

## CONSTRAINTS IN THE PRACTICE OF THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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### Abstract

*This paper investigates the constraints of contemporary Theatre for Development (TfD) in Nigeria tertiary institutions. It kick-starts with a discussion on how TfD in Nigeria adapted the South America and other African countries experiences of using drama to mobilize and conscientize people for development and self reliance. However, TfD from the academia is faced with myriads of challenges. This varies from preliminary concerns, to workshops and post-TfD engagements for possible consolidation. It takes a critical look at some of the constraints; identifying their causes and their impacts on the effective practice of TfD as action research. This study has explored, through qualitative processes, the procedures of TfD in Nigeria tertiary institutions and its coordinated effort to catalyze change in target communities. The study interrogated whether the methodologies have caused reasonable individual and community change in behavior to substantially cause development. While it acknowledges that, theatre has always responded to the environment in several ways, the paper proceeds from the evidence of a near absence of follow-up mechanism of TfD practices from the academia. It admits that although there have been efforts by a few scholars to locate the hiatus, there is still a wide critical chasm in planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects. The paper then posits that TfD projects from the academia tends to negate the principles of democracy and that the methodology being used inhibit the creative impulse of the practitioners. It proffers the means through which these constraints could be tackled for TfD in Nigeria tertiary institutions to thrive. Anchored on the 'trans-theoretical model of change theory' by Prochaska & DiClemente (1983), this paper concludes that TfD practitioners should commit more time to projects and let the methodology be more change-oriented to meet the yearning and aspirations of the targeted communities.*

**Keywords:** Development agencies, CBOs, Theatre workers, TfD, Nigerian tertiary institutions

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## Introduction

Theatre has always responded to the environment in several ways. Indeed, the early man started domestication and the taming of his environment using theatrical practices in the nature of rituals and other performances. It was both a social and religious bond. Today the role of Theatre for Development (TfD) in promoting people's culture and creating awareness towards sustainable development has become necessary and timely too. Ahmadu Bello asserts that:

While universities are primarily concerned with academic problems of world-wide interest, they have also the responsibility of promoting the culture, customs and traditions of the community in which they are situated. The preservation, protection and development of these traditions should be a main function of the university. (73)

Over the past three decades, TfD has witnessed progressive transmutation. This has largely been driven by the desire by theatre practitioners and development agencies to make theatre respond to the development challenges of many communities in Africa. In the United Kingdom, for example, Community Theatre in the early sixties served the objective of providing entertainment and a sense of community to inhabitants of alienated suburbs. It, however, scarcely sought to bring about social change (Harding xii). At the turn of the decade, TfD assumed a different character in Africa. Drawing richly from the pioneering efforts of two Brazilians, Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, its focus became the creation of analytical drama, within the context of entertainment. This found expression in a number of Community Theatre experiences, such as Laedza Batanani in Botswana (1974), which saw students, lecturers and development extension workers visiting target communities to interview them on their development challenges. Laedza Batanani, however, had its limitations because the process of discussion, data analysis and play making excluded members of the communities who simply 'consumed' the 'finished product' that was returned and performed for them by external theatre workers.

In 1976, the Samaru Project was introduced at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The intention was to deepen the participation of members of the community in the TfD process. The Samaru Project, like the Laedza Batanani experience is limited for the same reasons given the fact that students and lecturers adopted the 'migrant' approach which excluded the villagers from the process of data analysis, scenario developing and rehearsals. They were consigned

to only watching the final performance, which was at variance with the premise on which Freire and Boal's theories were founded. Freire had taken a swipe at the educational system in Brazil, which he considered "dehumanizing" because it considered the oppressed native (colonized) unintelligible and must be taught everything (by the colonizer). A student was seen as one incapable of thinking. Freire observed the people had been reduced into passivity. Such condition provided fertile ground for the cultivation of the "culture of silence" through what he calls "banking education". It became quite obvious that no educational system is without intended goals. A totalitarian, one-off "banking education" which only teaches the student to be a passive recipient incapable of contributing his or her input into the creative process was, therefore, unacceptable to Freire.

He opposed a situation where the student was made the unquestioning banker while the teacher or the theatre worker or the development 'expert' was the sole monopolist of knowledge. This type of education where there is no symbiosis that allows feedback from the student to the teacher, Albert Hurt suggests is "a process of instruction in the power structures of society" whose supreme aim is "to teach people how to adjust successfully to the social role they may be called on to play" without questioning (cited in Disai 21). Aligning with Freire, Gumucio-Dragon posits that real education "engenders a process that instills in each individual a level of consciousness necessary to develop his or her creative potential, to achieve independence, solidarity and justice" (35). As a radical response to this conformist practice of education, Freire proposed 'A Pedagogy of the Oppressed'. This is a "problem-posing education", "which breaks with the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education" (69). It is a practice that emphasizes the importance of dialogue between the adult educator and the student, between the theatre worker and the rural peasant and the urban poor, between the development 'expert' and the people. It demands that while the adult educator, the theatre worker or the development 'expert' listens attentively to the students, and he or she is equally expected to take into serious consideration the views of the student. It jettisons the totalitarian approach to learning, which simply intimidates or coerces the learner who is likely to resist the imposition act. Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' is rooted in the fact that education: must be forged with, not for, the oppressed, (be they individuals or a people) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity.

This pedagogy makes oppression and it causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle, this pedagogy will be made and remade (Freire 25). Boal

agrees with Freire and believes the oppressed can no longer remain a mere spectator. He must assume a central role and be an active participant in shaping his destiny. Boal therefore asserts that: spectator is a bad word! The spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanize him, to restore to him his capacity of action in all its fullness. He too must be a subject, and an actor on an equal place with those generally accepted as actors, who must also be spectators (Boal 155). Through this process, the "culture of silence" is cracked; the people are given the opportunity to fully participate in identifying, discussing and critically analyzing their problems. Solutions are arrived at collectively and not by the adult educator, the development expert or the theatre worker. The aim of this critical analysis of the people's problems is to demystify their social realities. This conscientization process exposes them to the relationship between their present predicaments, sufferings and frustrations and their oppressors. It also teaches them to question their present position, for example, why they are jobless, why they are without shelter, why their environment is dirty, etc. They learn to see things in new perspectives. They also begin to think of how to change their lives by first of all changing the structures that cause their frustration. When this consciousness takes place, they then begin to perceive: a new awareness of selfhood and begin to look critically at the social situation in which they found themselves, often take the initiative in acting to transform the society that has denied them this opportunity of participation (Freire 9).

Because of the awareness which is attained through the practice of popular theatre, the people's eyes are opened up to new ideas. They now believe they can chart their own course. They cease to be recipients of finished goods. They are now determined to be active participants in reshaping their lives. When the oppressed becomes so aware, he then ceases to be a spectator. He delegates no power to the character (or actor) either to act or think in his place; on the contrary, he himself assumes the protagonist role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for changes – in short, transforms himself for real action....(Boal 121). It is fundamentally on this premise that the practice of TFD is founded.

Inspired by Freire and Boal, the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) modified its approach by adopting the "homestead" approach for its community theatre. This entails amateurs staying in target communities and ensuring greater involvement of villagers in the entire process from the data collection through the data analysis, discussion, scenario developing, rehearsals, to the performance and post-performance discussion. The impact of the work in ABU has long spread to other tertiary institutions such as the University of Jos, University of Abuja, Nasarawa State University, Colleges of Education

Katsina-Ala, Benue State (1982); Kafanchan, Kaduna State (1984); Akwanga, Nasarawa State and the Bayero University, Kano. Government organisations have also found the Tfd an effective communication strategy in promoting their programmes and activities. These include the Benue State Council for Arts and Culture, International TFD Workshop (1981); the Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) train-the trainers workshop for Social Mobilization Officers in Bokkos, Plateau State (1987) and Kafanchan (1988); and the Train-the-Trainers workshop conducted by the Theatre for Development Centre (TFDC), ABU, Zaria for States Programme Officers of the National Orientation Agency, at the Nasarawa State University (2012).

In Nigeria, there is a multiplicity in nomenclature for Tfd which is no longer a worrying issue. For example, we are talking about the same thing when we say Community Theatre (CT), Forum Theatre (FT), Popular Theatre (PT), Drama in Education (DIE), Theatre for Integrated Rural Development (THIRD) Theatre for Community Development (TCD), among others. To avoid further multiplication and to evade further confusion, it was suggested that practitioners all over Africa should now adopt a common name – Tfd (Abah 33). Many scholars and Theatre practitioners have studied Tfd phenomenon in Nigeria and have profiled most of the Tfd initiatives in the country between the 1980s and the first decade of the new millennium. Over the past three decades, theatre for development as a programme in the curriculum of tertiary institutions has been on-going. In schools where it is practiced, it is usually a yearly tradition that has become a mechanism that concretizes the relationship between 'town and gown'. This practice has been impacting on various communities across the country and beyond. The practitioners and sponsors of Tfd are varied but three broad groups are discernible. There are Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Tertiary Institutions and Government Agencies. The general focus of Tfd in tertiary institutions is to introduce theatre as a participatory tool for sustainable development. This approach, like Okwori noted, is meant to help the community to evolve strategies for dealing with their problems (120). They are interested in developing an alternative theatre poetics as well as in tracing a new relationship between theory and practice (Abah 36). This type of development, says Saint Gbilekaa, "relates to the widening of the intellectual horizon, the raising of consciousness and the encouragement of dialogue and participation in issues relating to the peoples economic, political religious and social realities within their environment" (28). However, measuring depth of impact and cross checking results and change as a result of Tfd intervention has been a challenge. In as much as commendable achievements in terms of community projects have

been recorded in some cases, the zeal and 'anger' generated within the realm of the performance, which is necessary to galvanize social action by the citizens in order to change their situation, is most times diffused and deflated by the animateurs. Another contradiction stems from whether TfD should promote cooperation without necessarily compromising its independence or adopt confrontation with government and development agencies, because it wants to protect its independence, considering the fact that the capacity of many rural communities to solve their prime problems has proved to be limited, necessarily requiring the intervention of government or development partners. Another issue is the contradiction that emanates from the animateurs not being properly conscientized to be able to effectively serve as catalysts to members of the community.

What all these point to is the fact that there is dire need for the TfD animateurs, after facilitating the process of conscientization, to sustain the 'anger' aroused in members of the community beyond the context of the performance to ensure that social action is galvanized even in reality. This social action could be in form of a community project initiated by the people, as has always been the case or better still, a social action that sustains the interrogation of the circumstances responsible for their predicaments. Like any intervention covering the society and more because human communication itself is complicated, TfD can become complicated. The complications increase when we rise the hopes of a rural community; when we try to change behavior of the recipients and in the process leave them worse than we met them. The success of TfD will, therefore depend on the sincerity of the messenger (animateurs), the simplicity and directness of the message and most importantly, creation of mechanism for follow-up. Rasheed Musa, writing on the need for follow-up and evaluation submits that; basically, follow-up in community or street theatre nomenclature is to observe if the audience has carried out positive result or the aims and objectives of the theatrical performances (85). The above simply means that knowing the outcome of any TfD workshop is the aim of the follow-up exercise. In essence, follow-up in the TfD continuum is used to measure the effect, process, and impact of the actual activity on the population in the research community.

It is imperative to note here that the practice of TfD in the academia must go beyond a technical teaching of how to do TfD. It should include how communities can see development as a product of constant learning, investigation, and the readiness and will to initiate action and embrace change as its attendant consequence. Doing TfD from the academia should not have a different orientation from participatory action research projects. From the stage of preliminary visit(s) to specific communities where the TfD project would take place,

through the feedback and or follow-up stage, the two participants in the communication transaction should understand that it is a two-way transactional process. That means, the communicating partners are equal and should jointly arrive at a course of action. Jenkeri Okwori describes it as: A research process, that tries to diminish the barrier between the researcher as a collector of information and the researched as the suppliers of it. As a collaborative experience between two, it becomes an occasion for gaining and creating knowledge (2). Arising from the above, it is germane to remember that research is not just a fixed hodgepodge of theories and abstractions of objectives but a dynamic process that involves a marriage of both theories and praxis, and takes into consideration the existential realities and participatory inputs of the target community. Inasmuch as the researcher possesses technical expertise to analyze a given societal organization, it has to be noted that the target communities themselves are not a bunch of ignoramuses but are in fact protagonists of social change from which researchers can also learn valuable experiences that can lead to a more thorough and representational research outcome. Such an outcome can lead to holistic communication and development in the society.

In spite of the attraction of TfD's participatory methodologies, researchers from the academia need to make conscious efforts to extricate themselves from any uncritical application in all situations. In as much as it may be difficult for the academia to undertake a TfD project for more than three weeks, there is need to take a look at the other side of the coin- should TfD go into communities where there is no capability to take action on community issues? In relation to this Abah avers that where communities feel enthusiastic there is shortage of resource for them to follow through on community projects that the workshop may have identified. The resources in shortage here are both financial and human as the students are neither able to mobilize funds nor have the expert knowledge to do community projects (245). Critical to the success of every development process, is the serious need for an integrative communication strategy that recognizes the citizen not only as an active participant in the development process, but as its subject. It therefore underscores the compelling need to evolve a communication model that mainstreams the frustrations, fears, hopes and aspirations of citizens, from start to finish, in the communication process. Such a model is what TFD brings to development.

It is expedient to note that in any given study that involves field work, the follow up exercise usually comes at the end of the study to help ascertain its successes and failures. Participatory monitoring therefore avails the TfD practitioner with tools that enable him to



effectively check impact of workshops without necessarily being seen as a supervisor but a co - learner. It is on this premise that this paper is asking the following questions:

1. What are the factors in the planning process of TFD interventions in Nigeria tertiary institutions that perpetually militate against consolidations?
2. How democratic is the design and implementation of Tfd projects in Nigeria tertiary institutions?
3. How impactful and sustainable are the previous community theatre projects?
4. What are the modalities for choice of TFD project locations in Nigeria tertiary institutions?

### **Theoretical Framework: The “Trans-Theoretical Model of Change”**

This paper exploits the anchor of the ‘trans-theoretical model of change theory’ espoused by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983-2009) to illuminate on change as a gradual process that have stages. The ‘trans-theoretical model of change theory’ describes the individual’s motivation and readiness to act. This theory states that “people pass through a series of stages when change occurs” (235). To put it in perspective, Prochaska and DiClemente articulate five key stages:

1. Pre-contemplation (ignorance of need for change)
2. Contemplation (thinking of changing)
3. Preparation (ready to change),
4. Action (making change) and
5. Maintenance (staying on track).

This theory provides the lateral window for examining whether the project has done all it should do in moving its beneficiaries from the point of entry to the point of change. Many projects overlook certain important stages in the process of change and in doing so negatively impede sustainable behavior change from occurring, that is why it was necessary for this study to not only identify the influences around the individual, but also to track whether and how every stage in the change process is implemented. From the above theoretical frame, it is normal for individuals and societies to constantly analyze and evaluate how they operate to be able to identify whether there are things to be sustained and things that need to be changed. Positive changes facilitate even growth and development which in turn improve the quality of life of the people. The theory is significant to our



appreciation of this paper in so far as it foregrounds the fact that the concerns of community theatre practitioners is the development of the people particularly those at the grassroots, therefore, it is imminent for them to constantly review what is being done, the progress being made, the gaps and things that need to change in order to promote efficiency and effectiveness.

### **Constraints of TfD Pedagogy in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

TfD in Nigeria tertiary institutions can all too easily be utilized as yet another tool of manipulation by vested interests. While the approach strives towards empowerment, rigidly prescribed ideologies by its organizers must be avoided. Far from helping the process of liberation, if the academics are not careful, they may only enable the traditional policy makers and vested interests to 'present their goods in a more attractive package without changing the substance'. Even the best intentioned project can inadvertently enhance dependency rather than empowerment. If amateurs enter communities with ready-made tools for analyzing reality, and solving problems, the result will likely be that as far as those tools are successful, dependency will simply be moved from one tyrant to another.

The defect of TfD arising from the ideology of modernization and economic dualism has been the tendency towards issues-oriented, problem-solving campaigns. The research element in most TfD projects from the academic methodology stresses the identification of disparate problems and the theatre campaigns are judged a success to the extent that problems had been 'solved.' That is, trees planted, cabbages planned, VVF cases reported to the hospital, or drainages dug. There is little or no attempt to see the problems within the historical context of imperialism and underdevelopment. For example, many of the problems which were identified in the Leadza Batanani campaigns could only be understood within the context of Botswana's dependence upon the Southern African migrant labour system, and the social anomie and marginalization deriving from it (Kerr 57). By concentrating on disparate constraints divorced from the underlying structural cause of underdevelopment, TfD in Nigeria tertiary institutions often obscures issues for the rural poor rather than clarifying them. The lecturers, students and communities all relate to the projects, as the proverbial blind men of Hindustan, to the elephant. In this case though, the blindness stems from academic-oriented bureaucracies and/or cultural reality. While the amateurs leave the community with a sense of fulfillment that they have conscientized the people, they are left frustrated due to absence of community action plan (CAP) that is very crucial for the TfD synergy to yield action. Abah expands on this:

Once the workshop is over, the euphoria of the interaction between animateurs and the community comes to an end. Whether the community wants to or not, at this point when the animateurs withdraw, they will step out of the fiction of the performances back into reality. They are stepping back into a reality of communities with the same problems as when the workshop started... Therefore a new crisis will have been unleashed! This is the crises of unfulfilled expectations. Most TfD workshops raised the communities' expectations before, during and after the exercise. (75)

No matter how animateurs make clarifications at the preliminary contacts and during the workshop stating that they do not have the resources to be able to solve the communities, problems, community members jettison this and see the animateurs as the most sympathetic group and, perhaps the closest to something resembling authority with which they have made contact. To deal with this, will it not be right for the animateurs to function as active participants of the joint community effort by getting involved in the entire process from defining the problems and deciding on the action plan? It is not about advocating strictly for new strategies and options to be tried and tested. Theatre in the context of development is an on-going process. It is not an end in itself, but a means in the development process. And if development is on-going TfD must be seen as such.

A major constraint upon doing TfD from the academia is that the realizability of the seventh stage of TfD which is the follow-up stage is always considered a herculean task. Adopting a method of monitoring and evaluating TfD projects at the community level is an indispensable component of any such experience. TfD practice in Nigeria has moved from being theatre for the people by outside facilitators, to a theater with the people, a collaborative process between the "outside facilitator" and the people of a targeted community. From a form once highly dependent on outside assistance, TfD in Nigeria tertiary institutions is increasingly being appropriated and seen by certain local communities as a necessary development tool that provides for increased up-take in basic social services aimed at the community's overall well-being and development. Follow-up has been made possible, in part because of the growing presence of community-based organization (CBOs) in local communities. CBOs have been closely tied to the promotion of TfD as a participatory approach that relies on indigenous cultural

knowledge and the fostering of participation and involvement of community members themselves. All communities are made of different groups, men, women, age group, the literate, youths etc, and these groups have interests. Their interests may vary but it is always for a common goal, which is community development. CBOs can serve as master key to opening up lots of opportunities in terms of interactions and participation of the people. Umar-Buratai submits that:

In specific terms, however, the consolidation of the TfD project can be measured through its ability to incorporate, utilize and project existing social and cultural infrastructure such as a base group, where one has exist already, or the creation of one where non-existed on ground and which subsequently remains the pivot for community self-development. (80)

To ensure sustainability in addition to the above submission, the TfD animateures would need to forge and establish a cordial working rapport with the members of the community including its various hierarchies. In fact this ought to be done right from the stages of community preliminary research at the commencement of the project. This relationship is then cultivated and matures all the way through and sustained by the follow-up activities. It is unfair to think that CBOs were not available in most communities where most TfD projects were carried out and that they have not been visible in community commitments prior to the introduction of these projects. There were instances when the university agenda is pushed into the front burner at the expense of more critical challenges facing communities. For instance a group of lecturers and students interested in the area of VVF and maternal health would ensure that the project does not divert from that agenda. Even if there are more serious problems in such communities, efforts would be made to concentrate on the agenda from the academia. One such ideological factor, pinpointed by Kidd, is that of "scapegoating the poor." That is, 'a deprivation view of disadvantage: that poverty is self inflicted, that the poor are poor because they have certain deficiencies or inadequacies'. This is insults in a development strategy based on changing the poor rather than the system of oppression which makes them poor.

This problem fuels the superiority complex among academics. The tendency is that practitioners often go into communities as experts with 'preconceived notions of the nature of rural people and their problems' (Abah 46). Chris Odihambo notes that "practitioners assume

that communities are an 'empty vessel to be filled with knowledge by the teacher'(195) – what Freire calls the banking model of education (Freire 187). In Nigeria, it is typical for TfD performances to use a technique where actors solicit answers from the audience through leading questions like 'is this situation not true?', which is often met with a 'yes' in a chorus. Most times this does not give room for any real meaningful debate. The fact that performances are reliant on problems determined by university staff and lecturers – though in some cases verified by communities' members – makes the work patronizing and simplistic. The problem is further compounded by the 5 – 7 days of practical experiments. The fact that the practical part of the course runs only for a week or less is deeply problematic because this means that there is no time for students to fully grasp techniques and experiment with methods. Inadequate time for critical practice of TfD, according to Jane Plastow, fuels the problem of copycats, who go out replicating TfD methods according to the set guidelines passed on by their teachers. This also means that there is no opportunity for students to fully develop a relationship as equals within the community (115).

The situation is worsened by the way the academics cushion their accommodation. Homesteading interviews are deliberately jettisoned because lecturers and students prefer to have their accommodation in isolation. The flood method that is being adopted most times, does not give students and lecturers the opportunity to study closely the family night life of the host community. The philosophical basis of dialogical pedagogy is the missing link. In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire argues that 'authentic liberation – the process of humanization – is not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it' (79). This can only be achieved without any groups intimidating the other. Building trust and establishing rapport with people in the community is critical to team acceptance. Taking up accommodation as a separate group cannot create an atmosphere for trust. A good TfD team encourages exchange of experiences, information and knowledge among the people themselves, between the team and the people themselves, the people and between the people and outside institutions and organization without any groups feeling superior.

Furthermore, there is a vague assumption of successful TfD interventions without any rigorous evidence from the academia. For instance, there are assumptions that participation during post-performance discussions is sufficient for transformation. This is problematic considering that inequalities of gender, ages, economic status and class are evident in everyday life. France Cleaver notes that there is a tendency among participatory development practitioners

to view 'communities as capable of anything, that all that is required is sufficient mobilization and the latent and unlimited capacities of the communities will be unleashed in the interest of development (604). This thinking is often informed by the assumption that 'the community' is a homogenous group, which produces homogenous local viewpoints (Cleaver 611). Unfortunately, what ends up happening is that those members who occupy a high social status tend to dominate discussions and those with opposing views are often suppressed.

### **Further Remarks and Conclusion**

Third world development, to date, has been viewed by many scholars as merely a transfer of knowledge via providing technical information passed from the 'experts' to the 'ignorant'. Full participation of the peasant/villager in decision making, including inputs of indigenous knowledge, has been largely a fantasy with only lip service given to its importance. The government in its bureaucratic and technocratic aloofness has discovered its loss of ground and faith with the people. The involvement of government in grassroots theatre is, on the one hand, a shift in policy approach to development. On the other hand, it may be regarded as a means of penetrating the alternative movement, a movement which may be regarded from within conservative thinking as an alternative 'cabal' engaging in acts of subversion. Consequently, the onus is on TfD practitioners in academic institutions to serve as a bridge between the erstwhile abstractions of the ivory tower and the concrete world of reality in which NGOs work. The field in Nigeria has very few people who work full time. Therefore, it will not be out of place for schools practicing TfD to consider a curriculum adjustment to accommodate proper training of potential TfD workers. Since it is based within the academia, and has to operate within the parameters of curriculum, schools can begin to teach the very rudimentary rubrics with the year one students (new set). As they progress to year two (200 level) they can be engaged in practical projects through to year three. In their final year, students can go back for follow-up and engage the community one more time before graduation.

As one is dealing with people within changing social relations and cultural patterns, one cannot afford to be dogmatic about methods but should keep oneself open to people. This openness comes out of a trust in people and a realization that the oppressed are capable of understanding their situation, searching for alternatives and taking their own decisions. Mohan and Stokke state that:

There is no magic formula for the methodology of participatory research projects. However, there are common

features taking place in the process; (1) it consists of continuous dialogue and discussion among research participants in all stages; [and] (2) knowledge must be derived from concrete situations of the people and through collaborative reflection... return to the people, continuously and dialectically. (250)

Therefore, the process of participatory research is cyclical, continuous, local and accessible. Study-Reflection-Action is the integration process in this type of research. No doubt, TfD methodology usually involves a designed process that includes the following stages: Preliminaries, Community Research, Data Analysis, Scenario building, Rehearsals, Performance and Post-Performance discussions, and Follow Through. However, there is need for the animateurs to be consciously committed to the course of the community involved in the research. Even if the process cannot be cyclical, it should challenge the traditional principle of scientific neutrality and reject the position of the scientist as a social engineer. Continuous dialogue, (especially after projects) provides for a framework which guards against manipulative scientific interference and serve as a means of control by the community.

Given a continuous cycle of Study-Reflection-Action, participatory research inherently involves formative evaluation. Indeed, the terms participatory evaluation and follow-up are often used synonymously. Congruent with the objectives of TfD, the purpose of follow-up is to benefit the participants themselves. It does not function to test the efficiency of an exogenous program, formulate diffusion tactics, gather hard data for publication, justify curriculum of the academia or collect dust on a ministry shelf. The prism through which change is apprehended is follow-up. The academic environment within which TfD models have evolved should show sufficient interest in dialectical change and its implications inherent in participatory processes.

There is already a critique of the orientation of TfD from the academia and because of its inherent limitations; internally there is a lot of reflections to be generated as to the viability of the project. It is actually viable; but only need to be taken beyond the characteristic migrant method of simply going to scoop information or extract information from the people, turn them into plays, act and discuss with the people. There is the urgent need for continuous participation from the academia. The time the students withdraw, the people themselves would have been left with the skills with which to investigate and continue to articulate their problems. However, in talking about the

issues of change and building people's consciousness and orientation, it needs time. Authentic participation directly addresses team work. It is important to note that when people work together for a long time, they learn to work as a team, and this brings about honesty, trust, commitment and motivation too. This brings about genuine participation. And genuine participation brings about appropriate action plan for sustainable development. Taking students to a community for TfD project should not be seen as attempting to create a need for dissemination of information, but rather disseminating information for which there is a need.

Students of theatre, years in and out are full of anxiety as to what the world outside the university holds for them. On the other hand, it is also true that the desire of any community of people is 'development' and the major conduit for development is communication. Theatre for development is communication and communication is a basic in all human endeavours'. How then can a theatre graduate fear the world out there when he or she has the key to the need that is basic in any sphere of life?

However, TfD in Nigeria tertiary institutions is in desperate need of a curriculum and methodology overhaul. The importance of TfD to the academia cannot be overemphasized, but the objectives are often restricted to the level of abstractions and are not translated to the sociopolitical contexts of the people they are meant to serve (Plastow 110). The key concern of the animateurs should be in knowing very precisely whether the message of their collective performance with members of the community was understood. Was there a willingness to take concrete action in changing negative behaviours for more positive ones? In most cases, what happens is the exposure of the community's practices, problems and aspirations to outsiders (animateurs). The community gain little or nothing from the projects. The intellectual climate until now has not provided enough impetus for prioritizing the common search in TfD, which is attitudinal change. No doubt, in Africa, most TfD practitioners in the academia are conversant with the Ngugi W'a Thiong'O Kamirithu experiment that ran for years with elaborate follow-through exercises. Its being a long time ago yet tertiary institutions in Nigeria have never taken it as a challenge. After three decades of existence, TfD should no longer be seen as a method of development that is still teething or in the process of crystallizing. Beyond academic grades, there is need to create structures for sustainability in form of collaborating with CBOs, NGOs, NOA and employing the follow-up mechanism. With reference to shortage of time and resources, new dimensions have to creep-in in regards to the ethics of the practice of TfD. Unless these problems are addressed, there is little hope that truly empowering practice can emerge in Nigeria.



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