectively in a variety of settings, beyond school, especially in a business setting. In the *International Labour Office*, communication skill, was listed alongside, team skills, problem solving and decision making skills, initiative and enterprise skills, planning and organizing skills, self-management and learning skills as core skills needed for work. According to Van Linden and Fertman quoted in *International Labour Office* "Oral and written communication skills are the means for sharing knowledge, interests, attitudes, opinions, feelings, and ideas in order to influence and ultimately lead others" (21). Communication skills are necessary to fully participate in the workplace, families, relationships and society as a whole. They are truly a "life skill" as they enable people to demonstrate empathy and sensitivity to others, form friendships, express themselves, listen to others and resolve conflicts. In the workplace or business center, they enable people to work in teams, to take and to give instructions, to serve customers, to express their needs and to learn.

Experiential learning experiences through the community theatre at Ajagwumuhelped the rural entrepreneurs' abilities by doing, discovering, reflecting and applying. Through these experiences entrepreneurs develop communication skills and self-confidence and strengthen decision-making skills by responding to and solving real world problems and processes in their place of work and businesses.

Additionally, apart from the soft skills mentioned above, the Ajagwumu community theatre was employed to build enterprising business skills such as, bead making, singing, and dancing. These skills enable individuals to generate income through entrepreneurship and job creation, while

preserving and promoting cultural heritage and fostering personal development and self-expression.



Plate 6



Plate 7

Plates 6 & 7; Dr. Faith O. Salami teaching one of the Ajagwumu community members the rudiments of bead making shortly after a rehearsal.

These skills also provide opportunities for diversifying income streams, engaging with communities, and creating social impact. By leveraging these skills, individuals can unlock their creative potential, contribute to economic development, and enhance their overall well-being, ultimately empowering them to build sustainable and fulfilling careers in the creative sector.



Plate 8 shows the 3 researchers, Prof. W.S Onogu, Dr. J.O Okpanachi & Martins Adukwu on their first follow-up visit to Ajagwumu to interact with the people and get feedback.

Conclusion

What this paper has done is to position theatre as a hub of entrepreneurial skills, and by extension, assert that, theatre through the community theatre platform is capable of building or imparting some of these skills to the rural dwellers through participatory development process and experiential learning. A significant limitation of entrepreneurship development studies in Nigeria

is its elitist orientation, predominantly confined to tertiary institutions. This approach inadvertently excludes rural business owners, particularly those without formal education. Paradoxically, many students offer EDS as an academic exercise or to fulfill academic obligation rather than a viable means of generating income. Meanwhile, the drivers of the micro economy, often residing in the rural areas, are left underserved. This disconnect highlights the need for more inclusive and practical entrepreneurship development initiatives that cater to diverse populations, including those in rural areas and those without formal education.

By extending entrepreneurial skill development beyond the classroom to the rural setting, individuals can acquire practical skills and knowledge tailored to their specific contexts and needs, enabling them to start and grow businesses that address local needs and opportunities. The knowledge of these skills, especially, the internet based ones can help bridge the urban-rural divide, promotes inclusive economic development, and equips rural entrepreneurs with the tools necessary to create sustainable livelihoods, stimulate local economics, and improve their quality of life.

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