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EXPLORING THE USE OF CYBER TECHNOLOGY IN IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY CHALLENGES FOR THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN SELECTED EKITI COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Theatre for Development (TfD) deploys performance as a participatory tool to assist individuals and groups share their experiences with the intent of social transformation. It is a practical and theoretical exploration of the ways in which the arts can be used by communities to create social transformation on their own terms. The aim of the study is to expose how information transmission and reception, effective communication, feedback and information exchange can aid social transformation. This study is hinged on Paulo Freire's praxis theory of reflection and action and supported by Augusto Boal's conscientization and spec-actor postulations while Claude Shannon's communication theory on Cybernetic Pedagogy Technique shall complement Freire and Boal's theories. The study adopts the ethnography approach of the qualitative research methodology. The data was analyzed through description and analysis process. The result show that the problems of each community differs thus necessitating the use of different technological tool expose the long standing problems for more enlightenment on what drama can get for them and how they can use drama to get what they want even when the TfD catalysts are not with them.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of theatre in the society cannot be overemphasized as it reflects what happens in the society. The embryo from which it has grown is the collectively motivated performance of massive societies and its importance is highly relevant to the society. One cannot isolate the value of the theatre to what it can give to the society and that is probably why August Boal (179) strongly underlines the social function of theatre as a reflection of real life experience of man on the stage. A specialized area of Theatre which is even closer to the people is Theatre for Development (TfD) which deploys performance as a participatory tool to assist individuals and groups share their experiences with the intent of social transformation. Theatre for Development therefore, offers a practical and theoretical exploration of the ways in which the arts can be used by communities to create social transformation on their own terms.

But in recent time, according to Ogunleye (17) it has been discovered that most rural and urban dwellers in Nigeria were neglected in terms of social amenities that can be beneficial to their well-being and development. The helpless condition of these rural dwellers is so much disheartening that it attracts donour agencies from foreign countries. Thus, these prevailing situations and insensitivity of the relevant authority to intervene for some time now have warranted a third party intervention like World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These interventions have subsequently adopted the Theatre for Development as a tool for ameliorating these societal dysfunctionalities (18).

Osuya (75) says it is evident that from its inception in the late 1970s, Theatre for Development has been achieving its aim of being both interactive and participatory in its approach in Nigeria and other African countries where it is being practiced. However, there are still many communities that need the intervention. This is why this research deploys the practice of Theatre for Development to some selected communities in Ekiti States. This is in view of the fact that Theatre for Development has become an accepted popular tool and practice that gear fosters conscientization, empowerment and emancipation of the rural and urban dwellers, the “down trodden” and “the oppressed in the society. TfD is therefore understood as a problem- solving performance- oriented form of art. It is a process used in educating and conscientizing the communities on socio-economic political, environmental and religious problems.

According to Conquer Good (175) Over the years TfD has remained a vital instrument in bringing the people together irrespective of the status, age or creed. This symbiotic experience

has given birth to the various interplay of ideas that culminated in the evolution of different genius scholars such as Awoyemi (2011), Gallasher (2017), Micheal Gearhart (2022) within the progressive theatrical period in time past. The incorporation of cybernetic pedagogy by the researcher in the discourse of this thesis is also in furtherance of the evolution of technological practice that is done through TfD. The society has contributed immensely to theatre practice by providing the resource base or materials, while the product of theatre aims at reshaping, recreating and reforming the very society. The whole idea behind any theatre production is also to present to an audience a unified theatrical effect which will arouse them both emotionally and intellectually. (Idogho 315) this shall also reflect on their problems and at the same time take positive action for their liberation.

The utilization of TfD as a transformative tool has gained considerable attention in the realm of socio-economic development and human empowerment. This approach stems from the belief that the arts particularly theatre can serve as a catalyst for positive change within communities in the specific content of selected Ekiti State communities; namely Sakoro-Ekiti, Ilupeju-Ijan, Ise-orun and Oshodi axis in Ado Ekiti, Nigeria, where socio-economic challenges persist such as lack of convenience (toilets) truancy, teenager pregnancy, cultism, drug and substance abuse, female gender mutilation (FGM), lack of or epileptic electricity supply, bad roads network; widows neglect and urban drift, among others, the potential of TfD to address and alleviate some of these issues becomes a compelling area of exploration.

Scholars such as Freire (57) and Boal (68) have emphasized the importance of participatory methodologies in community development. They argued that actually, engaging communities in the development process as a more sustainable and impactful transformation can be achieved. Moreover, TFD aligns with the principles of dialogue and empowerment as articulated by Conquergood (20) and Kotecha (54), who highlighted the potential of performance as a medium for fostering understanding within community agency. The aim of TfD according to Willier and Feirner is to “Increase opportunities for marginalized and oppressed group to represent themselves and the world around them as a means of asserting their own identity and achieving cultural, social, economic and political equity (25).

However, TfD stands for equal right for citizens irrespective of their background or cultural belief. It integrates people at the grassroot to do it themselves by involving them in the drama. Since TfD is the practice by which theatre is put at the service of the disadvantaged rural and urban poor because TfD has helped so many communities through drama to see their

predicament and be able to proffer solutions to their problems through conscientiazation. It serves as an eye opener to people by telling them that the national cake is for everybody, so they need to stand up for their rights, that it should not be the top-bottom approach, it should be bottom-top approach. TfD is now used to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor for the purpose of discussing and working out strategies for dealing with their social, economic and political problems (Boal 180). This theatre speaks to the people in their own language and idioms. It is the practice which builds the people's artistic mode of expression; the people can control the dramaturgical process and provide material for the drama. It functions as a medium of articulating problems of the poor by the poor and for the poor. It is the best medium of preaching development to human and its environment. Its gives insight into the human mind so that in looking at man the gaze becomes an x-ray that penetrates behind the mesh and layer of the actor's skin to see the naked and humanity in him (117).

As stated by Nasir, "The use of theatre as a vehicle for information, dissemination enhances interpersonal Communication, which goes long way in promoting participation and understanding greater philosophy of Theatre for Development" (197). That involving the people in both the planning and the execution, the community members becomes fully convinced of the good intentions of the facilitators, which is in accordance with Augosto Boal's (1979) belief that "all revolutionary theatrical groups should transfer to the people the means of production in theatre so that the people themselves may utilise them". This simply underscores the importance of involving the people who are expected to be directly empowered so that, in the absence of the facilitators, they will be able to solve their problems, from time to time through drama.

Theatre for Development catalysts (the facilitators) use drama to help people air their views by making them feel the power of expression and through this expression, communicate results. TfD equips people with adequate information that helps them develop consciousness towards themselves and their immediate environment with a view to tackling development issues that is confronting them. Empowerment programme requires full participation of stakeholders to bring about the necessary change. For mutual cooperation and enlightenment in the society, effective communication through seminars, workshops and training are the best alternatives that TfD offers maximum emancipation thus deepening their understanding and fostering critical discussions (Ilukwe and Ume 2025). Bhasin captures this succinctly, thus: For building genuine partnership with people, for being part of and supporting people's struggle, for strengthening grassroots level democracies, for encouraging people's, creativity, there is no alternative to face

to face communication and people's media. We must learn from and strengthen these media which are built on oral tradition; at low cost and require low technology imput ------ (7)

For greater development and increase in the level of socio-economic empowerment, communication forms that could be of greater benefit to the people should be used when one realizes that development is the ability of the collectivity of individuals to organizing themselves with the view to eke out a living from nature. The kind of information one disseminates about development programmes should be that which can be understood by that the targeted people. This can be achieved through the participation of many people. It is the impoverished masses who are the majority in Ekiti Communities because according to John Kayode Fayemi, former Governor of Ekiti State in an interview (2012) says "This state is the poorest in the South-West and second poorest in the country". The state's poor economic status has made it difficult for her to partake in the ownership and control of mainstream communication media. Where they have access to them, they cannot effectively utilize the information that these media contain due to their literacy level.

To evaluate the success rate or otherwise of the intervention, there is the need for follow-up to TfD projects because follow-up activity is a vital aspect of the TfD process that cannot be overemphasized. It is through constant follow-up activities that the successes or failure of TfD project can be gauged. It is also through such constant monitoring that the levels of developmental initiative can be discussed.

As stated earlier to affirm the success rate of the interventions, one needs to involve technological aids which are often referred to as Cybernetic Pedagogy Techniques.

Cybernetic Pedagogy Technique

The Concept of Cybernetics refers to the transmission and processing of information within a system such that a control device is injected into the system to achieve a behaviour modification of the system Adeosun (73). When refering to behaviour modification, it is a kind of alteration in the status quo of the system. This is, however a positive alteration. Cybernetic control theory is as it is applied to complex systems that is associated with models in which a monitor compares what is happening to a system, that is, (the people at the grassroot as the case may be in this research) at various sampling times with some standard of what should be happening and a controller (the catalyst) adjust the system's behaviour accordingly. Pedagogy on the other hand is the study of teaching techniques or methods including the aims of education and ways in which such goals may be achieved, all these will be applied in this research in order to reach out to the

rural and urban dwellers in such a way that they will eventually come in terms with what the TFD personnels has to offer them.

Cybernetic pedagogy technique is now the application of learning. According to Adeosun (75) the Concept holds the learners as a negative feedback system that is capable of doing three things. One, he/they are capable of initiating a line of thought. Two, he/they are capable of comparing that line of thought with the true path and detecting errors and three, he/they are capable of redirecting his /their steps to ameliorate the errors. They are regarded as a self-regulating feedback system because they regulates their behaviour in line with the feedback they get from their interaction with their environment and the interaction with the controller (the calalyst) for possible solutions to their predicament. They learn best through these feedbacks.

There are five major approaches to cybernetic pedagogy technique (CPT) which are constructivist, collaborative, integrative, reflective and inquiry based learning. Piaget Jean Thompson is the father of cybernetic pedagogy and he made use of behaviourism constructivism, social constructivism and liberationalism, all these are meant to change the status quo of the system, that is, the people for a better life. A re-known Theorist Claude Shannon placed cybernetic pedagogy under Communication Theory has says it is how information is transmitted received and processed. Cybernetic pedagogy applies the concept of learning emphasizing self-regulation, feedback and adaptive systems. It examines information transmission and reception which emphasizes effective communication, feedback and information exchange between the learners, teachers and the system Claude (624).

Necessity for Intervention

Events in recent times have begun to raise bold question marks on social and economic strength of some communities in Ekiti as worrisome. It seems many of the approaches implored to strengthen the poor economically and socially, has become a mirage because the problems persist. It therefore becomes necessary to accentuate another approach with the belief that its purpose and aim will be achieved. This work therefore explores alternative approaches to human empowerment and infrastructure development using TfD which is geared towards reversing the hitherto top-down technique towards improvement.

Hence the researcher is experimenting with Cybernetic Pedagogy Technique which utilizes electronic facilities such as the projector, projector screen, computer and handset in order to aid good performance by the villagers and be pro-active in solving their own problems.

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Cybernetic Pedagogy Technique Tools to be Used for the Research Work

PICTURE OF PROJECTOR



PICTURE OF PROJECTOR SCREEN



HANDSET



LAPTOP



Gap to Fill

This research work wants to use cybernetic pedagogy to bring the target communities close to the aim and objectives of TfD. Since all other means or measures to do this are being jeopardized on daily bases due to technological advancement. The works of Aoudowase Boh, Steve Abah, Iyoruhase and the likes on TfD have been examined though these people tried in their own way to explore TfD rural communities but much have not really been achieved. That is why the researcher wants to deploy CPT as an alternative approach to development in rural clusters.

Theoretical Framework

This study shall adopt the theories of Paulo Freire on praxis theory of reflection and action which "found a direct correlation in the process of educating with political relationship in a society" (Arah, 28) and that of Augusto Boal's conscientizationn and spec-actor "designed to promote awareness of one's social situation" (Iroh 145) while that of Claude Shannon shall be used for communication theory on Cybernetic Pedagogy Technique. All these three theories says that spectators should be stimulated to transform their conditions and not to be passive and submissive but should be pragmatic in deciding the situations that will better their lots.

Methodology of the Study

The essence of methodology to research is to systematically guide the researcher in finding appropriate approaches to research questions and to serve as model in validating the reliability of any inquiry. Therefore qualitative method shall be deployed and as Obadiegwu states "qualitative method seeks a wider understanding of the entire situation, it attempts to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for actions and establish how people interpret their experiences and the world around them (27). Hence the approach of the qualitative method that shall be adopted by the researcher includes observation and participatory process in order to x-ray the level of socio-economic development in Ekiti State. Case study, ethnography, unstructured interviews as well as Participatory Learning Action (PLA) shall be used to authenticate the research with descriptive analysis. The study is on selected communities in Ekiti for the Theatre for Development Workshop, namely: Sakoro-Ekiti, which population is 23,000 Ilupeju-Ijan, is 20, 000 Ise-Orun is over 210, 022 as at 2023 and Oshodi axis in Ado Ekiti in which the population is about 50,000 because it is a relatively near urban area. 100 people shall be randomly selected from each community comprising the elderly ones both male and female, 30 of them shall be picked 26 people of less than 20years shall be selected and the youths shall not be left out, 54 of them shall also be selected and interviewed for purpose of data analysis, they will serve as the focus group for the research (FG), These people are equally selected from different clusters to aid good report on the representation of situations.

Pictures shall be included for more vivid. Triangulation approach shall be used to interview the same people to evaluate the same evidence in order to reduce the impact of individual sentiment. Simple Random Sampling shall be used to serve as a model for what obtains in Ekiti State because from the North, South, East and West shall be the target communities to be picked as cardinal point of Ekiti State for purposive analysis of the problems. Community research methods shall be deployed like the homestead integrated approach i.e "out-inside techniques, interview method, flooding method, official eye method, hierarchical method and follow-up method. These will form the bases for data collection and collations, the information gathered will serve as the researcher's report on the findings from each community.

Findings

This is the time when problems of the communities are figured out. The researcher went for a preliminary visit to those different communities at different time last year 22/2/2024 in order to identify their problems and such area that need prioritized attention. Findings shows that the

problems of each community differs so during the intervention proper, the researcher will be able to interact with the villagers to know which one to prioritized and attend to as time will permit like in the case of Sakoro-Ekiti, they are faced with:

- Lack of Convenience i.e public toilets
- Truancy among the children
- No befitting primary school

Ilupeju-Ijan Ekiti

- No Electricity Supply
- Widow's Neglect

Ise-Ekiti

- Youths urban drift
- Drug Abuse
- Teenagers unwanted pregnancy so rampant

Ado-Ekiti

- No health centre
- Female gender mutilation
- Truancy/Drug Abuse

Conclusion

Ordinarily, the growth of Cyber technology is expected to be an advantage to the theatre, however there seem to be limited evidences that shows that theatre have caught up with modern technology especially Theatre for Development. The researcher will deploy the use of cybernetic pedagogy to alleviate the long standing problems of the people by showcasing and exploring the cyber space among the people for more enlightenment on what drama can get for them and how they can use drama to get what they want even when the TfD catalysts are not with them.

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