

THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT AS SURROGATE ELEMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EKITI STATE

Laide Taofeeq NASIR (Prof)

Theatre and Media Arts Department

Federal University Oye, Oye- Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

tana@gmail.com

08033885404

&

Olubunmi Christianah AJAYI

Department of Performing Arts,

School of Humanities,

Bamidele Olumilua University of Education,

Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

achristianaolubunmi@gmail.com

08131292633

Abstract

Nigeria would have changed radically during the past decades and will continue to change more radically as time goes on, since the industrial revolution is advancing every now and then but the question now is how can this change get to the grassroots especially in Ekiti State in order for the populace to meet up with the global standard of development. This research objectively deems it fit to explore the role of Theatre for Development (TfD) as a strong and viable element in encouraging sustainable development at the grassroots in working at how TfD can function as surrogate element in Ekiti State especially at the grassroots and in what can TfD contributes to community development and effect social change at the grassroots. Since the TfD process encompasses elements that can reduce the dichotomy between the rich and the poor, between the rules and ruled, therefore this study investigated the styles and mannerisms associated with the people to fill the gap of low esteem that has not allow observation development in Ekiti State. The methodology for this study is done through participatory learning action and performance analysis as primary source and secondary sources done through existing literature books on problem facing sustainable development. The findings reveals an holistic system where the marginalized were subjected to the oppressive nature of their leaders. This attitude overwhelms the inner potentialities of the populace but Theatre for Development has helped in bringing out the inner ability in the populace through reflection and action via drama as an eye opener. This study concludes that preference should be given to theatre as an avenue to showcase hidden talents in the masses in order to aid sustainable development at the grassroot inrespectful of age greed and status in Ekiti State.

Keywords: Developments, Element, Surrogate, Sustainable and Theatre

Introduction

Theatre for Development is used as deliberate tool that awaken the people's consciousness towards self development. This is done for man to understand and be deeply convinced that everything happen to his life is dependent upon him alone and not any other super-power around him. TfD

therefore charts a course for the destruction of the factors inhibiting the development of man. As observed by Best, he said social realism should destroy the spirit of superstition inherent in man and open way to social action, inspiring inspiration to revolutionary construction to change the world, society and man (19).

Theatre for Development known as a reflection to the different realities of life; it is an avenue where the economic, social, religious and political issues of society are outlined and evaluated to bring about a better society. Theatre engages the attention of people through a dramatic presentation of problems in fresh and critical way. This is a very important potential of the theatre as an art form. When properly used, it could have a tremendous positive influence on the audience. In Africa, theatre has always addressed the problems affecting the society ranging from cultural conflicts to development problems which includes corruption, exploitation and oppression. This is referred to as “prams of social utility” that is using drama to address social anomalies (Abali 6).

That is why some dramatist in African feel there is the need to remain relevant as a dramatist which has incited the African dramatist to evolve a dramatic form that is distinct. The dramatist aim in doing this is first to create an awareness by raising the consciousness of the masses to the situation that is oppressive and spur them into action that will liberate them. Secondly, it makes the masses see how they are being ruled or governed to understand the social situation that conditioned them. This research aims at awakening the consciousness of the rural folks to understand the social configuration that governs their lives, making them to have faith in themselves to undertake the struggle for change. The research aims at the objectively filling the gap of “silence” of the messes in Ekiti State especially in Sakoro-Ekiti, to open their understanding on their social needs through reflection and action.

Definition of Concept

Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development strategies are multifaceted, taking into consideration social, environmental, economic, cultural, participatory and political factors that affect human welfare. Environmental, economic and social aspects of Sustainable development basically relate to the preservation of the integrity of nature, eradication of poverty and removal of social injustices and developments which are essential for the promotion of welfare of current and future generations (UNESCO, 2004).

Akorede and Onuka (2008) see sustainable development as a way by which the society is managed in an effective and efficient manner such that it benefits all and sundry, with enough resources available for the continuation of the human race. Sustainability also has a strong ethical dimension and can be considered as a value to be upheld (Briguglio, 2003). It has three components, environment, society and economy. Sustainable development can be understood as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development addresses social, economic and environmental issues.

Sustainability is a model for thinking about a future in which environmental social and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of development and improved quality of life (UNESCO,

2004). These three spheres (environment, social and economic) are very important society relies on a healthy environment to provide food and resources safe drinking water and clean air for its citizens (UNESCO, 2014). All these dimensions can only be fruitfully and effectively realized if the actors are suitably educated to understand the values (including the ethical ones).

Surrogacy/Surrogate: It is the practice in which someone gives birth to a baby for a woman who is unable to give birth to a child. It is also use to describe a person or thing that takes the place of or is used instead of somebody or something else (Oxford Dictionary). In actual sense Theatre for development can be referred to as a surrogate mother that is ready to bear the burden or the problems facing Nigeria by advocating for a better Nigeria through the use of drama to sensitize the mind of the people by taking the bull by the horn which implies that the destiny or the change for a better Nigeria is in the hands of the masses through their struggle for sustainable development. Surrogate element is a dramatic stand-in used to represent a real person, issue or force that's too sensitive to address directly with the community. It's a core facilitation technique for opening dialogue around difficult issues. Surrogate gives the people space to explore their reality, the goal is dialogue and not to ridicule.

Many problems can only be solved by getting people involved in decision making putting the people at the driver seat of policy making which goes along way in alleviating the suffering of the people because "it is he that wears the shoe that knows where the shoe pinches". That is why Theatre for development over many decades now had been a tremendous weapon in the process of human and resources development globally especially in African and Nigeria, as the case may be.

Theatre for Development: Historical Perspectives.

Theatre for Development is relatively a recent innovation but its origin is as distant as that of theatre itself. In other words, Tfd is perhaps the latest label for a tradition of theatre practice that has always existed in the society but which has been given a new orientation, in that its emphasis is specifically on development goals and on themes such as adult education, rural community mobilization and mass conscientization. Therefore it is a tool deliberately selected by group of intellectuals and development workers for acceleration of the modernization process of development in the rural and urban areas, that is where Tfd has acquired its relevance. In this context, Tfd is traceable to the activities of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal. Eregare (2004) asserts that:

Popular theatre for Development could be said to have originated from the works of Latin American Adult Educator Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal. Freire whose theories are found in his book, "Pedagogy of the oppressed" is primarily concerned with the theory and practice of revolutionary education. Boal's theory is found in his book, "Theatre of the oppressed. Both men were concerned with how to make the people active participants in the process of changing lives" (40).

Explaining the foregoing development strategy further, Ojehota (2007), notes that this type of education is one in which "a group of persons through dialogue, come to realize the concrete situation in which they live, the reasons for this situation, and the possible solutions. The learners (participants) through the process are more involved in the real act of knowing rather than being

given a ready-made view of social reality” (102). This approach to mass education for development through the dramatization of pressing issues of the day have been experimented by different people in different part of the world. Theatre for development was seen as a technique of recreating aesthetic values in the people’s culture. First to rebuild the people’s confidence in their ability to communicate vital messages via their hitherto, suppressed indigenous communication idioms; and secondly to rebuild their collective pride as a pre-requisite for development and conflict resolution (Nasir 109).

The Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria was the first to embrace this new TfD approach in Nigeria, which is called community theatre. The practice began with the introduction of what was then called the Samaruprojects in 1976 by first year students of the English Department of that University. The Samaru projects concentrated on students creating plays on issues they consider of interest to residents in Samaru village, where the University Campus was located (Nweze 50). By the time the students got to their second year of study, the community theatre workshop which was held during the two weeks Christmas or Easter holidays was introduced. Nweze summarizes the difference thus:

Both the (community theatre) workshop and (samara) project arrived at plays through improvisations that explore, criticize and discuss problems and aspirations of selected group of Zaria Community with emphasis of shifting from performance of selected plays to the actual process of play creation which as a weapon of protest and change, first encourages all participants to come to a form of consciousness about issues that affect their lives, and secondly exposes the potentials of theatre as a viable instrument of social change (57).

The Zaria Community Theatre experiments initially utilised the migrant Laedza Batanani TfD approach. This was a practice in which students serving as resource persons with other extension workers and lecturers visited a community to gather information. Thereafter, they returned to their classrooms or operational base to analyze the data collected. At their operational base, a scenario is devised, rehearsed and taken to the village or community for community performance. The villagers were then encouraged to contribute their views during the post-performance analysis. This methodology shared similarly with the Leadza Batanani Campaigns in the sense that members of the host community were not directly in the main stages of the workshop process like the data analysis, and the scenerio construction stage.

With time, the ABU Community Theatre Practitioners provided a better modification of the Leadza Batanani Theatre for Development methodology. They introduced a new approach where villagers became better involved in all facets of the workshop process. Rather than have the facilitators withdraw to their camps outside the target community they stayed back among the villagers to analyze the data, develop a scenario and eventually rehearse the villagers who also acted alongside the facilitators in their new status as subjects rather than objects of the research and learning process. In essence development start with the people; so getting them involved in development planning is what can sustain development.

Theoretical clarifications

Freire Praxis Approach

Paulo Freire's theory which has its root in Theatre for Development supposed that social change come from the masses and not isolated individuals. The political nature of Freire's education, where Theatre for Development derives its strength benefits those who are struggling to have a voice of their own because they live in cultures or sector of society which are totally silenced. Freire opines that people can be taught to read and write as well as present them with a world view that is unclear and enables them to understand their life situation more clearly.

Thus, Freire literacy method is founded on the notions of conscientization and dialogue. It involves teaching adults how to read and write in relation to the awakening of their consciousness about their social reality. Breitingner (1994) explain that "consciousness is a process of developing consciousness, but must be the consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality" (4). Breitingner further defines conscientization as:

An awakening of consciousness; a change of mentality involving an accurate realistic awareness of one's locus in nature and society; the capacity to analyze critically its causes and consequences, comparing it with other situations and possibilities and actions of a logical sort aimed at transformation, psychologically it entails an awareness of one's dignity (6).

Conscientization leads to people organizing themselves to take action so as to change their social realities. The concept of conscientization has attracted those who believes in humanistic implications for the participation of the masses and in the necessity of a rapid restructuring of society. It rests on value assumptions of equality of all people, their right to knowledge and culture and their right to criticize their situation and act upon it. According to Freire (1979) "Praxis is an ability to help one another reflects and act on the world at the heart of sound education through that process transform it into something more equitable and worthwhile" (116).

Augusto Boal's Concept of Spec-actor's Approach

According to Boal (1976) he said that "the process of change in behaviour feels the mind of the individual that participate in the exercise of expressing one's mind through theatre, it becomes open to new ideas, such people begin to perceive a new awareness of the selfhood and begin to look critically at the social institution in which they find themselves" (25). Perhaps this informs the reason why Cornwell (2017) describes theatre that seeks to dialogue and participate with and not just for the communities as theatre of the people, for the people and by the people. Boal argues that culture of silence or banking system of education should not be celebrated but that people should be carried along in governance through conscientization and through participatory performances.

Boal's goal of changing the spectator went beyond changing the person into an actor to educating people for action using his aesthetic to aid people to take action on their concerns of which they are fully aware. It is easy to see how this consciousness raising types of theatre was influenced by freire's pedagogy of the oppressed as both methods transfer power from the top to the bottom of

the social pyramid (e.g) from teacher to student, politician to constituent and wealthy to poor to create a dialogic discourse where all opinions can be represented more fairly.

Features and Relevance of Theatre for Development

Theatre for development is live performance or theatre used as a development tool. It is a theatre for economic and social political information and reformation. It is a viable instrument of conscientization and mobilization. Its primary aim is empowering the disempowered people. It encompasses spoken words, music, singing and dancing. It is a participatory theatre that encourage improvisation and through improvisation it enables the audience to take it roles in the performance. The common feature of TfD is that the theatre in its various forms is used to entertain people and make them think and act on their problem. In this way it is expected that the life of the community is changed. It can also be fully scripted and staged with the audience observing. TfD has always been concerned about problems, poverty, development and underdevelopment. As a development tool, it ensures education of the people and serves as propaganda for government programmes. It also serves as a therapy, a participatory tool or as an exploratory tool for development.

It has raised issues of “who controls the resources of a nation or community” or how can those resources be best used or shared in an equitable manner for the benefit of all. TfD helps the people to see what they can jettison in their old ways and why they need to adopt a new method. Bamidele(2000) posits that “it is a process of involving individual in a community to examine the factors that contribute to his own level of development along side the development of his community” (17). The wheel idea of TfD in spurring the people or community towards participatory dialogue especially in Nigeria and other Africacountries whichis to sow an integrated development strategy in which all sectors in the society that have a direct bearing on society development are regarded as an integrated package that needs to work together.

Theatre for development according toEpskamp (1989) is in opposition to all classical theatre forms which are standard and which are generally used in anestablished order. By this he means Theatre for development strives for explicitly educative aim in the development process. It is a type of theatre that can ask questions. It can identify the way out. It can also provoke discussion as well as give advice.

According to Yerima (2002) he said that “theatre for development has become thought provoking to the extent that it can ask the audience to reflect on social and political issues which affect their lives. This means that the approach can serve to put people on track to improve their living conditions. It does encourage members of the community to research into development issue that define themselves. The people then analyze their data and identify the root causes of the problems and propose possible solutions through the assistance of the Theatre for development activists. The people themselves concretise these problems and causes by transforming them into dramatic performance that draws upon the community’s theatrical conventions. TfD is projected here as a theatre form that helps man to identify his problems as well as the possible ways in which such problems can be solved for the development and progress of man.

TfD is used as deliberate tools that could awaken the people consciousness towards self-development and development communication. This is done for man to understand and be deeply

convince that everything that happens to his life is dependent upon him alone and not any other super power around him. Theatre for development therefore charts a course for the destruction of the factors inhibiting the development of man. As Best (2006) observes “social realism should destroy the spirit of superstition inherent in man and open the way to social action, inspiring an inspiration to revolution, reconstruction to change the world, society and man” (80).

Theatre and Development

Theatre can be defined as the art or medium of expression through which specific message either entertaining or functional is deliberately orchestrated before a viewing or participative audience through the imitation of an object, animal, person or abstract phenomenon (Feiner 25). Talking about development the Collins Concise Dictionary & Thesaurus (1995) uses terms such as, advancement, evolution, expansion, growth, improvement, increase, maturity, progress and change to refer to development. Development is perceived as progressive and unfolding phenomenon that goes beyond income related variables, development start with people and not with good, it starts from the mind, it includes their education, empowerment and preservation of people’s cultural identity and all that enhances their well being and makes for a good life. Kwaghkondo (2002) submits that:

Development, though seen from different angles, means one basic things to all people, a change for the better in both the human, cultural, socio-economic and political conditions of the individual and consequently of the society. It is not solely a matter of technology or of gross national product. More importantly, it is a matter of increased knowledge and skill, the growth of a new consciousness, expansion of the human mind, the upliftment of the human spirit and the fusion of human confidence (100).

This means development occurs when there is an improvement in an individual’s well being as well as betterment in the quality of his or her life. It is about changing for the better. Development is a process that seeks to free man from the shackles of oppression and servitude. It is a process that empowers individuals in a nation to gain control over themselves and to chart their process of growth and development in order to make themselves active contributors to national development.

So the idea of solving societal problem through the theatre can only be regarded as one of the several approaches to solving human problem. None of the ideas that are being experimented in solving human or development problem is theatre oriented. This is because Nigeria society has not been convinced of the potentials of theatre. This is sheer ignorance for theatre has been used as a tool or surrogate element in search for people oriented development for many decades, instances are the Yoruba travelling theatre experiment in Nigeria, the Nairobi, Lusaka, Yaounde, experiment, the 1970 Leadza Batanani experiments which has flourished and has yielded fruitful results, such as also been experimented in Ekiti and has proven to have prospect for further research.

Conclusion

We can succinctly conclude that Tfd is all about making theatre with the people as well as utilizing theatre to help target groups or communities to think critically and reflect so as to take step towards change and transformation. It is high time for the Nigeria nation to realize that her problem are man-made and it would take man, committed Nigerians and not foreigner to solve them.

If Ekiti State can take advantage of the rich elements in Theatre for Development through folklore reflection and actiondrama, she will be a better place to stay and one good thing about TfD is its ability to bring about unity, team work and oneness amongst the people where people come together, irrespective of status, to face the challenges confronting them, there will be transformative change but where there is no love, unity and oneness, progress or development in any form would be a mirage. If the ideas of team work, cooperation and love can be taken from Theatre for Development and consciously embraced by the government and people of Ekiti State, The developmental opportunities of the State would be exposed, creating room for economic activities and employment.as people will not totally be looking up to the government for their well being but will be employer of labour themselves. This will boost the economy of state

Democratically people will get involved in the decision making of the nation from the grassroots to the state then to the nation. TfD helps in social enlightenment by liberating the mind of the people. They now see life from another perspective which will invariably boost their inter and intra human relationship with individuals and with the State as a whole.

It will add value to the quality of life, because people are made to hold the bull by the horn, they are made to think on the way forward from their predicaments which serves as an eye-opener in improving their standard of living infact they too can possibly be making money from theatre as the case may be.

Education and literacy advancement will be made possible because this is part of the objectives of TfD to educate the illiterate members of the community and since they are made to be at the driver seat of the drama, it enhances self-development and self-education. TfD gives vigour to youths that gets involved in the performance and it gives them hope that tomorrow would be better than today.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, the study recommends that:

- Government should give recognition and support to TfD practitioners to be involved in mobilization and development programmes locally, nationally and internationally.
- TfD should be included as one of the strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in health, education, environment and other pressing matter in Nigeria
- TfD should intensify efforts to uphold the indigenous arts like folklores, folktales, dancing, music, mime, puppetry so that these elements will not go into extinction and so that it will be able to bridge communication gap.

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