

**THEATRE FOR ATTITUDINAL CHANGE AND HUMAN
EMPOWERMENT: THE FUOYE / IMOJO-EKITI
EXPERIENCE**

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Abstract

*The Top-bottom developmental policies instead of Bottom-top approach; which are people and mass-oriented have been identified as contributing to policy failure and underdevelopment in most Nigerian communities. This study therefore addresses the problem of under-development and disempowerment among the Nigerian populace by exploring the validity of Theatre for Development methodology. The challenges of human empowerment, transformation, emancipation and rural development remain critical in Nigeria. The paper adopts qualitative research methodology; participant observation in its data gathering and analysis: while ethnographic research design approach of data collection was used in the **FUOYE / Imojo-Ekiti Theatre for Development Project**. The study thus finds that Theatre for Development possesses the potency for facilitating human development in all ramifications if appropriately applied. The paper therefore recommends that using the Theatre for Development alternative which encompasses the traditional nuances of communication; performance-oriented approach to promote dialogue, create awareness and encourage participation would enhance sustainable development in the society. The study concludes that Theatre for Development should not be seen as*

mere rituals embarked upon by development workers for fun but a catalyst to human development and positive change; if the process is duly observed.

Introduction

A cursory look at most communities in Nigeria in this 21st Century, still reveal a high rate of environmental degradation and neglect; lack of portable drinking water; poor and inadequate hygiene systems; epileptic power supply or lack of power supply in totality; bad roads and host of other that is life threatening to the rural dwellers. Asagba bemoan this situation thus; “most rural and urban communities in Nigeria are characterized by environmental waste and neglect, lack of portable drinking water, poor and inadequate hygiene systems and bad roads” (40). Subsequently, these dreadful environments have resulted in high infant mortality rate, disease and poverty.

The high rate of illiteracy among the populace and the nonchalant attitude of our government and government agencies to respond to the needs of their people have in no measure engendered this situation. The helpless condition of these rural dwellers is so much disheartening that it attracts foreign communities. Thus, these prevailing situations and the insensitivity of the relevant authority to intervene over the ages have warranted a third party involvement like WHO: World Health Organization; UNICEF and UNESCO. These interventions have subsequently adopts the Theatre as a tool for ameliorating these societal dysfunctionalities.

Thus Theatre for Development has become an accepted and a popular tool and practice that gears towards the conscientization, empowerment and emancipation of the rural dwellers; the “down-

trodden” and “the oppressed” in the society. Theatre -for – Development (TFD), understood as a problem-solving performance-oriented form of art is a process used in educating and conscientizing both the young and old and unifying and articulating the community on socio-economic, political, environmental and religious problems.

To achieve this objective, TFD works on the emotions, feelings, aspirations and the sensibilities to arouse and galvanize the public who unfortunately are in the majority towards taking decisive actions on the direction of development within the polity. Perhaps the aims of Theatre for Development as stated by Akinwale, “is to mobilize and conscientized the rural and urban dwellers, so that they can confront their social, economic and political problems and solve them” (252). Akinwale further highlighted the aims and objectives of the Theatre for Development as stated in the MAMSER Community Training Manual: “to initiate theatre workers, development agents and village/other communities in the practice of theatre for conscientization” (252), and that the Manual stated categorically that Community Theatre projects seek to contribute to: “the search for new methodologies in the practice for genuine self reliance in each community and for national development” (252).

Arising from the above notions, we can therefore see theatre in a new dimension: especially against the backdrop of the role that theatre has set out to play in the 21st Century with reference to socio-economic, social-political and social-cultural situation in Nigeria specifically and all over the world generally. In this new role therefore, theatre would foster attitudinal change that not only the professional artistes but everybody who is involved in the process of the Theatre for Development projects will contribute their quotas towards the development of the nation. It is only when

this is achieved that we can say that the theatre has indeed mirror the society and as well serve as a functional instrument ameliorating society ills. It is only through this recommended process of Theatre for Development projects and recommendations executed or followed-achievement that the society would say it has witness development. In fact the whole method, approach and process itself is a developmental process in the role of the theatre as posits by Paulo Freire:

When the people are able to see and analyze their way of being in the world of their immediate daily life, including the life of the village and when they can perceive the rational for the factors on which their daily life is based they are enabled to go beyond the narrow horizons of their own village and the geographical area in which it is located to gain global perspective reality. (182)

It is against the background of the aforementioned problem; rural illiteracy and neglect and viability of Community Theatre or Theatre for Development as a functional tool for development; with particular emphasis on rural dwellers empowerment and emancipation that this paper seeks to ascertained the veracity of the above position, by reviewing the Community Theatre project executed at Imojo- Ekiti, refers to in this paper as *The FUOYE/ Imojo-Ekiti 2013 Theatre for Development Experience*.

The Community Theatre project review in this study was executed by the pioneer 200 level students of the Theatre and Media Arts Department, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, as part of the practical fulfillment of the Community Theatre Course, with this researcher as one of the animator. Suffice to mention that it is the maiden experience of the students; class, involved and that of

the entire environment, communities: but with the academic doggedness and commitment of the pioneer Head of Department and the staff members involved as animators the project yield positive results.

Conceptualizing the Problem

In spite of the attainment of political independence since 1960, Nigeria is still virtually moribund in terms of human development, infrastructure and otherwise. This has led to her being described variously as a “developing nation”, “Third World”, “underdeveloped nation”, to mention but a few. These clichés are doubtlessly borne out of absolute lack of socio-economic and political development in the oil-rich nation. Meanwhile the nation has had array of developmental projects and Policies since her independence in 1960: ranging from the 'Operation Feed the Nation' (OFN) of the late 70s, to the 'Austerity Measures' of the early 1980s, 'Structural Adjustment Program' (SAP) of the 1990s, to the third wave of democratic rule beginning in 1999, that introduced Poverty Alleviation Programmes of different sort, yet the nation still wallows in poverty, oppression, repression, unemployment, socio-political and religious conflicts etcetera.

Rasheed Lateef bemoaning this situation avers that; “the hopes at independence and during the democratic periods have suddenly given way to despair in the closing hours of the 20th century. The much talked about democratic dividends; (human empowerment and infrastructural development) is a sad commentary and a total paradox to the reality on ground” (2). In a similar vein Ameh commenting on the problems of under-development in Nigeria avers that; “Development is not a natural

process or endowment; it is a human-induced experience. However, it appears that this human angle has made development discourse a singular myth of a metropolitan culture: it has turned out to be the power of one (powerful) people to transform the destinies of another (powerless, less fortunate) people” (302). This paper therefore explores an alternative strategy to human empowerment and infrastructure development: using Theatre-for-Development which aimed at reversing the hitherto top-down approach towards development which the nation has had to grapple with since independence and adopting the Bottom-up approach that is people or mass oriented.

Methodology of Study

Methodology as used in this context implies the general research strategy that outlines the way in which study was undertaken. As mentioned earlier, this study is a review of the FUYOYE/Imojo-Ekiti Theatre for Development 2013 Workshop; thus the researcher adopts a qualitative research using participants’ observations approach in data gathering and analysis. In other words the researcher was a facilitator in the workshop; he got the firsthand information and was in fact part of the entire process. Thus, this study is a firsthand experience, a direct report of the FUYOYE/Imojo-Ekiti Theatre for Development 2013 Workshop; embarked upon by the 200 level Theatre and Media Arts Department, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of empowerment is of increasing interest to researchers, practitioners and citizens concerned about human welfare issues. Edelman posits that, “empowerment is a new buzzword in some respects, in relation to language and the politics

of human services, sometimes new language is used to describe the same old practices” (27). Others believe that “empowerment language can actually lead to raised awareness” (Rappaport 18). Regardless, a growing number of people are searching to understand the meaning of empowerment and ways it can be used to change their settings and lives and as well as of others.

Empowerment can begin to be understood by “examining the concepts of power and powerlessness” (Moscovitch and Drover 11). Power is defined by the Cornell Empowerment Group as the “capacity of some persons and organizations to produce intended, foreseen and unforeseen effects on others” (Cornell Empowerment Group 2). There are many sources of power, Galbraith identified: “Personality, property/wealth, and influential organizations as critical sources of power in the last part of the twentieth century” (13). Others have pointed out that the “class-dominated nature of our society means that a small number of people have vast economic or political power, while the majorities have little or none” (Moscovitch & Drover 91).

At the individual level, “powerlessness can be seen as the expectation of the person that his/her own actions will be ineffective in influencing the outcome of life events” (Keiffer, 14). Lerner makes a distinction between real and surplus powerlessness. “Real powerlessness results from economic inequities and oppressive control exercised by systems and other people. Surplus powerlessness, on the other hand, is an internalized belief that change cannot occur, a belief which results in apathy and an unwillingness of the person to struggle for more control and influence” (6). Powerlessness has, over the years, come to be viewed as an objective phenomenon, “where people with little or no political and economic power lack the means to gain greater control and resources in their lives” (Albee 31). As an

illustration of powerlessness, Asch has noted that generally people with disabilities;

... Have so internalized the general negative attitudes towards them because of their disabilities that they cannot believe that collective action can improve their lives. They have seen the problems as inherent in their medical conditions and have not been urged to join others to demand structural changes that would render the environment useful for them. (13)

Most of the literature also associates empowerment with personal control. Rappaport points out that "by empowerment I mean our aim should be to enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives" (119). Cochran believes that "people understand their own needs far better than anyone else and as a result should have the power both to define and act upon them" (26). Cochran further posits that "people cannot achieve their fullest health potential unless they are able take control of those things which determine their health" (29).

Increasingly, "empowerment is being understood as a process of change" (Cornell Empowerment Group 2). McClelland has suggested that "in order for people to take power, they need to gain information about themselves and their environment and be willing to identify and work with others for change" (56). In a similar vein, Whitmore defines empowerment as: "an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live" (13).

Keiffer's work on personal empowerment is one of the only major empirical studies which examine personal

empowerment as a process. He labels empowerment as “a developmental process which includes four stages: entry, advancement, incorporation, and commitment” (47). The entry stage appears to be motivated by the participant's experience of some event or condition threatening to the self or family, what Keiffer refers to as an act of 'provocation'.

In the advancement stage, there are three major aspects which are important to continuing the empowerment process: a mentoring relationship; supportive peer relationships with a collective organization; and the development of a more critical understanding of social and political relations. The central focus of the third stage appears to be the development of a growing political consciousness. Commitment is the final stage - one in which the participants apply the new participatory competence to ever expanding areas of their lives.

According to Wallerstein, “empowerment is a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life, and social justice” (59). While Whitmore feels the concept of empowerment needs to be more clearly defined, she states that there are some common underlying assumptions:

- a. Individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else and therefore should have the power both to define and act upon them.
- b. All people possess strengths upon which they can build.
- c. Empowerment is a lifelong endeavor.
- d. Personal knowledge and experience are valid and useful in coping effectively. (89)

For the purpose of this study, empowerment was defined as processes whereby individuals achieve increasing control of

various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity. Rappaport's concept of empowerment; "conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights" (121).

In this sense, empowerment can exist at three levels: "at the personal level, where empowerment is the experience of gaining increasing control and influence in daily life and community participation" (Keiffer 34); "at the small group level, where empowerment involves the shared experience, analysis, and influence of groups on their own efforts" (Presby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich, & Chavis 10); and "at the community level, where empowerment revolves around the utilization of resources and strategies to enhance community control" (Labonte, 19).

The concept of empowerment again could be best understood from Augusto Boal's seminal work *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Boal's approach emphasizes and is interpretative of a dramatic experience "where the audience are no more mere onlookers or spectators, but are part and parcel of the creative process – "spectators", rather than mere recipients of finished products. They are "active spectators" and "the protagonist [s] of the theatrical action (224). This is also, perhaps, Boal's conviction that the "spectator" is only turned to less than a man, voiceless and passive and urgently needed to be humanized, to restore to him his capacity for action in all its ramifications" (155).

For this reason, the people, he infers, no longer needed to delegate power to any character either to act or to think in their place; rather, "they themselves have to assume the protagonic role, change the dramatic action, try out solutions, and discuss plans for change – in fact, they have to assume full responsibility for their

emancipation and development; since they and only they alone can wield the empowering weapon of the theatre” (122).

While this current study was focused primarily on the personal level, it is important to note that it is difficult to clearly separate the three levels of empowerment; indeed, the three levels are highly interactive. Understanding individual change and empowerment informs community empowerment strategies and policy and vice versa. As a result, “it is important that research on empowerment begin with an understanding of individuals, not in a clinical sense, but in an experiential sense” (Lord, 31). This means that understanding empowerment is complex and ecological. This study on empowerment looked at the "person in the environment" by trying to understand the lived experience of citizens in relation to family, groups, and other aspects of community life.

It is against the background of the foregoing, that **The Fuoye/Imojo-Ekiti 2013 Theatre for Development Experience** will be discussed by expounding on the inherent machinery of Community Theatre or Theatre for Development practices.

Empowerment in Imojo-Ekiti through Theatre for Development

The FUOYE/Imojo-Ekiti Theatre for Development Experience executed by the pioneer 200 level students of the Theatre and Media Arts Department, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, as part of the practical fulfillment of the Community Theatre Course, with this researcher as one of the animator. Suffice to mention that it is the maiden experience of the students; class, involved and that of the entire environment, communities: but with the academic doggedness and commitment of the pioneer Head of Department and the staff members involved as animators the project yield positive results. The research was developed to involve the

facilitators in exploring the use of drama to teach adults on particular health issues and influencing their opinions on a given subject-matter. The research thus addresses the following questions:

- 1) How can drama students and animateurs use drama to emancipate the oppressed in society.
- 2) How can drama foster attitudinal change among adults in a community?
- 3) How can drama help to influence a people with skewed opinions?

Ethnography of Imojo-Ekiti Community

The Imojo-Ekiti community is about 7km drive from Oye Ekiti; where the Theatre and Media Arts Department of Federal University Oye-Ekiti is domicile. Imojo-Ekiti is in south-west of Oye-Ekiti along Ishan-Ekiti - Ilorin Express Way. The community has less than one hundred buildings and less than five hundred inhabitants, with just a small Primary School with less than 200 pupils; ill-equipped with manpower and under-furnished, a nascent small market undergoing construction: no secondary school and health centres with epileptic power supply just like Oye-Ekiti. Imojo-Ekiti is ruled by a Monarch with the Title of **Olu-Imojo** of Imojo-Ekiti; the person of Dr Samuel Olatunji, the monarch is academics, a Senior Lecturer at Federal University of Technology Akure. The proximity of the community to Oye-Ekiti, where the student/ facilitators reside enhanced the project facilitation.

The FUOYE/Imojo-Ekiti Theatre for Development Workshop

The project team animators developed a kind of workshop in which the facilitator; students-researchers worked with the entire community to develop their drama facilitation skills. As has been

reiterated, the most significant point to note in any true context of Theatre for Development practices is the level of involvement of members of the community/target audience in this process that is meant to empower and liberate them. In discussing methodology and process, therefore, it is important to note that there are no laid down or fix rules of operation. “Methodology and process have largely been determined by the approaches to development adopted by the individual practitioner” (Daniel and Bappa 24). However, certain methods have become dominant from practice, since theatre’s re-orientation from being taken to the people to engage the people themselves for their own interest, and have continued to be redefined towards realizing the full objectives of Theatre for Development and make it yet a continuous and alterable process.

Data Collection Methods in the FUYOYE/Imojo-Ekiti Theatre for Development Workshop

Data collection is simply how information is gathered. Data collection basically is a period of information gathering and perhaps the most crucial in any Theatre for Development process. It is the time when the problems of the community are ‘x-rayed’ while resource persons interact with community members in order to identify such areas that needed priority attention. This process may also manifest in different approaches as the case may be. “Research”, basically according to Daniel and Bappa (2004) is the primary source of data collection which helps to achieve a broad understanding of how problems manifest in the society. According to them, it also helps to stimulate involvement on the part of the community and ensures the presentation of a balanced view, a level of community consensus, a sense of involvement and participation by all beneficiaries (20).”

It is the time when the problems of the community are ‘x-rayed’ while resource persons interact with community members in order to identify such areas that needed priority attention. This process may also manifest in different approaches as the case may be. Nwadiuwe, E.C. noted that “scholars in the field of Theatre for Development have identified five approaches of data collections within the ethnographic research design in the field of Tfd. This position was further confirms in Komolafe, A.M. (2012), “when he says that there are different methods of data gathering approaches in the field of theatre for development” (35). However for the FUYOYE/Imojo Tfd Workshop three basics approaches of data gathering were adopted:

1. The Homestead Approach: The Tfd workshop ran for two weeks, with the student/ facilitators going to the community at about 1:00pm and returning to Oye-Ekiti at about 7:00pm. The student/ facilitators employ the entire information gathering techniques disposed to qualitative research: *Participant Observation, Non-participant Observation, Field Notes, Structured Interview, Semi-structured Interview, Unstructured Interview, and Analysis of documents and materials.*

2. The flooding Approach: To ease data collection and put some management elements on course, we re-divided the team into four groups (of seven persons each) viz: Group A; Group B; Group C and Group D. We gave each group specific job description to do and gave the four groups writing materials for proper documentation.

3. The Hierarchical Approach: The team also sought the opinions and views of the Olu-Imojo of Imojo-Ekiti; the King of Imojo and his cabinets in the data collection process. In fact the King and his cabinets gave the team all the firsthand information which was later, merged with those of the towns people.

On health, it was discovered that there is no government owned Health Centre in the Community. Apart from the absence of government owned Health Centre, the only private Chemist is run epileptically; one day on and a day off, with inexperienced nurse that do not know how to apply first-aid. Thus, there was need for public health campaigns to reduce the high rate of infant mortality and educate families on the advantages of family planning. Such campaigns would equally improve sanitary habits and reduce incidents of malaria and diarrhoea. It was also discovered that there was a linkage between superstition and health. For instance, most people would not attend the health centre because they believe that perceived enemies with witchcraft powers imposed their ill health on them. This kind of belief has divided families and turned father against son. Even the erosion in the community is traced to some vengeful witches to spite men.

It was gathered that the major reasons why the indigenes of the community abroad do not come was as a result of witch-craft practices in the community, hence the under-development of the community. The community was said to have been in existence for the past one hundred and fifty years, yet only one manual- pipe-borne water tap, aside the other amenities mentioned earlier. Interview revealed that once any rich member of the community returns home for a visit: he or she may not live to see the subsequent years. Secondly, there is no home or house with toilet in the entire community except the palace: the entire communities defecate around there surroundings with few members going a little further into the forest to defecate. The implication of this act is the health implication and the risk of snake bite. Thirdly, it was gathered that girl-children are never allowed to go to school in the community, besides the fact that there was never school in the community until ten years ago. Finally, the youths of the

community refused to farm or rather do any other menial jobs, the educated and uneducated alike: they were all idle expecting government to provide all their needs.

Performance and Follow-up Evaluation

The actual performance of the improvised sketches before the audience in the target community comes next, followed by evaluation time; when the drama is critically evaluated in relation to its significance to the life of the community. Community members are encouraged to ask questions and get clarified concerning certain approaches and processes as well as issues raised. This is aimed at opening up possibilities for further action. Through the relationship between the drama and their lives, the consciousness's of the community members are awakened to new realities about their problems; and from the discussions, they are made to realize their potentials and ability to initiate action to improve their situation.

In fact the performance was an eye opener to the entire community: not only was it geared towards the entire community problems but proffers solution to it and at the same time such ideas solution, came from them, though with little coordination of the student/facilitators. The drama was acted in the target community indigenous language, which is the usual ethos in community and theatre for development practices and so as to ease communication flow between the indigenes and the students/ participants, researcher. In the viva section that was held immediately after the performance, the king **Olu-Imojo** of Imojo-Ekiti asked his subjects the participants and as well as the targeted audience several critical questions.

This section give further room for interaction between the students/facilitators and participants/ targeted. Through the project/

research, the entire community comes to the realization that they had been in a disadvantaged situation, a shortchanged people; as a result of their lack of awareness and skewed opinion about government and themselves. In other words they eventually realized that they the participants/the targeted audience had been responsible for their predicament and they alone has the key, solution to free themselves from their present predicament: in other words work out modalities for their own development.

The follow-up process for the project under review came up around February in 2014, about four months after the project was executed. The research team, animateurs; comprising both the members of staff and the 200 level students visited the community and interacted with the entire community, the participants to ascertain what measure they have taken to implement the recommendations reached at the performance. The Olu-Imojo of Imojo-Ekiti briefed the team that so far so well about four different families has built Toilets in their compound to forestall the act of defecating around the Neighbourhood. That plans are on the pipeline to collectively build the market, to an enviable standard that could attract neighbouring community for patronage: with him the Olu-Imojo, donating fifty percent of the resources needed: also that he, the Olu-Imojo has met with the state government concerning refurbishment of their only primary school and the possibility of bringing secondary school and an Health Centre and that he is sure is actually yielding positive result.

The Olu-Imojo further assured us that he had liaised with government agencies to come and build Housing Estate in the community and leases it to civil servant on mortgage arrangement and that has already been started, he even showed us round the proposed site for this projects. Finally, the Olu-Imojo said that the community has agreed to give out their farm lands to any able-

body youth willing to farm free of charge; indigenes and non-indigene alike, this is to promote the culture of self-reliance. Unarguably, with this action plans in place; with what we see on ground we the amateurs concluded that our effort is yielding positive fruit. It is only on this basis too we can actually say that drama has indeed empowered the participants.

Unfolding the Discourse

As described in the preceding section, the communication practice of Theatre for Development “the FUYOYE / Imojo-Ekiti workshop” for instance has always had a context for people to adapt to popular theatre. For centuries performing art of similar genres (the Alarinjo / Ogunde Theatre) existed in this country and people are cognitively tuned in identifying the purpose—which is information dissemination in an entertaining form—of this kind of media. Most of the folkloric media in the FUYOYE / Imojo-Ekiti workshop use performance both for entertainment and education. Thus, Youth, across both the sexes, are highly attracted to the FUYOYE / Imojo-Ekiti workshop. They find it significantly educative that teaches them what is not taught in their school and TV dramas and cinemas. Therefore, popular theatre to them is a means for extension education. It supplements institutional and traditional knowledge.

Besides, popular theatre trains them to become a good human being. Hence, it was not accidental that popular theatre is not only popular but it is also recognized as mirroring the social ills, unraveling the causes for poverty in their own discourse, and it is also a medium for extension education. Perhaps, any performing art is inherently an entertaining means, no art alone can bring revolutionary change in a society. What it can do is to complement other organized attempts for a change. Maxim Gorky’s novels did

not revolutionize Russia; rather it inspired people when Bolsheviks underwent a political upheaval leading to people's revolution. Revolutionary literature could work as quiver in the reader's consciousness and thus pave a ground for other change-makers to accomplish their task.

Therefore, it would be unrealistic to expect popular theatre to be catalytic to institutional change despite its being so popular. However, there are examples of popularizing basic health issues, like personal hygienic, the needs to have toilets, the need to use recommended drugs for ailment rather than traditional herbs that could pose danger to one's health. Changes that bring immediate reward and not constrained by deeper social factors seem to be easy to achieve. Use of recommended drugs to cure diarrhea, as demonstrated in the FUYOYE / Imojo-Ekiti workshop is an example of such change, and therefore media had experienced such a phenomenal success. Our findings reconfirm this as we find the positive effect of popular theatre disseminating the messages of drinking hygienic water is significantly successful.

On the contrary, messages about problems that are deeply embedded into a social structure have difficulties to mark a significant effect. Taking dowry is an example in this case. A poor feels obliged to give dowry for her daughter though he is aware that dowry is not a positive social act. Without dowry it is still difficult in the rural Yoruba community to marry off a daughter. That is why it does not make a huge positive effect on social practice even when dozens of modern theatre like Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* is staged advocating against dowry. Nevertheless, advocating against dowry in this way strengthens other means of fighting against dowry and such problems. In a society that have been, and perhaps still is, governed by the poverty of ignorance, popular theatre as a means for extension

education is a significant step towards making people educated about their rights to legal system when there is a need. Legal system is also a product of a society's dominant discourse. More truly, the dominant discourse often blocks people's access to use the benefit of the system. The language of legal system in general is cumbersome and the procedure is complex. Therefore, people generally are not confident to access the legal system.

The dominant class exploits this by making the discourse even more distant. Popular theatre, as we have found in our study, makes people aware about the legal system by translating the cumbersome legal discourse into a comprehensible speech of people. Such a linguistic transfer is an important tool in order to ensure people's access to a complex system. Such a linguistic transfer is required to make people get rid of the dominant discourse that shapes an institution. Linguistic transfer needs social capital and other organized support else it remains an unsuccessful endeavor. It is positive that the drama groups are on the way to develop a certain social capital.

They are respected, recognized as knowledgeable and above all a bridge between the Governments and the people. In other climes People in crisis often come to drama artists who in turn take them to respective Government Agencies for support. It often happens that in rural problem mitigation meetings the drama group members are invited to join the adjudicators. This is an indication that popular theatre is making a small but important way in the rural power nexus. Seen from the discourse-centric development approach, popular theatre is performed about local problems in local language, which people feel easy and spontaneous to link with. It contrasts with the mass media that is packed in an elite language speaking a distant voice. Such distant voice has a boundary that the poor people cannot access. Even

accessed, such discourse, as it is the case in the developing countries, will inevitably generate a knowledge system alienating people from their actual situation.

Furthermore, such distant but powerful discourse will mesmerize them by the dazzles of a false consciousness. Such false consciousness hinders development, makes people dependent on an unknown discourse, and as such maintains the trap of underdevelopment. Popular theatre in this respect possesses the merits to unfold grassroots discourse capable of undoing the distant but dominant one. Case studies confirm how people positively reflect on the depiction of their life in popular theatre. In many cases popular theatre brings positive changes to their life and attitude, they feel spirited and demands justice that otherwise they would not have done. The following is such a case study.

Rahima is an unmarried poor young girl living in a remote village in Durgapur. She hardly talks and stays in a constant gloomy mood. Her mother worries about her. One evening, local BRAC popular theatre group performs a play entitled “The Imposter” that Rahima’s mother watches with her daughter. The drama shows how a young girl was raped by a village man and upon her complaint the village community forced the young man to marry her. Watching this drama brings significant change in Rahima; she tells her mother that she has experienced the same fate as she was raped by Ripon, a married man. Rahima’s family, now spirited with the lesson learnt from the drama, complains to the elderly of the village. Upon investigation it is found that Rahima is pregnant of three months. Village community, with the consent of Ripon’s wife, arranges marriage between Ripon and Rahima. Now Rahima lives with honor and financial security. (Pervez 13)

Observation of various popular theatres confirms that spectators spontaneously immerse in emotional and intellectual dialogue among themselves during the show. With loud speech they confirm their recognition of the characters acting in the show with the real characters in their locality.

They also recognize how unaware they have been about these social problems and as well as their rights. Often the spectators start debating about the issues played in the theatre when the show is still in performance. Some even expressed the blankness of their consciousness by loudly uttering “When will the people rise up?” or “How long can we afford staying unconscious about our right?” The educative potentials of theatre for development indeed cannot be undermined. Freire has argued that educative processes are never neutral. They can either be an instrument of domination or liberation. Educative processes domesticate people where there exists a dominant culture of silence. In this culture people are taught to accept what is handed down to them by the ruling elite without questioning. Hence, their understanding of their social reality is limited to what they are taught and told to accept and believe. Freire (quoted in Nyirenda) points out that:

In a culture of silence the masses are 'mute', that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformation of their society and therefore prohibited from being. Even if they can occasionally read and write because they were 'taught' in humanitarian - but not humanist - literacy campaigns, they are nevertheless alienated from the power responsible for their silence. (9)

Domesticating education denies people the power to think for themselves and become architects of their own destinies. It does

not provide them with a critical perception of their own social reality which would enable them to know what needs changing and actually take action to change. While education that liberates; (like Theatre for Development and Applied Theatre generally) shatters the silence and makes people become aware of their condition and their democratic rights to participate in social change or transformation.

Thus, Freire's thesis which has its root in Theatre for Development: supposed that social change should 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 sectors of cultures which are totally silenced. Freire contends that people can be taught to read and write as well as presented with a world view that is unclear and mystifying or a world view which is clear and enables them to understand their life situation more clearly.

This latter view is attained not only by what is taught, but why and how it is taught. For instance, what do we mean when we say that a person is educated or empowered? Or what do we mean when we say that an illiterate person has become literate; yet disempowered? On examining the assumptions behind the descriptions that "a person is educated" or "a person has become literate", "empower or disempowered: it becomes clear that there is an underlying ideology and practice which is in fact undeniably political, even when, for example, the process of acquiring literacy is made nothing more than the mastery of technical skills such as reading simple messages or filling a form. Therefore, "we can say that the written word can subdue, deceive, and lull or it can arouse, enlighten, stimulate and awaken, depending on the ideology and practice employed" (Nyirenda 10).

Thus, Freire's 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. Discussing Freire's texts, Nyirenda explains that, "Conscientization is a process of developing consciousness, but consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality"(10). Nyirenda 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 action of a logical sort aimed at transformation. Psychologically it entails an awareness of one's dignity. (10)

Even though the stimulus to conscientization derives from Interpersonal dialogue in which one discovers the meaning of humanity from encounters with other humans, like the case of theatre for development programmes an almost inevitable consequence is political participation and the formation of interest groups such as community organizations and labour unions.

Conscientization, therefore, leads to people organizing themselves to take action so as to change their social realities. The concept of conscientization has attracted those who believe 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. It also implies having a faith in the capacity of all people, including

the illiterate, to engage in critical dialogue. Dialogue is the means of achieving conscientization. Conscientization requires that an individual change his or her attitudes, perception or beliefs. In other words, individuals must not accept that social reality cannot be questioned and changed. Freire believed that once a person perceived and understood a challenge and recognized the possibilities of a response, that person will act and the nature of his or her action will correspond to the nature of his or her understanding. Hence, “critical understanding of situations leads to critical action” (quoted in Nyerida 11). Thus, Freire's literacy method offered the illiterate people the means by which they could replace their passive perception of their reality by that which was critical so that they could do something about those situations.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the instrumentality and effectiveness of Theatre for Development in the development and participant empowerment process, by stimulating community/people-oriented development through its participatory methodology cannot be overemphasized. It encourages the people particularly to take part in identifying their problems through participatory research, problem analysis, playmaking and discussion, all in a bid to chat the course of their collective destiny. The basic essence in the methodology and process outlined above, therefore, is empowerment– the awakening of the consciousness of the disadvantaged in society “to understand societal configurations as well as have faith in themselves as vectors of change” (Gbilekaa v).

In other words, it is an empowerment aimed at stimulating the people towards “real action” in finding solution to their

problems; for change itself – the “real action”, as Boal argues, lies with the people, for whom “the theatre certainly is a weapon, and it is the people [themselves] who should wield it” (122). This is to say, therefore, that this theatre is an empowering process; the people’s liberation and development is only consequent upon the people’s action based on their awakened consciousness.

Thus, Theatre for Development used for development, as we have seen in the FUYOYE / Imojo-Ekiti workshop, mirrors grassroots problem packed in local discourse. It draws on local legends, humor and communication materials that are largely folkloric in nature. In other words, popular theatre is aligned to the grassroots cognitive competence. Furthermore, as a form it advances on the performance tradition of the locality. All of these give popular theatre strength that other development communication acts practiced in development work, poster, simplex documentary, etc. generally do not hold.

Show time interactivity and post-dialogue are especial merit of popular theatre that makes audiences feel part of the act and as such it helps brainstorming necessary for strengthening community’s own discourse towards serving the interest of the community. “Community theatre therefore is a participatory theatre at the service of the people for their socio-political development: its existence borders on dialogue and action, which will lead to critical consciousness and emancipation of the society” (Obadiegwu xii). It is a participatory endeavor using communication devices to unearth the unconscious of a community through advancing community’s own discourse. It contrasts the economy-centric growth model of development which reproduces a distant discourse.

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