

Towards the Effective Management and Marketing of Theatrical Productions in Nigerian Universities: The University of Jos and Benue State University Theatre Departments in Perspective

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Abstract

This article advocates the effective management and marketing of theatrical productions in Nigerian universities, using the theatre departments in University of Jos and Benue State University as fulcra of discussion and analysis. This is predicated on the fact that many theatre arts departments in Nigerian Universities have not been able to adequately manage their productions and possibly market them. This is probably because there is no clear-cut plan of what to do with the productions outside achieving their educational purpose, thereby underutilising them. Deploying the administrative management theory (AMT), this article uses the content analysis method to posit that the educational theatre trains would-be professionals and attends to the needs of the university community and its environs as it concerns; education, information, entertainment and the like. As such, failure to effectively manage and market theatrical productions will result to subduing and devaluing educational theatres. Consequently, the paper submits that, creating awareness of theatrical productions through different media (electronic, print and traditional) can go a long way in attracting the audience to these productions. Also, box

office productions in the university should be stepped up to underscore their value and justify the efforts in achieving such productions. If this happens, educational theatres can be self-sustaining and capable of producing graduates who can withstand the harsh economy of the new world. The paper recommends that heads of educational theatres should take up the challenge of ensuring that productions go beyond achieving course requirements but speak volumes of what the theatre stands for as well as attracts something tangible to the theatre.

Keyword: Theatre management, Marketing, Educational theatre, AMT, Theatrical productions, Box office.

Introduction

Every aspect of human endeavour or activity requires some level of management for survival, sustainable growth and effective productivity. This is because, the act of management ensures the proper harnessing of resources and coordination of individual efforts to achieve goals or meet the set objectives of the organisation. This explains why Weirich and Koontz see management as “the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims” (4). The educational theatre being an organised setting with human and material resources requires effective management to achieve its aim and objectives which are fundamentally educational. As a cardinal objective, all theatres seek to educate the people and societies they emanate from.

This is why in dissecting the educational substratum inherent in theatre, David Pammenter poses these questions and answers them frontally, “What is theatre, who is it for, and what does it say? Theatre, at its best, is the communication and exploration of human experience; it is a forum for our values, political, moral and ethical. It is concerned with the interaction of these values at a philosophical, emotional and intellectual level” (59). Extrapolating from this standpoint the educational theatre scholar Tony Jackson holds that “any good theatre will of itself be educational. That is, when it initiates or extends a questioning process in its audience, when it makes us look afresh at the world, its institutions and conventions and at our own place in that world, when it expands our notion of who we are, of the feelings and thoughts of which we are capable, and of our connection with

the lives of others" (35). Theatre engages on all subjects in all societies of the world, hence, its conspicuous place in the educational setting today.

Generally, the term educational theatre has varying connotations for different persons and it is peculiarly susceptible to misunderstanding. It is a general term that refers broadly to the various educational and pedagogical uses of drama, theatre and performance and there have been many forms of this, from different schools of thought, and various names and a large number of approaches resort under this category of theatre. More technically and in the context of this paper, an educational theatre is a theatre that is situated or housed in an educational institution for the purpose of training people to become professionals of theatre arts. In which case, departments of theatre arts are good examples of educational theatres. The curriculum of theatre arts as contained in many Nigerian universities today is anchored on the arts of the theatre such as: playwriting, media, drama, directing, costume and make-up design, technical design, cinematography, choreography and kinesthetics, arts and cultural management, education, among others.

Consequently, would-be professionals are trained to master all these areas to enable them become professionals in their practice of theatre wherever they find themselves. Although the aim of an educational theatre is not to make profit in monetary terms, the management aspect of the curriculum calls for some commercialization of productions as a training method for the would-be professionals. Besides, given that Nigerian tertiary institutions are grossly underfunded, the commercial aspect is in line with the conviction that art should attract value and not just for its sake. This is why it is incumbent on Nigerian universities offering theatre arts as a course to effectively manage the productions carried out in their respective departments which fundamentally serve as teaching methods with a view to marketing them to generate funds for maintenance of equipment and facilities as well as provide opportunity for the outside world to see what they do and are made of.

The artistic and creative abilities of students can be developed but if the marketing strategies are not properly harnessed, it will be difficult for them to compete favourably with their counterparts elsewhere in the contemporary world. The university theatre must, therefore, be alive to the socio-political and socio-economic

realities of its time and for this to happen, theatrical productions must be well intended to keep the audience alive and at the same time, improve on the box office of the theatre through adequate training of students' trainees in the area of marketing and administration of theatrical productions. Suffice it to say that "arts mirror the society" (Adeoye, 6). It is on this premise that the departments of theatre arts were established in Nigerian universities to develop personnel and build capacity in the arts which Oshionebo avers is necessary for imparting education. He affirms that "theatre-in-education is a specially designed dramatic performance before an audience of school children or any other target audience, which has an objective to impart one form of education or another" (22). The establishment and core values of educational theatres as enshrined in the curriculum gave impetus to theatrical productions of all kinds in different institutions across the country; and in every theatre arts department across Nigeria, theatrical productions are at its core. Hence, there is the need to effectively train the students in the arts of business, marketing and administration of theatrical productions beyond just the theories but practically. As such, the need for all other technical rudiments of theatrical productions which will provide the base for student trainees in the arts business become imperative as captured by Ododo thus:

Technical aids are elements used in theatrical presentation usually to give depth and meaning to the artistic fare. These are manually, electronically or mechanically employed. They include stage set and property, lighting, sound, effects, costumes and make-up. Though essentially visual elements, where meaningfully handled with the oral aspects of theatre production, they help the understanding of the audience apart from their aesthetic values. (154)

It, therefore, behoves on theatre scholars to deploy all available means to train students in all elements that can spice a production and attract an audience thereby making it marketable and valuable. Theatre has always been a potent weapon for communication, conscientisation and sensitization of the masses, by mirroring and reflecting on the social challenges of humanity (Uzundu, 85). Arising from this standpoint, this paper interrogates the basic realities in educational theatres across Nigerian universities. To do this, the following salient questions are posed;

(i) Are undergraduates adequately taught the art of marketing theatrical productions in Nigerian universities? (ii) Is the teaching of theatre management in universities made practicable? (iii) What are the methodologies adopted to improve on the knowledge base of performance management and marketing? The foregoing constitutes the thrust of this paper.

Conceptual Clarification

To avoid any ambiguity, the concept of marketing/theatre marketing, management and educational theatre will be conceptualised in the context of this paper.

Theatre Marketing and Administration/Management

The American Marketing Association provides an explanation to marketing as cited by Roger and Steven that “marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and advertising value to customers and for managing customer relationship in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholder” (8). The background given above in regards to what marketing is has propelled us into trying to understand the concepts of marketing and administration more concisely. Theatre can be said to remain in a vacuum if it is not well attended by an audience to appreciate the productions therein. Even if it is an educational theatre production, it needs an audience for its viva on salient issues that concern the production from inception to finish. Nevertheless, one fundamental aspect that should not be relegated to the background is the marketing side which to a large extent is the hallmark of theatre at its peak. Nwamuo gives a perceptible insight into the arts of theatrical production marketing in the following words: theatre marketing is the performance of theatrical business activities, which directs the flow of theatre goods and cultural services from the producer to the consumers or clients and with a need of satisfying them, and at the same time accomplish company’s objectives (91).

The forgoing entails developing a sound knowledge of the art of theatre marketing and ensuring also that the content that is put before the audience or clients is satisfying. This satisfactory content is a sure way of keeping the theatre administration or company in full operation. Ododo advances the argument further by noting that “the hallmark of theatre marketing entails developing

attractive artistic production packaging result-oriented proposals, embarking on effective solicitation campaigns to serve collaborative sponsorship, identifying target audience through effective advertising and public relations" (ix). Theatre marketing is an essential art and a business-oriented venture. As such, utmost attention needs to be accorded it to keep the theatre profession alive and at the same time providing good content to its audience while sponsorships of all kinds are sought through well advanced policies and publicities to further strengthen the theatre business.

The art of theatre marketing and administration requires hands on and all elements needs to be put in place to have a unified whole. This is while Ekpenyong was quick to remind theatre professionals that "while one cannot claim absolute superiority in importance over the other, it is noteworthy, however, that at some points, the success of any theatrical production, no matter the beauty of its artistic direction, depends heavily on the said production being served to a full house of hungry, excited and paying audience" (264). The above underscores the fact that effective marketing has the power to arouse the appetite of an audience, as this will further motivate the audience into demanding for more of such productions and at the same time increase the box office of such a given theatre house. Its professionalization transcends just the entertainment aspect alone, perhaps, the marketing strategies should be given uppermost attention in the teaching and the practice of theatre business. Until effective marketing is put in place, that the sure way for promoting the theatre arts business will be said to be effective beyond just the classroom experiences and the survival of the theatre profession in its entirety.

To successfully manage and promote a theatrical production, the arts marketer(s) and administrator(s) must ensure that they have the right attitude towards creating the right environment for the audience and the content under review. Kotler and Keller firmly note that "the cornerstone of a well-conceived marketing orientation is strong customer relationships. Marketers must connect with customers informing, engaging and maybe even energizing them in the process" (119). The advantage of this synergy is in many layers and it behoves on the marketers and administrators of theatre house to create that customer-marketer kinship. This relationship if well provided during theatrical

productions, it will provide the arts administrator(s) the opportunity to be able to get quality feedback from the customers so as to plan adequately, for improved methods of sustaining the business. Customer satisfaction, to a large extent, is the aim of every theatre house, be it commercial theatre, civic theatre or educational theatre. Nwamuo in "Theatre and Media Administration" expressed an opinion thus, "I believe that the theatre needs to discover new ways of attracting people to its programmes for cultural literacy, value orientation, humanist education, and the improvement of the human artistic excellence" (21). The arts administrator(s) must identify new methods of dealing with theatrical productions, so as to meet with new wave of the digitized world, high powered insecurity and economic hardship, among others. It is only when these new forms of marketing and the administration of theatrical productions are put in place that the theatre business can experience a breather. This will help build a solid theatre house that will always project and market its products beyond imagination.

The concept of administration particularly in respect to the arts of theatre administration has been viewed differently by different scholars. The word administration is a Latin word which means "aid, help, cooperate, direction, and management" (Online Etymology Dictionary cited in Asen). In other words, administration has to do with directing, monitoring, coordinating and managing a group. Nwamuo affirms that theatre administration as it is understood, is the art and science of planning, staffing, organizing, motivating, directing, and controlling human and material resources in the arts of the theatre in order to attain the predetermined objectives of having a full house, guaranteeing satisfaction and mobilizing profit and to ensure an optimal level of performance for audience satisfaction (57). This shows that the administration of theatrical productions requires a serious knowledge, and it is a huge task that the theatre administrator(s) must do so as to be able to provide the right platform for the art itself. Hence, the art of theatre administration has become a very crucial one in Nigeria, and it calls for serious attention for the sustainability of the theatre profession. This attention will help arts and cultural professionals, particularly, students in this case, who are taking this course at different levels in tertiary institutions in Nigeria to be amply equipped and exposed to the area of

marketing and administration so as to become theatre owners upon graduation.

Theatre marketing and administration are a viable means that promote the arts profession; the art of marketing sells the production and the art of administration coordinates the processes involved in the making and managing of a given theatrical production(s). These concepts are very vital to theatre profession and if the profession must be sustained, they should be adequately taught to students at all levels of learning in Nigerian tertiary institutions and beyond. The productivity and survival of every theatre is dependent on its management, this is why many theatres fold up soon after their establishment or do not flourish as the case may be. The management of a theatre is to ensure that the aim and objectives of the theatres are met. To manage a theatre is to make it productive and result oriented. Similarly, the art of management entails the proper harnessing of resources and coordination of individual efforts in an organisation to achieve the set goals of the organisation.

This is why Asen holds that theatre management “is the effective utilization of both human and material resources available to a theatre practitioner for the purpose of achieving a theatre production for a target audience” (10). In doing this, the basic principles of management which include; planning, organising, leading and controlling are employed in harnessing the theatrical products into a unified whole. Commenting on the indispensability of theatre management to the growth and survival of all theatres, Nwanaju holds that “if the theatre is (a) business with set objectives, then, its numerous resources must be geared towards the actualisation and realisation of the objectives” (84). Consequently, the business of theatre management becomes inter alia as Adelugba and Okhakhu posit management as “the careful organisation and coordination of the efforts of various people working together in order to achieve the theatre’s goals and objectives” (152).

Theoretical Framework

Several management theories have been advanced for the management of the theatre industry. Depending on the type of theatre, these theories have facilitated the effective management of the theatre. For the purpose of this article, the administrative management theory is used to underpin the discussion of issues.

The administrative management theory (AMT) was developing when the scientific management theory (SMT) was at its peak in America. Among the advocates of the AMT were Henri Fayol, Luther Gulick, Oliver Sheldon and Lyndall Urwick. Henri Fayol organised knowledge of management around managerial functions. Referred to as the father of what is called 'administrative process', Fayol breaks down the functions of management as – planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling (51). Wehrich and Koontz (38-39) list Fayol's fourteen principles of management, which are also referred to as classical principles of management. The principles include: 1. Division of labour, 2. Clear delineation of authority and responsibility, 3. Discipline must be maintained, 4. There must be unity of command, 5. There must also be unity of direction (objective), 6. Individual/personal interest must be subjugated to over-all interest, 7. Respectable remuneration must be guaranteed to workers, 8. There must be a delicate balance between centralization and decentralization of authority and power, 9. Order (material and social) must be maintained to avoid chaos and disaster, 10. There must be a scalar chain of authority and communication ranging from the highest to the lowest position, 11. Security of jobs must be ensured, 12. Initiative: the use of initiative by staff should be encouraged, 13. Equity: there should be equity (fairness and justice) in dealing with staff, 14. Esprit de Corps: there must exist concentrated effort, total belonging and unity of purpose and direction.

In addition to the principles, Fayol also noted that industrial activities could be divided into six basic groups: 1. Technical (production), 2. Commercial (buying, selling, and exchanging), 3. Financial (search for, and optimum use of, capital) , 4. Security (protection of property and persons), 5. Accounting (including statistics), 6. Managerial (planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling). The hallmark of Fayol's principles of management and units of industrial activities is to enhance optimal efficiency in the process of production where there is adequate division of labour, coordination and discipline. This, to large extent, is what it takes for effective productivity to happen and this is why this article considers the administrative management theory (AMT) as being capable of driving the thoughts of theatre operations. The theatre is a hybrid art with different components such as: the play, actors, costumes and

makeup, scene design, and directing which must be brought together for a production to take place. As such, the business of the theatre centres on a group of bodies or individuals such as: (playwrights, actors, directors, choreographers, designers, and dancers) working together to realise the common goal which is the production. According to Uzoma Nwanaju, "for proper execution/actualisation of this objective, it becomes absolutely necessary to share the theatre job among its personnel with each managing the unit which he/she is most knowledgeable. Beyond this division of labour and specialisation, there exists a complete unity of purpose which Fayol appropriately termed "esprit de corps". When administrative theory is conscientiously applied in the theatre, the business becomes a great "enterta-industrial" profit venture" (10).

The educational theatre being a training theatre demands that students under training are properly drilled in the arts of the theatre to become professionals (Omoera and Awodiya 75-73). Professionalism is the watchword in all operations. Consequently, Fayol's administrative management theory comes to bear as there is division of work in order to cover all the aspects of the theatre production just as there is discipline, unity of purpose and the spirit of mutual loyalty shared by all those involved. In this way, the etiquettes of the theatre are thought and enshrined in the process of production. Be that as it may, the production must come out at its best which will in turn teach the students to constantly search for nothing less. Having gone through such a painstaking process of production, though meant for educational purposes, the production should be marketed for the public too to have access and value for it. If this happens, the students will also learn the commercial aspect of theatre. This is why this paper is of the view that if the administrative management theory is employed in the University Theatre, it will mark a turnaround in the teaching and practice of theatre at the ivory tower.

Theatrical Productions at the University of Jos' Department of Theatre and Film Arts

The University of Jos' Department of Theatre and Film Arts' theatrical productions largely come in form of class workshops or school projects. At every level, from diploma programme to undergraduate and even at the postgraduate levels, courses are

designed to cover practical and theory aspects so as to provide the learners with the requisite knowledge about the theatre profession. The involvement of students in the effective marketing and administration of theatrical productions and other aspects which constitutes the practical components of each of the courses at whatever level in the department is crucial. The argument is built on the logic on whether students are taught how to be amply engaged in the marketing and administration of theatrical productions in Nigerian tertiary institutions. In an interview with Yaki Musa a lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Film Arts, he explained that while students are oftentime not fully involved in the entire process of marketing and administration of theatrical productions. Here are his words:

Whenever a lecturer is saddled with the responsibility to do a production with any given class, the first thing one considers is the time frame. This is an educational theatre and the students have other courses to attend to and based on this fact, the lecturer(s) decides to use the best hands in the class to save time and still have a good outing. The worst-case scenario is, if the students are firsthand students just entering the university without any experience, the lecturer(s) is/are forced to handle every process of the production alone so as to make it a worthwhile experience, since the core aim of educational theatres is to impart knowledge. The unfortunate fact remains that, a preponderance of these students graduate without requisite knowledge in the areas of marketing and administration of theatrical productions because, they are not given the right training and the right opportunities, to learn all the ropes in production handling. But there is need, to get them involved in the processes from entry to exit points if the theatre profession must be sustained and well advanced (interview with Yaki).

Yaki reiterated the concern in this paper that students are inadequately taught the act of marketing and administration of theatrical productions in tertiary institutions. Even when they are taught, it is scarcely done as more attention is given to the theoretical aspects because of the overemphasis on education, while the areas of marketing and administration and other aspects of the profession are shoved aside or given just passive attention. The processes that should actively concern the students are taken

over by the lecturer(s) in charge of each class' production workshop, leaving the students to their fate.

The first stage which is the selection of the script or a choreographed dance is solely done by lecturer(s) in charge; the students are not given the opportunity to be part of the selection or the creation of any given dance that best suits their time and moment. The students are part of the system and if given the platform, they could create or select a production script that could best suit the market and at the same time put in place the right administrative management team that will best handle such a production from its inception to finish. Nevertheless, the denial that the students are subjected to makes them have little or no knowledge in the selection of the right script(s) or the right dances that can better boost the box office of such a given theatrical production or create a better platform for their proper administration or management. This ugly trend has been the lot of the Department of Theatre and Film Arts at the University of Jos. The students' factor is not considered in this regard and when they graduate from school, they are in a quandary as to what script(s) to choose or what type of dance to choreograph for a given production. If they are given the opportunity for experiential knowledge, the students will know exactly what they are expected to do when the need arises. This explains why the students should not just be seen as passive learners but active participants in all aspects of the theatre profession as trainees.

The second stage is casting. In most instances, the casting is done by the supervising lecturer(s) and again, the students are relegated. This denial of students by those in charge could be very disappointing and it arguably goes to say that the required knowledge that the students are expected to get, which will in turn provide them with the right sense of judgment when required in the art of management of theatre productions upon graduation. Here too, if the students are amply involved in the casting of the production, they will get to learn the rudiments to consider in casting a particular character or a particular dancer for every given production. And this can make them better marketers and administrators of theatrical productions anytime, anywhere because of the acquired skill.

The third phase is the rehearsal process. In an interview with Tsaku, a senior lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Film

Arts of the University of Jos, he expressed worry that: this is an educational theatre unlike commercial theatres, here, the sole aim is to instil the required training into the students and no lecturer who knows his job will allow the students to manage rehearsals on their own. Whatever they need to know, will be taught them by the supervising lecturer(s). Of course, it is quite true that our students need to be taught how to independently manage a production from start to finish, so as to have the requisite knowledge on how to handle the marketing and the administrative aspects of theatrical productions independently. However, the time frame within our university curriculum and the numerous strikes sometimes have adverse effect on the intended teaching and learning process in our tertiary institutions' educational theatres. On a whole, the students should be fully involved no matter the circumstances so as to broaden their understanding in all aspects of the arts profession. (Interview with Tsaku)

The point being made here is that the students in training are not adequately involved in the process of handling rehearsals, they are only spoon-fed by the instructor(s) who do not mind, if the students will be able to adequately manage a theatrical production on their own or not. This paper is a clarion call on the instructors in theatre departments in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, to mandatorily involve the students in the production(s) processes of every production, so as to make them capable of handling productions upon graduation. The fourth phase is the box office. The box office of every production is one of the most sensitive aspects of every theatrical production. The box office of educational theatre is not left in the care of the students. The situation in the Department of Theatre and Film Arts of the University of Jos is quite practical; the box office is handled by the supervising lecturer(s). In an interview with Abati Isaac a lecturer in the Department reveals that: the experiences that we have had over the years as lecturers with students are indeed worrying and disgusting. There are instances where some students spend money meant for productions for their personal needs. Based on this, most lecturers have decided that accounts be given at the close of each single day's rehearsal from whichever student who is charged with the responsibility of collecting the production fee. This will enable the lecturer(s) in charge manage the issues of

mismanagement of production funds by the students and enhance efficient and effective use of the funds (interview with Abati).

This also confirms the concern of this study by revealing the limitations of existential problems that hinder the full involvement of students in the management process of the production. It is evident that the students have little or nothing to do with the handling of the resources meant for theatrical productions in many tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Gate passes (also called tickets) are designed by the supervising lecturer(s) and given to the students to be sold and the proceeds given to the supervising lecturer(s). The issue here is that the students are not closely monitored by those in charge to ascertain whether they sold their tickets through proper publicity or not. The administrative office of every production or the publicity leadership is set and handled by the lecturer(s) in charge. Students' involvement is not a thing of concern but only the income that comes in is the concern of the supervising lecturer(s). Going by the above, the Department of Theatre and Film Arts of the University of Jos tend to pay little attention to the involvement of students in the marketing and the administration of theatrical productions. They are rather concerned with the banking system of knowledge dissemination and not the hands-on approach where the students are actively engaged and taught all the rudiments of the theatre practice.

Theatrical Productions at the Department of Theatre Arts, Benue State University, Makurdi

Theatre productions at Benue State University, Makurdi, are class workshop based with minimal commissioned productions by the university management. Being an educational theatre, the curriculum is structured to house workshop courses in all the levels of the 4-year undergraduate programme where productions are carried out as pedagogy. Consequently, at least one theatrical production is carried out every semester in each level of study in the department with some having as many as four productions. The practice has always been that students are given the opportunity to select the type of play to be used for workshop in line with the objective of the course and their choice is ratified by the course lecturer(s). In the event that they cannot arrive at a particular play, the lecturer(s) in charge imposes a play on them. After which the play is cast and rehearsal commences. Apart from

the 400 level students who are minimally supervised, the other levels are fully supervised to achieve the production. Other productions such as choreography and kinesthetics, film production, children's theatre, theatre-in-education, theatre for development, industrial theatre, among others, are all closely supervised from the rehearsal level to production as pedagogy with some taking place outside of the university environment.

The department has a production committee which is saddled with the responsibility of liaising with lecturers to put-up box-office productions as way of promoting the department to the outside world, teaching commercial theatre and generating funds. Lecturers who have taught workshop courses for a semester and come up with quality productions are expected to work with the production committee with a view to presenting them for box-office purposes. Part of the proceeds of the production goes to the department for maintenance of equipment while the other part to the course lecturer after the cost of production is taken. In time past, the department used to have departmental productions where guests were invited (mostly political figures) and after the productions, they were asked to comment on the productions and support the department. The department used the proceeds to fill the gap in office furniture and lighting equipment. Unfortunately, the tradition was not sustained following change of leadership..

At the moment, the department enjoys patronage of the university community with the setting up of a departmental troupe at the instance of the 5th Vice Chancellor of the University Prof. Msugh Kembe who has insisted that only the troupe performs at all university ceremonies. This has brought the department to limelight as all directorates, units, and departments resort to the department for awareness creation on different themes, ranging from decent dressing, examination malpractice, bribery and corruption, rape, stealing to issues of morals. The services offered by the department are adequately remunerated for the maintenance of facilities and equipment. This way, the department is able to attend to its needs which are uniquely identified with it because of its performative background and nature. Regrettably though, the department has not adequately market its numerous products as it should because of obvious reasons. In an interview with Dennis Teghtegh, an associate professor in the department, "the university theatre, particularly Benue State University theatre

has unfortunately relied heavily on little or moribund approach to marketing its products. In fact, there has not been a conscious strategy in recent history on the part of the department to evolve ways of marketing its product using 21st media to not only publicise specific theatre events but also to create a culture of theatre patronage by the university community and the Benue populace. The experience today has been a sharp break from the past where the community looked forward to theatre performances. Because of the lack of a sustained approach over the years, the community appears to have lost interest or are hardly aware of theatre events. Besides, the scanty posters sometimes designed for specific purpose hardly motivates contemporary audience. Online or virtual publicity has not been leveraged on to launch the department and its products into an orbit of popular theatre makers."

Similarly, Dr. John Onah - a senior lecturer in the department claimed that: marketing theatre in a country like Nigeria generally has constituted a serious challenge to the business of theatre. The first factor, to my mind, is the dearth of professionally trained marketers in the context of theatre business. Yet, would we even say that the theatre business is really flourishing today? My ambivalence actually stems from the theatre curriculum where there is a palpable lack of marketing aspect of our teaching. Therefore, most of our products, despite their quality, hardly attract attention and attendance. I will contend that a robust marketing strategy spun from the awareness of the new media; that is, leveraging the contemporary media especially the multi-media to generate a robust theatre-going-culture. University theatre has unfortunately relied on moribund or atavistic approach to marketing its products. This implies that the department has not been able to consciously explore the commercial aspect of the curriculum thereby making it difficult for one to vouch for commercial abilities of its graduates. Though artistically skilful, they may not be adequately acquainted with the art of marking their theatre products and this is the crux of the matter as the entire theatre training is hinged on professionalism which is all encompassing.

For effective marketing and management of theatrical productions to take place, students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria must be adequately involved in the entire process of such productions from the beginning to the end of their studentship. If

this is done, the students will have a better understanding of how to effectively market theatrical productions and at the same time provide administrative leadership in all matters concerning theatrical productions upon graduation. The curriculum of university theatres should be revised to adequately embrace the marketing and management of theatrical productions. Rugg corroborates that “the curriculum is really the entire programme of the school’s work. It is the essential means of education. It is everything that the students and their teachers do. Thus, it is two-folded in nature, being made up of activities, the things done, and the materials with which they are done” (38). This implies, revising the theatre curriculum to address the marketing and management aspects of the theatre discipline is not only in the right direction but the way to go if we must produce entrepreneurial graduates who can be self-employed after graduation. The practical component of the theatre should be stressed so that the students will develop the culture of theatre practice from entry to graduation. Theatre profession needs to undergo some kind of modification; the practitioners through the Society of Nigeria Theatre artists (SONTA) should approach the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) with a concrete proposal on how to mainstream theatre arts students for a six (6) months internship as obtainable in other practice based professions such as mass communication. The internship should be designed in such a way that it will avail the students the opportunity to acquire hands-on training.

Conclusion

The creative competence of theatre students in Nigerian universities should not be overlooked. The dynamics that play out in theatre departments in tertiary institutions across Nigeria, with a specific reference to the University of Jos and Benue State University Makurdi have been closely looked at. The argument advanced in this paper is holistically anchored on the findings and discussions of the issue in contention, which lies in the neglect of student’s involvement in the processes of marketing and the administration of theatrical productions in many theatre departments in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper is theoretically used the Henri Fayol’s administrative management theory to strengthen its argument and to show that the instructors at all levels need to

diversify and be more flexible in their dealings with the students. As well, studying behavioural characteristics to ensure that the students are fully involved in the marketing and the administration of theatrical production beyond the banking system of education which is teacher based is needful. The paper recommends, among others, that the curriculum should be revised to embrace marketing to enable students' participation in the process. This will adequately promote the effective marketing and administration of theatrical productions in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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