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CHRISTOPHER B. BALME & ABDUL KARIM HAKIB (Eds.)

# Theatre for Development in Africa

Historical and Institutional Perspectives

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Christopher B. Balme and Abdul Karim Hakib (Eds.)

Theatre for Development in Africa  
Historical and Institutional Perspectives



# Theatre for Development in Africa

## Historical and Institutional Perspectives

edited by

Christopher B. Balme and Abdul Karim Hakib



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This volume began life as a conference, as so many collections do – except this conference never happened. It was planned to take place from 16–20 March 2020 in Pretoria, South Africa. It was a joint effort of the Department of Theatre Studies, LMU Munich and the Faculty of Arts and Design, Tshwane University of Technology. Organized under the auspices of the European Research Council-funded project *Developing Theatre: Building Expert Networks for Theatre in Emerging Countries after 1945*, it aimed to historicize and contextualize the emergence of Theatre for Development in Africa from the early beginnings to its transformation into a coherent organizational field capable of attracting significant governmental and NGO funding. It also sought to examine the complex transnational processes that led to the institutionalization of theatre for development in universities in Africa. The intention was to bring together some first-generation practitioners and scholars with a younger generation to reflect on the previous four decades of work. Unfortunately, just as most delegates were about to embark, South Africa and the rest of the world went into lockdown in response to the Corona pandemic. We tried unsuccessfully to reconvene the conference on Zoom and invited a selection of papers as online presentations (<http://developing-theatre.de/presentations>). This volume represents a substantial part of the original conference.

The editors acknowledge the contribution of Patrick Ebewo in the early stages of planning. We also thank the contributors for their patience as we moved online, offline, and finally into print. Funding was made possible through an Advanced Grant of the European Research Council (funding ID–694559). Abdul Karim Hakib acknowledges in particular, Rashidatu Abibu Adelanwa†, Hellen Mawunyo Diaba, Maxwell Odoi-Yeboah and Dr. Samuel Benagr. Thanks also to Sophia Fischer for assistance with preparing the manuscript and Open Publishing LMU for accepting and guiding the project to completion.

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# Introduction

Christopher Balme and Abdul Karim Hakib

Theatre for Development as a theatre form *sui generis* emerged in the 1970s out of different activities and under differing labels, a ‘confluence of cognate practices’ in Tim Prentki’s formulation (Prentki 2015: 15). It has been described variously as Community Theatre, Interventionist Theatre (Inyang 2016), Community Media (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2003), Popular Theatre (Mlama 1991), Applied Theatre (Mda 1993). Theatre in Education, Popular Theatre, Community Theatre all pre-existed Tfd and either re-formed around the new term, Theatre for Development, or provided particular techniques or institutional contexts. Plastow (2014: 117) also includes ‘edutainment’ as an additional term. Tim Prentki, Kees Eskamp and Ross Kidd have each traced the narrative of this story: we are familiar with the common denominators and founding fathers and mothers: Michael Etherton, Zakes Mda, Ngūgĩ wa Thiongo, Rose Mbowa and Penina Mlama, to name only some. What is less well understood is how and why this particular configuration of people, places and practices coalesced to form such a powerful and influential movement that came to assume institutional characteristics. How did Tfd come to be institutionalized in its current forms and practices?

From its early beginnings in the 1970s, Tfd quickly transformed itself into a coherent organizational field capable of attracting significant governmental and NGO funding. It also brought about changes in the teaching and practice of theatre studies in many African countries. The argument could be made that the success of Tfd in the Global South has contributed significantly to the emergence of Applied Theatre as a subdiscipline in many Global North countries.

In its reliance on expertise and the development paradigm Tfd can also be considered a form of ‘technopolitics’, a term popularized by scholars of the Cold War and development politics alike (Mitchell 2002; Hecht 2011). It refers to the complex interdependence between political imperatives and the seemingly selfless goals of bringing expertise in

modern engineering, technology, and social science to help developing countries. The concept hinges on a critical interrogation of the very concept of expertise and its often-unquestioned structures of authority. The term enables an examination of the “unpredictable power effects of technical assemblages” (Hecht 2011: 3) which could refer to the introduction of pedagogical techniques such as workshops or the social engineering of Theatre for Development practices.

The research into socially engaged theatre and performance provides key entry points into a generation of theories and an archive of communal/developmental history that is embedded in the praxis of Theatre for Development (TfD). The TfD concept has evolved over the years and tries “to organize and synthesize existing knowledge in two fields of the humanities, that is, theatre and social science” (Asiama 2003: 136). The volume of research, practice and training provide avenues by which contemporary histories, experiences and theories can serve as a discourse towards creating an alternative livelihood and also for communicating social change and development.

Regardless of its context, TfD depicts a broader nexus of cultural practices. It becomes a site where cultural performances flourish, dialogue was initiated and aesthetics developed. The scope of this genre, as Kamlongera (2005) suggests, permeates community-based theatre, prison theatre, political theatre, drama/theatre in education, theatre for evangelism, new media and film, ethno-dramatics and drama therapy. It strives to provide a more comprehensive aesthetic, sociological and historical context for evaluating social change and development initiatives from the subjects’ perspective. The challenge however is that practitioners and academics either seldom or only intermittently document and theorize their practice. This stems from the fluidity of the approaches and practices. It is a truism, however, that we are at a point when new dynamics are emerging around the issues of the histories and theories of the Theatre for Development genre. These histories and theories need to be excavated, documented and reexamined for a clear understanding of the old and new paradigms.

Emerging in the 1970s in the wake of Paolo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) and influenced by the activism of adult educators such as Ross Kidd and Martin Byram as well as theatre scholars

and practitioners like Augusto Boal, Christopher Kamlongera, David Kerr, Steve Oga Abah, Michael Etherton, Theatre for Development has evolved into a global practice and resource tool for participatory research, advocacy, sensitization, education, empowerment and development in both urban and rural communities.

Drawing from wide-ranging research platforms, the concept, history and practice of Tfd has transcended transnational boundaries in its quest for conceptualizing and facilitating social transformation and raising critical issues of concern among ordinary people in disadvantaged communities or neighbourhoods around the world. The goals and methodology of Theatre for Development entail multi-level collaboration and networking between expert communities, philanthropic organizations, donor agencies, governmental agencies and organizations, nongovernmental organizations, facilitators, local practitioners and participants throughout and beyond the duration of projects. As these multilateral levels of interactions serve as the basis for accessibility to participating communities, concerns have frequently been raised about the process of selecting, structuring and presenting developmental issues, especially, as regards whether project objectives and contents reflect the desires of ordinary people or are controlled by and handed down from top to bottom by powerful bodies, government workers and community leaders. Since the Tfd paradigm is often adopted as the 'best fit' method in development communication by most international development organizations, several international and regional bodies including UNICEF, Union of African Performing Artists, African Council on Communication Education etc have made crucial attempts towards providing a viable platform where experts, practitioners, facilitators, governments, NGOs, donors, and partners could interact, coordinate, learn, network or share ideas from their experiences in the field.

This volume is designed to illuminate the historical and theoretical perspectives that informed Tfd as a global development practice as well as examine the layers of collaboration and networking behind cases, projects and/or contextual histories or backgrounds that shape Tfd practices in emerging countries. The contributions drawn from practitioners and researchers from across Africa interrogate the following research questions: (i) How technopolitics have influenced the con-

ception and development outcomes of TfD projects globally? (ii) How have the transnational growth and spread of TfD practice impacted operational and developmental goals in disadvantaged communities in Africa? (iii) How do international and regional organizations as well as governments shape and limit TfD practices in emerging countries? (iv) What cultural implications, transmutations or issues have emerged due to internationally-assisted development practices or interventions at urban/rural spaces, especially, in the Global South?

The book is divided into two sections. In the first part the term is discussed by leading practitioners and theorists with a focus on its conceptual underpinnings and its broader historical evolution. The second section presents country-specific case studies from Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria (including regional differences), and Tanzania. Prentki in the first chapter discusses the symbiotic relationship between theatre and development within the practice of TfD across the globe. He looks at various experiences documented by TfD practitioners, especially in Africa, that address the question which conjunction is most appropriate to link the two concepts: theatre and development. Whereas it seems most TfD rehearses the change it seeks to see in society, Prentki makes it clear it does not end there, as TfD in Africa serves as a springboard to acting out the change in society. In the second chapter, Steve Abah takes us through his over four-decade journey as a TfD practitioner in Africa using an element that is ever present in African folklore tradition: storytelling. Readers get to appreciate the genesis of TfD on the African continent and its contestation with power as it seeks to cater for the marginalised in society. He points out the impacts, challenges and trends of TfD in Africa. He aptly ends by eulogising some forerunners of the TfD practice, whom he terms "TfD ancestors" for their varied contributions to TfD.

In chapter three Penina Mlama examines the quest of TfD in Africa for empowering grassroots communities to engage in critical participation in development processes. She begins by exploring the socio-economic context of African communities and how their local performance modes, which fuel the practice of TfD in Africa, have interrogated the conditions and causes of the marginalised in society and the desire to effect change. In discussing TfD as a developmental model in Africa, Mlama delineates the concept and emergence of TfD,

acknowledges influences external to Tfd in Africa (like Boal's Forum Theatre technique), and juxtaposes Tfd with the top-down development model. Despite the apparent advantages of Tfd compared with the top-down development model, Mlama also highlights the pertinent challenges associated with using Tfd to empower marginalised communities. The enormity of challenges despite the work of the "animateur" should prompt Tfd practitioners not to relent in finding new ways to complement Tfd's quest to empower grassroots communities.

Critically examining some stories that originated from local community members' lived experiences, Banda and Mpolomoka discuss their experiences with Tfd within and outside academia. The four case studies they reflect on were Tfd projects carried out by students that treated substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, nutrition issues and perceptions of a male midwife. This chapter makes a strong case for local communities' importance when academic institutions carry out Tfd projects.

In his contribution Balme sets out to answer two-pronged question: how the emergence of Tfd was determined by broader transnational movements and pressures and how it came to be institutionalised in its current forms and practices. Balme's investigations spell out the seemingly coincident but symbiotic relationship between the Structural Adjustment Programmes African countries signed up to and the birth of Tfd. He also traces the history of the institutionalisation of Tfd in African universities and the active role played by foreign donations from former colonial powers (like France and Great Britain) and other western-based agencies (e.g. Rockefeller, The Carnegie Corporation and USAID). This has made it possible for the growth of Tfd as a fully-fledged academic field and has also developed into an organisational field.

Hakib examines the influences, contexts and changing narratives of Tfd practice in Ghana. He traces the history of Tfd in Ghana to the activities of the Concert Party travelling theatre tradition as well as the mass education and development campaigns by the colonial government. Hakib notes that the UNESCO puppet training and polyvalent workshop organised in eight of the then ten regions of Ghana in 1962–1963 also served as a catalyst for the emergence of Tfd there. He also touches on the significant contribution of Efua Sutherland in her experiments with the anansegoro dramaturgy both at the Drama Studio and Ekumfi Atwia.

Samba offers us a rare insight into the history of the practice of Tfd in Cameroon and its attendant consequences on formal and non-formal institutions. She clearly shows the progression and growth of Tfd in Cameroon from its beginnings in the 1980s through to the present by delineating some workshops and projects that took place as well as their impact on the local communities. The chapter also identifies the universities as the pivot around which Tfd has boomed in Cameroon and acknowledges the varied roles of NGOs and foreign embassies in employing Tfd in their activities. In search of an answer to the question what qualifies as Theatre for Development, Yankah takes a critical look at the varied styles of Tfd practice in Ghana. He references the various dimensions of Tfd praxis in Ghana and classifies them into two major categories, Structured and Unstructured. He further outlines the features of both typologies taking note of the similarities shared as well as differences.

Iyang and Iyang in their chapter undertake a historical survey of Tfd practice in the South-South geopolitical region of Nigeria, emphasising the state of the practice under the prevailing circumstances between the 1990s and the present. They also demonstrate the viability of employing indigenous cultural resources in Tfd projects carried out in the various states in South-South Nigeria. Finally, they highlight the positive impacts Tfd made in communities, not forgetting the challenges that came along with it.

Idebe examines the impact tertiary institutions in Nigeria have made in driving the Tfd model as a channel that offers local communities the opportunity to make their voices and inputs to community development count. He also takes note of the challenges that have been encountered by the tertiary institutions and concludes by suggesting some ways forward.

Igbaba takes on the issue of impact assessment of Tfd academic practice within the Niger-Benue Valley to ascertain its long-term feasibility. Using focus group discussions, interviews and community score cards, Igbaba assesses the impact of Tfd practice in local communities by six tertiary institutions in the Niger-Benue domain. Through descriptive analysis, the findings establish the sustainability of Tfd academic practice in Niger-Benue Valley.

In the last chapter, Sanga does a situational analysis of Tfd praxis in Tanzania in the context of the seemingly dwindling Theatre for Devel-

opment practice in the country. He walks readers through the vibrant practice of TfD from its inception in the 1970s until the first half of 2000. Sanga uncovers several factors spearheading the downturn of TfD in Tanzania, namely, lack of commitment of staff to write proposals, the structure of TfD courses and lack of ideology to guide actions. The chapter also brings the benefits the university and communities stand to gain with TfD practice.

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## **Part I**

Globalized concept, conceptual framings and the development of networks



# From Theatre for Development to Theatre as Development

Tim Prentki

## Introduction: Rehearsing the Revolution

In *The Theatre of the Oppressed* Augusto Boal famously declared: 'Perhaps the theater is not revolutionary in itself; but have no doubts, it is a rehearsal of revolution!' (Boal 1979: 155). Is Theatre for Development (TfD) destined to be forever in a process of rehearsal which never finds its way to a performance? Are its facilitators endlessly rehearsing alternatives to a corrupt *status quo* as displacement activities, endlessly postponing the revolution? If TfD is a theatre of consciousness-raising, what do we actually do after our consciousness has been raised? The tension between revolution and theatre was also articulated by Bertolt Brecht in relation to his own theatrical career: 'I wanted to apply to the theatre the principle that it is important not only to interpret the world, but to change it. The changes, whether big or small, that ensued from this intention – an intention which I myself only gradually came to recognize – were only ever changes within the framework of theatre...' (Kuhn 2014: 251). How can theatre change the world if its changes are contained within its own frame? Perhaps the difficulty of the question explains why Marx wrote so little about art. Practitioners of TfD, at least those motivated by ambitions to address socio-political change, have wrestled with this conundrum since its inception. By applying theatre to social change do we enable that change or merely offer *ersatz* change; a mirage hovering tantalisingly on the desert air?

I ask these questions not to devalue the work of the past five decades which has seen TfD take root among myriad NGOs, CBOs and university departments but only to highlight the abiding tension between domestication and liberation, containment and freedom, survival and hope. The credibility and integrity of our discipline depends upon an honest appraisal of its limitations as much as a trumpeting of its triumphs. My particular focus is to analyse the shifting and sometimes contradictory

relationship between theatre and development and specifically to ask what the most appropriate conjunction might be for the linking of these two concepts. Theatre is an art form while development is a social process. What then are its practitioners? Artists or social workers? Experts or each one of us?

## Theatre for Whose Development?

In his Inaugural Address of January 20th, 1949, President Harry Truman set the paradigm from which the age of development emerged: 'we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas' (Truman 1949). In that moment the world became divided into 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' nations with the declared mission of the developed to bring their way of life to those less fortunate than themselves; in short, to make 'them' like 'us'. The military, colonial expeditions of former years were now replaced by the 'soft' power of the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and the permanent members of the UN Security Council. The golden age of development had begun. International NGOs (INGOs) mushroomed and governments set up departments dedicated to the policy and practice of development. Newly independent nations desperate for cash to sustain essential public services or to feed their self-serving kleptocracies were *de facto* beggars at the portals of global financial institutions whose largesse was contingent upon signing up to their notorious conditionalities; the mechanisms through which the other could be made to behave according to the dictates of western democracies. By exerting economic control over 'new' nations in this way, the era of independence can be described as post-colonial rather than decolonial. In other words, the actors in the colonial scheme may have changed, at least those in the shop-window, but the fundamental structures of central financial control went unchallenged. In *The Shock Doctrine* Naomi Klein entitled her chapter on South Africa 'Democracy Born in Chains' and described South Africa in the following terms:

Today, the country stands as a living testament to what happens when economic reform is severed from political transformation. Politically, its people have the right to vote, civil liberties and majority rule. Yet economically, South Africa has surpassed Brazil as the most unequal society in the world. (Klein 2007: 198)

In this scenario the role of TfD was almost entirely instrumental. It was a means to achieving goals set by the funding agencies which, in themselves, had nothing to do with artistic processes. The answer to the question of whether TfD was effective in a given context had nothing to do with the affective experience of participants, but only whether extra-theatrical goals had been met, measured by quantitative metrics: had more pit-latrines been dug? Had instances of teenage pregnancy declined? If the ANC was unable to pursue the goals of the Freedom Charter, what chance did TfD stand of engineering structural changes of governance that defied the global economic system? The appeal of theatre lay in its usefulness in communicating to non-literate audiences who could not be reached by pamphlets and instruction manuals. However, since there was little interest from the sponsoring bodies in the medium itself, scant attention was paid to performance forms beyond crude role-plays, typically revolving around dialogues between the clever development expert from the city and the stupid rural peasant who must be brought to see the error of their primitive ways. David Kerr, in writing of his experience in Malawi, makes the colonial connection explicit:

In colonial health plays, for example, a wise colonial doctor struggled to convince a foolish, superstitious African (usually influenced by an evil 'witch-doctor'). The formula has remained surprisingly common in post-colonial plays created by African theatre companies and is particularly popular in plays about HIV and AIDS. Mr. Wise, the colonial health expert, has evolved into a Western-trained doctor or health worker while Mr. Foolish is still a superstitious recalcitrant, often influenced by an identikit evil or mercenary 'witch-doctor' (Prentki 2009: 100).

Far from indigenous knowledge having anything to teach the developers from the North, that knowledge was perceived as a barrier to development which needed to be destroyed as a pre-cursor to 'successful' outcomes. Local cultures and ancient customs stood in the path of the imposition of the global monoculture, like a ragged, grimy child trying to slow down the progress of a bulldozer. At best they might be preserved in museums and theme parks as evidence of past primitivism; at worst, they could be lost forever as a repository of wisdom that had nothing to offer a technocratic age. The real cost of such a loss is articulated by Ngũgĩ:

Local knowledge is not an island unto itself; it is part of the main, part of the sea. Its limits lie in the boundless universality of our creative potentiality as human beings. (Ngũgĩ 1993: 29)

Since the 1980s the dominance of neo-colonial capitalism has been buttressed by the global spread of neoliberalism with its reduction of all human activity and aspiration to the sphere of economics and the further shrinking of economics to finance which measures the cost of everything and the value of nothing. The consequences of this dominance for development were pointed out at the time by Penina Mlama: 'Attention is increasingly drawn to the fact that development strategies have over-emphasised economic growth at the expense of the social and cultural factors which are just as crucial to the well-being of a people.' (Mlama 1991: 8). The pre-eminence of economics as a guide to development has not occurred by accident but by design. On September 11th, 1973, the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende was violently overthrown by the Chilean military, backed by the United States. The ensuing months saw the destruction of democratic institutions at every level – trade unions, cultural organisations, the media – accompanied by the shrinking of the state in every sector except for the armed forces and the police. The role of the state was no longer to support and protect its people but to support and protect itself at the expense of the people. Public infrastructure was destroyed to be replaced by either the private provision of education, health-care and transport or no provision at all. The coup amounted to the creation of

a ground zero on which privatisation would flourish, unhindered by regulation, unlimited in its scope. This was the realisation of the plan concocted by Milton Friedman and his Chicago Boys who arrived in Chile to take up advisory roles with Pinochet's regime. Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and an array of Western governments, taking their lead from the prescriptions of the IMF, followed the Chilean model, albeit less crudely.

If this was a cold climate in which to practise any form of TfD intended to foster human rights and self-determination, worse was to follow after the second September 11th, 2001, when George Bush opted not to pursue the perpetrators of the attacks on the USA as criminals but rather to declare his infamous 'war on terror'; perhaps the only time war has been declared on an abstract noun. The present age of what Naomi Klein has termed 'disaster capitalism' was inaugurated, allowing governments to declare emergencies that bypass democratic controls, paving the way for multinational corporations to reshape the contours of entire countries and collect vast fortunes in the process. For instance, of the Defense Authorization Act (2006), Klein wrote:

It gave the president the power to declare martial law and "employ the armed forces, including the National Guard," overriding the wishes of state governors, in the event of a "public emergency" in order to "restore public order" and "suppress" the disorder. That emergency could be a hurricane, a mass protest or a "public health emergency"... (Klein 2007: 308-09).

The Covid 19 pandemic has offered greatly increased opportunities for state interventions in the name of a public health emergency. Writing in a moment when the disease is still rampant across the globe, it seems only reasonable to give consent to the bulk of measures ostensibly designed to enhance our health and safety. However, when peoples begin to emerge from the crisis, will autocratic governments be willing to reverse such measures and thereby diminish their control?

As development funds have been increasingly redirected towards disaster relief in a world where disaster is frequently a deliberate weapon of political choice, so TfD finds itself working in contexts of survival; sup-

porting the victims of disasters both natural and man-made in refugee and internment camps, providing a displacement activity for the homeless, desperate and destitute. In the light of what the Western notion of development has given to the African continent it is not surprising that Achille Mbembe says that ‘the function of art in Africa is precisely to free us from the shackles of development both as an ideology and as a practice’ (Mbembe 2009: 6). The situation of Tfd is, therefore, acutely paradoxical; at once one of the tools by which development imposes itself upon African communities, and simultaneously a means by which African peoples may free themselves from those ‘shackles’.

## Participation without Domestication

One of the central tensions or, perhaps, fault-lines running through Tfd has been that between participation and domestication. It is self-evidently in the interests of development organisations to strive for maximum participation (or that deceptively cosy word, ‘inclusion’) in any given project since that will increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. However, if the agenda is pre-set from outside the community, no amount of participation can enable community ownership of decisions or implementations. Mlama has long since highlighted grassroots experience as the foundation of a Tfd methodology to avoid domestication: ‘First is the recognition of the people’s way of life as the starting point in development action. Popular Theatre begins with the grassroot community and with what its members think are the major concerns of their lives’ (Mlama 1991: 203). As an illustration of the importance of people’s participation in mobilising for social change, I want to recall the famous instance of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s theatrical practice in relation to the Kenyan state.

Prior to his much-chronicled work with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ at the Kamĩriĩthũ Cultural Centre at Limuru, Ngũgĩ, with Micere Mugo, wrote *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* which was performed in English at the University Theatre in Nairobi before being taken to FESTAC in Lagos as an official Kenyan entry. Looked at solely from the aspect of content, it could be suggested that the play is every bit as subversive towards the government as anything created subsequently at Kamĩriĩthũ. Kimathi’s

final address to the people before sentence is passed upon him reads as follows:

Organize in your homes  
 Organize in the mountains  
 Know that your only  
 Kindred blood is he  
 who is in the struggle  
 Denounce those who weaken  
 Our struggle  
 by creating ethnic divisions  
 Uproot from you those  
 Who are selling out to imperialism  
 Kenyan masses shall be free!  
 (Ngũgĩ and Mugo 1976: 83–84)

As an attack upon the neo-colonial administration of Kenya, this is hardly disguised. Nevertheless, the response of the state was to embrace the cultural product, secure in the knowledge that its English language appeal was to a middle-class sector of the populace who would not be taking to the streets to demand revolutionary action. By contrast the script which the Ngũgĩs created from the community at Limuru, *Ngaa-hika Ndeenda* ('I Will Marry When I Want') earned them detention and exile and led to the razing of the Cultural Centre to the ground. It was the articulation of grassroots experience in the mouths of the people themselves that proved so frightening to the establishment:

The trumpet of the masses has been blown.  
 We are tired of being robbed  
 We are tired of exploitation  
 We are tired of land grabbing  
 We are tired of slavery  
 We are tired of charity and abuses.  
 (Ngũgĩ and Ngũgĩ 1982: 116)

This famous example from *Kamiriithũ* illustrates Zakes Mda's hypothesis around what he termed 'optimal intervention' where the material of the drama derives from community experience but is shaped by what he calls 'the catalyst'; today usually termed a facilitator:

Theatre-for-development practitioners, in their dramatization work with local communities, should create a balanced situation that will result in optimal intervention. Optimal here refers to the most favourable or desirable condition. Optimal intervention would therefore mean the best compromise between the opposing tendencies of participation and intervention. As in the case with optimal heterophily, there cannot be set a standard of what optimal intervention is. All that can be said is that it is attained at that point when intervention is just sufficient to serve the three functions – naming, reflection, action – and does not go to the extent of imposing the catalyst's own views and values on the process of dramatisation...

This finding places a great responsibility on the catalyst. It confirms an assertion [...] that catalysts must have a higher level of social consciousness than the villagers. Without this higher level of social consciousness – and of critical awareness – they cannot play their interventionist role effectively, and the villagers will remain unconscientised through the theatre (Mda 1993: 173).

Mda's assertion begs the question of how this 'higher level of social consciousness' is achieved. Some might answer that it is the role of the university to train facilitators to just such a level and that Mda's call has been responded to throughout the last thirty years by the plethora of courses which have sprung up, offering degrees in applied, community, social theatre. Does this in turn create a cadre of experts in search of suitable places to practise? Are university trained facilitators imbued with a burning sense of injustice and a desire to change the world? How many of those who might loosely be termed 'the oppressed' find their way onto such courses in order to return to their native communities as TfD facilitators? A cursory glance around the world is not encouraging, perhaps because the funding that enables them to operate in the

field at all, also prevents them from exercising ‘social consciousness’ and ‘critical awareness’.

Whether conducted in institutional or informal contexts, I believe that the corner-stones of such training are to be located in the theories of Paulo Freire and Bertolt Brecht; specifically, around the concepts of ‘codification’ and ‘*Verfremdung*’. Freire makes explicit how the facilitator is to employ codes in the organisation of a praxis:

The first requirement is that these codifications must necessarily represent situations familiar to the individuals whose thematics are being examined, so that they can easily recognize the situations [...]. It is inadmissible [...] to present pictures of reality unfamiliar to the participants. The latter procedure [...] cannot come before the more basic one dictated by the participants’ state of submersion, that is, the process in which individuals analysing their own reality become aware of their earlier, distorted perceptions and thereby arrive at a new perception of that reality (Freire 1972: 86).

Earlier, Brecht had reflected upon a similar process in the context of theatre, a process which he termed *Verfremdung*:

For them to be able to doubt all these things that they take for granted, they would need to develop that strange gaze with which the great Galileo observed a swinging chandelier. He was astonished by these oscillations as if he had not expected them to be like that, and so could not understand them, which led him to establish the laws that governed them. This gaze, as problematic as it is productive, is what the theatre must provoke with its representations of the way people live together. It must make its audience feel astonishment, and this can be achieved by techniques that make the familiar seem strange.

(Brecht 2014: 242)

Unless what is presented is familiar, it will have no resonance with participants/audiences. Yet, if it is only familiar, it will not stimulate the desire for change. The educational power of theatre lies in its combination of empathy with distance for this combination offers the key to new

knowledges, new possibilities for changing the world. Both *Verfremdung* and codification are counter-hegemonic strategies designed to strip externally imposed ideological frameworks from the lived experience of those who are oppressed by such frameworks. In this era of fake news and anti-social media it is a critical function of facilitation to offer Tfd participants the tools with which to make optimal interventions into their realities. As reflective, self-conscious beings we are constantly attempting to understand and interpret our experiences. To do so in a manner that leaves us with the agency to act upon such understandings, it is important to decode the mediations through which they are being manipulated; these days often by computer-generated algorithms. Only when we own our experience and take control of its meaning, in Freire's term 'name the world', can we begin to intervene in the wider world. Tfd is a vital resource for live encounters where empathy engages with criticality as an antidote to the ubiquitous echo-chambers of (anti) social media. Through Tfd we can explore the range of human altruism directed at our fellow humankind and beyond our own species to encompass the planet itself.

In Tfd, interventions are fundamentally playful in all three senses of the word. Firstly, participants enter into a process where they play together, creating and improvising back to a lost childhood or perhaps a childhood never experienced. Secondly, the process typically leads to the making of plays either within the closed space of a drama workshop or as a public theatrical event with a target audience. Thirdly, there is play in the process in the sense of movement, flexibility, changes of position as when we speak of materials having 'play' in them. The playful drama requires fluidity of a kind that opens up an opportunity for empathy, for exploring the self in the other and the other in the self. This happens when we take on a character who appears initially antithetical to us or beyond our experience and when the gap is opened between the actor and the character even when we are dramatizing our own story. The retelling, structured into the drama, creates a distance between the actor and the character into which critical reflection on the relationship between ourselves and the wider world can occur. As Boal's use of the term 'joker' suggests, there is an intrinsic, deep connection between facilitation and fooling:

We propose a “Joker” who is a contemporary and neighbour of the spectator. For this it is necessary to restrict his “explanations”; it is necessary to move him away from the other characters, to bring him close to the spectators.

Within this system, the “explanations” given periodically are designed to make the performance develop on two different and complementary levels: that of the fable (which can use all the conventional imaginative resources of the theater), and that of the “lecture,” in which the “Joker” becomes an exegete. (Boal 1979: 175)

In speaking of the two levels Boal might equally be referring to a character such as Azdak in Brecht’s *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* who operates as a protagonist within the fable and as a commentator upon it with both functions fusing when he takes on the role of Judge. In turn Brecht, as he acknowledged in his notes to the play, is reaching back to the tradition of Shakespeare who developed the persona of the semi-detached fool, exploiting the capacities of Robert Armin. That persona is most fully exemplified in the characters of Feste and Lear’s Fool. Folly, besides speaking truth to power, is the time-honoured device for exploding contradiction and dislodging the fixed positions that stem from ideological certainty. The moral philosopher John Paul Lederach has drawn attention to the importance of the playfulness of art for ensuring the quality of our lives and the hope of our survival:

The greatest artists of all time had a knack for playfulness, for seeing life inside things. Too much seriousness creates art with a message but rarely creates great art. There is no scientific evidence that seriousness leads to greater growth and maturity, or insight into the human condition than playfulness. (Lederach 2005: 60)

It is this spirit of playfulness which informed Michael Etherton’s Tfd practice with Save the Children, framed within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular Article 13: ‘The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this freedom shall include the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas

of all kinds regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.' (UNICEF 2016).

The rights agenda developed through UN agencies stands in marked contradiction to the neoliberal policies to which the signatories to the CRC also subscribe. Indeed, the implementation of neoliberal economics guarantees that these rights are not fulfilled for the overwhelming majority of their populations. Nevertheless, within NGO discourses the evocation of rights in relation to TfD with young people has opened the door to practices of possibility and hope as Etherton articulates:

What constantly amazes us adults is the quality of the drama the young people create in the process of defining the infringement of their rights. In country after country, in culture after culture, children and young people have a beautiful sense of dramatic improvisation. Young people's art in all kinds of creative media, coupled with their struggle for their rights in an unfair world, stands a good chance of changing the future in ways we adults cannot now imagine. (Etherton 2006: 118)

## Conclusion

Today, as we contemplate the rich history of TfD and wonder what tomorrow may bring, I believe it is high time to, in Ngũgĩ's phrase, 'decolonise the mind' of all those engaged in TfD: practitioners, funders, universities, NGOs alike. Such a decolonisation requires a reversal, a *Verfremdung* of the familiar, dominant trope of development. For instance, the funds that emanate from the institutions of the so-called developed world are, in fact, nothing other than reparations or war damages for the centuries of exploitation and pillage that the colonised have suffered. As George Monbiot points out:

This accumulation of debt has been accompanied by a massive transfer of natural resources from the poor world to the rich world. If these resources were valued according to their utility, the nations of the poor world would surely be the creditors, and the nations of the rich world the debtors. As the Native American leader Guaicaipuro Cuautemoc has

pointed out, between 1503 and 1660, 185,000 kilogrammes of gold and 16 million kilogrammes of silver were shipped from Latin America to Europe. Cuautemoc argues that his people should see this transfer not as a war crime, but as 'the first of several friendly loans, granted by America for Europe's development'. Were the indigenous people of Latin America to charge compound interest on this loan, at the modest rate of ten per cent, Europe would owe them a volume of gold and silver which exceeded the weight of the planet. (Monbiot 2004: 157–8)

Not only is the industrial model of progress on which the developed world's prosperity is based rapidly making the planet uninhabitable, it was also funded by the theft of resources from those parts of the world which have contributed least to the process of ruination. Without resorting to some pre-colonial fantasy of a golden age, the time to learn from indigenous knowledge is overdue; Incas built earthquake-proof homes now studied by Japanese architects; Australian aboriginal peoples understood the significance of fire-breaks in the bush. The message for African Tfd is spelt out by Achille Mbembe:

Without a new ethics of recognition, solidarity and mutuality, the way most Western cultural funding (or for that matter development funding) agencies operate will become ever more destructive of the continent's capacity to culturally and artistically account for itself in the world. (Mbembe 2009: 2)

Since Mbembe spoke these words, the urgency of the climate emergency has made them yet more relevant for the future development of Africa and for the ultimate survival of human life on this planet:

... there is little doubt that another crisis will see us in the streets and squares once again, taking us all by surprise. The real question is what progressive forces will make of that moment, the power and confidence with which it will be seized. Because these moments when the impossible seems suddenly possible are excruciatingly rare and precious. That means more must be made of them. The next time one arises, it must be harnessed not only to denounce the world as it is, and build fleeting

pockets of liberated space. It must be the catalyst to actually build the world that will keep us all safe. The stakes are simply too high, and time too short, to settle for anything less (Klein 2014: 466).

Theatre for Development in Africa must be recruited as one of these 'progressive forces' because it has the methodologies through which the lived experiences of communities can be harnessed in the search for environmentally friendly, sustainable ways of being. Specifically, Tfd has a crucial role to play (the pun is intentional) in bridging the gap between climate scientists and the general public because it communicates on an affective level, engaging bodies, minds and emotions in ways that create empathic bonds amongst people and between people and their environment. Tfd can support scientists in communicating evidence as opposed to fake news to the public. Equally important, it can also communicate real experiences of climate emergency back to the scientists in order that they have a felt understanding of what is at stake. Empathy is the spring-board to action. I finish where I began, with Brecht: 'Taught only by reality can/Reality be changed.' (Brecht 1977: 34)

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# Disrupting the Performance in the Evolutionary Journey(s) of Theatre for Development in Africa

Oga Steve Abah

From the day I received the invitation to contribute to this volume, I have battled with the content. It is not that I am short of what to write. It has been because of the difficulty of what to include and what to leave out. Such is always the dilemma when you have to compress experiences of 44 years to a very short performative article! My second dilemma has been whether to present a strict academic paper or to tell stories of wonderful learnings over these four decades plus! I like storytelling; but I also acknowledge that this is an academic adventure. So, I have chosen to tell stories as well as try to sound like an academic! Perhaps the combination will contextualize this paper academically through storytelling!

## The Disruption Starts

Listen to this:

<i>Ndamature, ndama togblega!</i>	<i>I stand at the waterfront, and I watch!*</i>
<i>Ndamature ndama togblega</i>	<i>I stand at the waterfront, and I watch!</i>
<i>-} 2x</i>	<i>Tortoise and God have made a wager!</i>
<i>Ikinabo d'Owoicho chogwo ne</i>	<i>I stand at the water's edge and watch!</i>
<i>Ndama togblega!</i>	<i>I stand at the waterfront, and I watch!</i>
<i>Ndamature ndama togblega</i>	<i>Tortoise the proud trickster has made a wager with God</i>
<i>Ar'Ojokwupa d'Owoicho chogwo!</i>	<i>At the water's edge!</i>
<i>Ndama togblega!</i>	<i>I stand at the water's edge and watch</i>
<i>Ndamature ndama togblega</i>	<i>And look, God has lost the wager!</i>
<i>An'ogwo l'Owoicho kwu ne!</i>	<i>I stand and watch at the water's edge!</i>
<i>Ndama togblega!</i>	<i>I stand at the water's edge and watch!</i>
<i>Ndamature ndama togblega</i>	

*\*\* The translation of the refrain, 'ndamature, ndama togblega' in this song was done for me in 1980 when I was researching the Storytelling Tradition of Idoma for my MA studies. It is an esoteric folklore language, not derived from any of the extant variants of Idoma language!*

I have chosen this song to frame my exposition because of the unconventionality of its content. In the upbringing and daily lives of many of us, God is infallible. He is invincible. In this song, drawn from Idoma folklore, however, a 'mortal' in the form of Tortoise outwits God in a wager. The significance of the song for me is the challenge of the established belief system of the supremacy of Godhead. It is a disruption of the taken-for-granted notion of power, knowledge and intelligence. Secondly, I have always argued that the connectedness of TfD to the people lies in its respect for, and in the use of cultural forms of communities where it is practiced to tell their stories. It is therefore interesting that this song establishes departure, not acquiescence or docility. I have characterized this as *perforaltics* in my book, *Performing Life: Case Studies in the Practice of Theatre for Development* (Abah 2005). I started this discourse with a folk song because it captures the spirit in which I want to cast Theatre for Development (TfD).

I am assuming that readers of this volume might be familiar with Theatre for Development. Nonetheless, I want to explain my understanding of what it is for the benefit of those who may not be so familiar with the form. TfD is the practice in which ordinary persons in disadvantaged communities (very often with the collaboration of amateurs) research and perform their issues and problems in order to better understand them and to find solutions. This is a working definition open for discussion of course.

## Between TfD and Development

There is an undeniable relationship between TfD and development. My own understanding of development is that it is a whole process and practice that leads to change and transformation in the lives of people. This process involves making visible hitherto unresearched and unanalyzed issues in communities, whether rural or urban, that have not allowed people to live fulfilled lives. We must ask here about what the process involves and who drives it. I believe that when we frame the practice in national terms, we know that government is the driver in respect of planning and allocating resources: national governments, regional governments, international governments and coalitions/car-

tels (the biggest of which are IMF, World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), etc. The next question for me is development for whom? The usual answer from government and international development agencies and big financial institutions is: the poor? How? Give them jobs so they spend all their lives toiling! Give them loans so that they can never gain freedom and independence! Make no mistake, the first and biggest beneficiaries of development are the rich! The project of development is for me like a series of energies colliding, coalescing and separating into many interests. Which one gets fulfilled depends on the power of the group championing it. Whose voice counts? (Chambers 2005). The ordinary workers, the farmers, the labourers, the academics – all of us are victims of the eschatology of development! Yes. Development is eschatological. Let me explain:

There is an intriguing similarity between the preaching of religion and that of development. They both talk of prescribed ways or patterns of behavior and action with attendant outcomes of rewards or punishment as the case may be. Whereas in theological terms, eschatology is about death, judgment and the destiny of the soul or humankind, in development it is about paradigms and strategies, which if followed yield good results. In the eschatology of religion, you go to heaven or hell. In designing the paradigm of development to follow, you are either judged to adhere to rules – and you get a World Bank loan as reward, or you are a development heretic and you become ‘a failed state’! And there have been several such paradigms ranging from the trickle down to assistentialism and the new penchant for participatory development. Interestingly, the victims of these theories have been both the intended beneficiaries and theorists of development themselves. The theorists are caught up in their paradigms, which may not have been well cooked, verified and validated by the long-standing and tested knowledge that the intended beneficiaries have (Okwori 2002). So, they fail and hobble back into their studies with the justification that it is the illiterate, backward people that refused new ideas! On the other side, the ordinary men and women in poor urban and rural communities are left bemused at the deafness of the book people to hear wisdoms that could enrich and allow a nuanced approach to doing development. The result is that they are abandoned and on many occasions are bypassed by the flight

path of development and left to their fates in their communities of 'hell'. Herein lies the eschatological similarity. Let me say that the 'conditionalities' at play here also include either for ordinary citizens to renounce their knowledges or to cede them to the 'experts' to re-imagine and represent. Such is prevalent in the practice of theorizing development, offering guidelines and manuals, patenting indigenous knowledge by transnational organizations for profit in abandonment of the owners. This is perhaps a more pernicious set of conditions than the fiduciary ones that lie on the surface when nations negotiate loans and development assistance from the IMF, World Bank, the Paris Club, etc. It is more devastating because it amounts to the loss of essence of the community, self-esteem and obliteration of a legacy of science and knowledge. I believe therefore, that as a community of people interested in community development, our mission and role may therefore include understanding the importance of legacy institutions in communities and in supporting vulnerable groups against the appropriation of their good practices. Listen to this: *'Words from the heart are more alive than your scribblings. When we speak our words burn.'* (quoted in Slim and Thompson 1993, 1).

In talking about, in theorizing and in doing development, it is possible to reverse the eschatology of development from that of condemnation to that of the affirmation and validation (i.e. recasting eschatology of death to that of life.) This may be possible when we conquer the prevalent way of thinking, understanding and of doing development by interrogating the pronouncement as well as the performance of theories and practice of development. I want to also situate this reversal in the general frame under which development functions. One is the knowledge and wisdom of the citizens; and the second is the governance and government system that decide the course of development. And, that beyond improvement, the people have control of their resources. (Chambers 2005: 186; Abah 2007). Therefore, good development must be seen as activities undertaken with acceptance as well as the participation of the communities to achieve the improved lives of the people.

The problem that development faces therefore appears to be the constant repetition of the expert syndrome approach, even after so many decades of seeing and acknowledgement by development institutions

that it does not always work, when beneficiaries have not been given the opportunity to determine the development they want in order for their lives to be improved. Yet, the same mistake of deciding development for people is still being repeated (Slim and Thompson 1993: 4). Stories and case studies abound from Ethiopia (Wordofa 1998), India (Kamal and Philips 1998), Nigeria (Abah et al. 2011) and Bangladesh (Kabeer 2000) that where ordinary persons are given the opportunity to make choices, development is far more organic and more sustained and can be scaled up. The opposite also holds true that where decisions are imposed or where the majority is sidelined, the chaos that results scuttles the prospect of development (Abah et al. 2012). All of these may sound familiar and perhaps seem overworked! Yet, there has always existed a taken-for-granted belief that some people know and others do not know what is good for them, and what needs to be done!

The second level of governance that is important in this discussion is the extent to which ordinary citizens are guaranteed roles to play in the process, especially those that have direct impact on their lives. We have to understand that the universe of development defines sectors and beneficiaries. The sectoral organization of development is supposedly meant for the planners and implementers to make sense of needs and to adequately address them. All of these imply roles, choices and actions that speak of good governance, whether it is economic, political, or developmental. The deficit in our development process is absence of coherent transparency and accountability, which demonstrate good practice, and which make for inclusion so that beneficiaries are not by-passed in the flight path of development.

Following from the above, it appears that there is an underlying issue of democratization of knowledge and of rights to decision-making in the development process, which may or may not have been realized in many instances. It is now common knowledge that for development to take place there should be an enabling environment in which several factors are favourable. One such critical factor is good governance, that is: people believing in the system, that they have the opportunity to be part of the governing system, and that it should be sustainable. What we do today should guarantee existence and continuity going forward.

## The Connection Between Theatre and Development

There is an undeniable connection between theatre and development. Theatre tells development stories. Beyond telling stories, theatre interrogates development. In its agenda of changing perspectives, it also sets the agenda for development. It is a vehicle through which communities perform their live issues and experiences, which are developmental in nature. We also know that development has several sectors (social, economic), and that the broader canvas against which all of these should be viewed is governance. Theatre for Development, the genre of theatre that this collection of essays address is perpetually of relevance.

TfD is no longer one thing. It is a constellation of practices working together to change or disrupt negative energies that have characterized development. It is a process (theatre, participatory learning and action (PLA), songs, dances, etc.) of challenging the eschatology of development. It is this constellation of cooperation that I have characterized as ‘methodological conversation’ (Abah 2003). When this constellation of people and practices disrupt the eschatology of development, then we can say that TfD is dynamic! Let me repeat: that the intriguing similarity between the preachment of religion and that of development is that they both talk of prescribed ways or patterns of behavior and action with attendant consequences of rewards or punishment as the case may be. Very often, the people who judge and sentence you do not understand your circumstance. Herein lies the injustice, the gap, the failure of mainstream development. My question, therefore, is how may we disrupt this eschatology of punishment in order to recast it as an eschatology of life?

## The Journey Begins

*“In the beginning the theater was the dithyrambic song: free people singing in the open air. The carnival. The feast. Later the ruling classes took possession of the theatre and built their dividing walls... the coercive indoctrination began!” Boal (1985: 119)*

The evolutionary journey of Theatre for Development (TfD) in Africa has been a journey of disrupting the forces that have sought to anni-

hilate the practices, knowledges and activities that were written, codified and implemented by indigenous societies. The quote above, from Augusto Boal's book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, points to appropriation of indigenous practices without the permission and participation of the people who originated and owned the practices. On the other hand, TfD has been a journey of reclaiming what the elite appropriated – ranging from the performative, the economic, through to the spiritual to the scientific. We began what is today known as Theatre for Development as Popular Theatre. At the time (and perhaps still so) popular theatre was theatre of the people speaking about their own issues, in their own language(s), and making use of their cultural forms. There is a picture of oneness even in talking about difficult issues in this definition. In this seminal book, Boal also talks about how the elite appropriated the collective space and stole the dithyramb. I dare say that our practice of Theatre for Development in Africa has been about how to recover the dithyramb. Mark you, the dithyramb for me here is symbolic of ownership, of knowledge and of performance of such knowledge. Sometimes the battle to recover the dithyramb is ironically prosecuted by those who stole the rhythm! Take the case of *Laedza Batanani* in Botswana for example. It was the Government, who in frustration that the people were not buying into their development plans and practices, turned to Ross Kidd and Martin Byram in the Adult Education Faculty to help in mobilizing the citizens to accept Government's development agenda. Ross Kidd and his colleagues adopted Popular Theatre as their strategy. In this early phase of what is today known as TfD, the approach, as Kidd called it, was outside-in. This was the approach of outsiders packaging drama pieces on specific development issues as contained in the Government blueprint to persuade citizens to adopt them. The performances, which took place in open village spaces invited comments and 'participation'. In the euphoria of this new frontier for Adult Education, Kidd and colleagues were convinced that their practice was Freirean in spirit and practice! However, many years later, they realized and admitted that their approach was pseudo-Freirean.

In Zambia, where Chikwakwa was also taking root under Michael Etherton, there was uncertainty as to where Shakespeare would meet Kabwe Kasoma. Interestingly, however, it was Kabwe Kasoma's injunc-

tion that: “*Instead of expecting the people to go to the theatre, let theatre go to the people*”, that Chikwakwa listened to Kabwe Kasoma by taking theatre to the villages. In this early period, the digest of plays that the villages were treated to was a mish-mash of adaptations of Western as well as locally-made plays from the University of Zambia (UNZA) (Kerr 1995; Etherton 2011). Chikwakwa laid a good foundation and provided lessons from which other countries learned. It was these two experimentations that also gave rise to Tshwarang Bosele in Swaziland; Chalimbana in Tanzania and the Tfd practice in Malawi where Chris Kamlongera was in the lead, Marotholi Theatre where Zakes Mda (1993) was making ‘people play people’. In all of these, the operational sites were the Universities. I see an ironical twist here: the government elite may have inadvertently tried to return the dithyramb by running to the academic elite to recruit the ordinary citizens to ‘save themselves from destruction.’ For me, it was the academia that may have abrogated the return – perhaps because we did not understand the event well. Nonetheless, the academic institutions had started an interrogation of established development practices. And the character of this interrogation was defined by social analysis and experimentation. I believe that the overall question that lay at the background of all of these was, what is the meaning of theatre to development and to its own environment of operation?

The answer to this question for me is contained in the events and projects in Kamiriithu (Kenya) and Soba (Nigeria) both in 1977. Others in different parts of Africa followed. In a 1982 article, published in *Theatre Research International*, Michael Etherton and myself, explained the philosophical background of the Samaru and Community Theatre Projects in Nigeria as moving theatre away from ‘a peeping relationship’ to society to a more engaged one. We are also told in Ngūgī’s account of the Kamiriithu project in his book, *A Writer’s Prison Diary*, (1981) that it was an old woman who one early morning tapped on his door to throw a challenge that he and his colleagues should put their knowledge to the benefit of the ordinary people of Limuru. In that challenge, the woman was asking for a methodology to talk about their woes and worries; she was looking for a means of talking to authority. She wanted a platform for voice articulation; she was looking for partnership. But above all,

she wanted action and change. The work that followed this call by the woman was the mobilization of ordinary women and men to discuss how governance under President Arap Moi did not favour them. They stated their issues in songs, dance and performance. Beyond singing and dancing and performing their problems and demands, they built a physical structure that would be a legacy of their voices; a structure that would become a site for debating and interrogating the government of Kenya. But the empire fought back and the theatre was demolished and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o jailed. Ngũgĩ wa Mirii and others fled into exile. In spite of all of the demonstration of power by Government over the voices of those for whom governance should serve, the story of Kamirithu remains a strong legacy that TfD continues to learn from.

The Samaru and Community Theatre Projects in Nigeria, which have continued to date, have taken Chikwakwa and Laedza Batanani forward by finding pathways beyond pseudo-Freireian methodology. Soba District gave us the opportunity to talk with community members on the burning issues of fertilizer shortage and other farm inputs. It became a platform through which farmers discussed the 'Operation Feed the Nation' programme of the Nigerian government to promote agriculture and food security (Abah 1992; Anpe 1992). In the Bomo and Lansanawa projects in the 1980s, the dispossession of ordinary persons through the sale of land was made evident through the drama performances. We also learned about the strategic role of *roko* (praise-singing) as a storytelling form and, where necessary, turning it into an invective against authority (Bappa 1982). When in 1983 TfD practitioners gathered in the Murewa District in Zimbabwe to use the creative means of TfD to x-ray the reconstruction efforts after the freedom struggle led by Robert Mugabe that liberated Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), the Zaria model provided part of the template. The Murewa District workshop quartered all the practitioners in a primary school in the district so that it gave everyone the opportunity to experience the rhythms of community life in the evenings – listening to their stories, joining in the drinking of *chibuku* (locally brewed beer) and eating the local foods. Those moments yielded stories of worth to understand the war experiences of ordinary Zimbabweans and to better understand their aspirations in a post-war period. Reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation

were key words in the Murewa District Project. Although the approach adopted was not exactly a live-in one in which amateurs stayed in the villages of Karumazondo and Dombwe, it was not facilitators making theatre, which they took to the communities. The community members made the drama alongside the facilitators and performed for their communities to open discussions of the three keywords prevailing in their lives at the time.

**Approaches and Styles** –The journeys that TfD has undertaken in the last half century in Africa have been journeys through diverse ideological and cultural landscapes. They have also been journeys through various discursive strategies and approaches. Nomenclatures have also changed in the process. We started with the name Popular Theatre through Theatre for Integrated Development and Community Theatre for Integrated Rural Development. A number of things were clear in this journey: the practice was in search of definition with which it would be identified. Second, it was a journey that engaged the practitioners in analyzing the terrain of their operations. The analyses told us that there were issues of governance, gender, participation and inclusion. They also revealed to us that there was a battle being waged between the rulers and the ruled. Therefore, if the practice was going to have relevance it needed to determine which side of the battle it would join. We joined the marginalized and the oppressed. In other words, we made a choice to disrupt the performance of discrimination against the poor. It was a complex and delicate fight because it looked like catapults versus machine guns! Perhaps without knowing it, the early days of theatre for the people may have been a strategic approach of testing the waters. Practitioners went in to catalyze knowledge; to raise consciousness and to make change, and then ran away again! This is what Ross Kidd characterized as ‘outside-in’ and I later called this the ‘migrant method’. It was safe because practitioners were a little unsure about whether communities would accept them. We were also still learning the craft and perhaps it was safe to stay away from trouble. At this early stage Popular Theatre packaged drama performances of the issues away from the people and gave them a show.

Several things were inappropriate in the migrant method of theatre for the people. One was the expert thinking of appropriating knowl-

edge of how to make theatre; we thought that we were the ones who knew how to make theatre! Second, we assumed we knew the problems and the solutions so we were going to conscientize the villagers! Missionary thinking! But very often we were humbled! Three, very often the dramas prescribed solutions, which were not realistic in the lives of the communities. Eventually, we recognized these pitfalls and so the next stage of working together with the people started – theatre with the people. In this stage there was more collaboration and more participation. The drama was beginning to originate organically. This rung of the ladder was a step towards taking us to the point of theatre by the people for the people. This stage, which TfD always looks for, is the point where there is a consciousness by the people to understand why certain problems exist in their environment, what and who may be the causative factors and the need for collective action. Theatre for Development at such moments becomes a tool of discussion, of analysis and a means to build community cohesion. As Boal says, it is the people who are now wielding the weapon!

Community rhythms, community life as entry points and as vehicles for the TfD process became better understood in the 1989 Theatre for Integrated Development (TIDE) workshop in the communities of Onyuwei, Adankari and Otobi in Nigeria. When Etta, a female singer in Onyuwei set up a counter performance in her operatic compere of the performance, it was not because anyone scripted or rehearsed her performance. When Agboji, the village chief, took on the directorial role by telling actors what to do, when to go on the attack, it was not because he was part of the rehearsal. That was why Ndumbe Eyoh (Cameroon) screamed for help and Ghonche Materego (Tanzania) devised a quick escape route from the wrath of the community members when the barrier between fiction and reality collapsed in the performance arena. The account of this experience is well documented in my book, *Performing Life: Case Studies in the Practice of Theatre for Development* (2005). When Penina Mlamba stirred the women of Chalimbana, they roared that their village was on fire! The fire in the village was the fire of new knowledge; and that knowledge arose from the songs and dances creating a community of interrogators and discussants using performance to x-ray their society. In Zimbabwe, the cultural forms of *mbira* and

*pungwe* defined the performances. In Marotholi, Lesotho where Zakes Mda was making people play people, the definition of self, of community and of communicating their issues were through cultural exploration. In short, all over Africa such has been the story.

Let me now talk briefly about the environment and sites, as well as some of the underpinning ideologies framing the practice of Theatre for Development. Firstly, I wonder why TfD in Africa first started in Southern and Eastern parts of the continent. Secondly, why did they mostly start from the academic institutions all over Africa? I would like to say that TfD (known as Popular Theatre) at the time, began its journey in an invited space. It was the government development space; and this occurred due to the frustration and inability of government to devise a development plan that was acceptable or participatory. Thirdly, it had no understanding of the horizontal means of communication other than the top-down strategy that it knew and was used to. Once TfD was invited into the development space, academic institutions needed to analyze the context, the discursive strategies and a corresponding approach that would be inclusive. In both Botswana (Laedza Batanani) and Zambia (Chikwakwa), the ideological position of Paulo Freire regarding dialogics, which challenged top-down approaches (which he characterized as banking system of education), was seductive. However, the methodological approach was an invited one in which communities were called to shows discussing their issues. In other words, the government invited academia, and the academia invited the people, although in the case of Nigeria, academic participation was not invited. Instead, there was a focus on topical issues around the Government programme of 'Operation Feed the Nation', a green revolution programme to achieve food sufficiency and security. Nonetheless, the early days of Popular Theatre in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (Nigeria) also followed this pattern of inviting the people to shows, albeit in their communities. It was Kamiriithu that reversed the pattern when community invited academia. And we know the outcome! This leads me to a question I have nursed for a long time. It is this: did the socialist orientation of East and Southern African governments (Mwalimu Nyerere's *Ujamaa* in Tanzania; Kaunda 'humanism' in Zambia; Obote in Uganda; Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya) offer a favourable environment for the practice?

I have been equally curious why TfD thrived in West Africa, where the environment was militarized: Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia. I want to venture an answer that the quest and passion for freedom fuelled a socialist ferment in nearly all the African countries and the Universities. TfD benefitted from this. As a matter of fact, TfD's heyday in Nigeria coincided with the military period. The steam ebbed after civil/democratic rule was established. Is this not ironical? I want to point to a few lessons from all these observations:

- It was when people began to play people (Zakes Mda) and they started to perform life (Abah) that voice and the notion of cultural action for education (Freire) was understood and activated.
- The role of TfD as development communication becomes fully fulfilled when it talks and relates with people from their cultural roots/rhythms
- The discourse of TfD has several strands ranging from the romantic, the theoretical to the practical. However, as we talk about the efficacy of TfD today, we must also go beyond the romance of the practice to also being aware of the difficulties of a practice whose thrust is to disrupt the performance of oppression.
  - Remember the case of Kamiriithu. It shows that authority does not just sit back and watch us call their practice to question. That is why the dances were stopped! When in in Bomo and Lansanawa (Nigeria), the drama called on community members to dance to the songs of invective against their rulers, the authorities closed the door and warned that if the team continued work in the community, they could not guarantee their safety!
  - In Mazah, the men declared they would no longer carry women up the hill to the hospital when they fall sick; because the women challenged their choice of what the burning development issue was.
- TfD is a practice that authority constantly wants to infiltrate, domesticate and usurp. For example, when the military government 'invaded' the TfD space in Nigeria in 1989 under its populist programme of mass mobilization for social and economic recovery (MAMSER), we warned that they were making a mistake because TfD would not sing their praises. They doubted the practitioners, believing that funding TfD would woo us over, and that they could

appropriate the practice. But when the critical tone of TfD and its interrogative penchant did not change after a couple of community encounters, the government withdrew its funds!

## Impact, Trends and New Areas

In the fifty-year journey of Theatre for Development in Africa, the achievements have been numerous. They obviously vary from country to country. It is however possible to point to some of the pertinent achievements and impacts.

- i. Since its small beginnings in the 1970s TfD has today become a household name in academic institutions offering theatre studies all over Africa. It is difficult to find any theatre programme in an African University that does not refer to TfD, even if it has not established it as a full course of study.
- ii. TfD has changed its lexicon of participation in the theoretical discourses of theatre studies from performing *deus ex machina*-like issues on behalf of the viewing audience to a new language of people interrogating and performing issues together. This means disciplinary boundaries have been transgressed from performance to development. It is this disciplinary transgression that has allowed methodological conversations to occur and has become an emerging theoretical consideration in TfD.
- iii. Over the years, the performative ethics of TfD in communities which included songs, dances, and other cultural forms, have moved beyond serving as coloration and beautification of performances to becoming quintessential in the framing and narratology of TfD. This accounts for why Etta in Onyuwei was able to set up an operatic narrative text whose trajectory was contrapuntal to, and yet operating from within an existing performance text! This, and many other such experiences are what gave rise to my thoughts on 'perforaltics'.

Perforaltics is the oral and gestural amalgamation of a community's cultural systems into a dramatic representation of their own reality. The oral which names and codifies the issues in this system of performance does not only refer to dialogue. It is about the gamut of language which

includes speech, song, drum and dance. They expound and locate the community's philosophy and ethos... Perforaltics in action is, therefore, the deployment of the oral and gestural instruments in the performance warehouse of the performer in the pursuit of creating a picture and in generating meaning. It is the practice in which a dramatic piece is created through an essentially oral process incorporating, if not entirely relying on, the performance modes of the community giving such drama life and meaning (Abah 2005: 41).

- iv. The name of this practice/discipline is not Theatre for Development for nothing! The name already suggests a bridge between disciplinary boundaries. Tfd has proven that it understands development – perhaps far more than many disciplines that have positioned themselves in the middle of development. In the fifty years of journeys across different countries of Africa, Tfd has been able to shift the thinking and understanding of what development means. It has shown that one of the essential starting points is voice. Unless people are allowed to articulate their problems, their issues and what they feel, development interventions take place in the void! From Samaru, through Soba, Kwanga, Mazah, Onyuwei, Ukalegwu, to Kamiriithu, Murewa, Chalimbana, Marotholi, Turmi (Ethiopia), Kumba, etc., Tfd has contributed to opening voices and shedding light on the meaning of development that supports livelihoods and is sustainable. It has done so through respect for indigenous wisdoms and practices, even when it needs to challenge some of them. Conversation is at the heart of all these – conversation with people, methods, and issues. Tfd has therefore learned methodologically from such conversations. I dare say that the town and gown vision through which most tertiary institutions in Africa see themselves giving back to their catchment communities is partly fulfilled in the conversations and engagements that Tfd undertakes in communities.
- v. The experience of Tfd in academic sites has also led to the birth of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) taking the practice forward on a more regular and sustained basis. The Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA) and Youth Adolescent Reflection and

Action Centre (YARAC) are good examples in Nigeria. NPTA has been in existence for 31 years (in March 2020) and has executed over 30 projects in different development sectors all over Nigeria. It has also shared methodologies in training with many communities, CBOs and NGOs in Nigeria and in other countries.

- vi. Perhaps the ability of TfD to stand astride academia and community, of its ability to research, to tell stories and to enthuse for change may have attracted international development agencies and international non-governmental agencies (INGOs) in their development work. Cases in point in Nigeria are DFID, ActionAid, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, CordAid, SIDA, CUSO, UNICEF and some governmental agencies in different countries. I know these raises concerns in a number of ways. Are we being coopted?

## Challenges and new spaces to conquer

While all of these remain enduring lessons for TfD, we must also acknowledge the challenges that it has faced and will continue to face. We have already established that there are two tracks of TfD work in most parts of Africa. One is domiciled within academic institutions, in which students study it as an academic discipline and as a performance genre. The other track is the use by NGOs and development institutions and governments, where TfD is either a change agent or is seen as a campaign tool.

*Challenge One:* In the immediate term, the communities are study laboratories from which students seek to obtain good grades and to graduate with a good degree. One of the problems associated with this is that the engagement with communities may not be long-term. A further consequence is that the gains we make by raising consciousness, the linkages we start when we work together with community-based organizations, and the hope we build among animateurs and community people very soon die away. This has further implications in the form of frustrations arising from unfulfilled hopes of change, and communities begin to disbelieve or indeed reject us.

*Challenge Two:* The very success of TfD constitutes part of its challenge! It may now be essentialized and frozen in such a way that its

flexibility and openness are threatened. It is now common to insist on a strict adherence to prescribed stages of TfD. While we cannot eschew guidelines, rigidity works against what TfD stands for, which is creativity, adaptation to context rather than application under 'the rules are the same everywhere'! We need to counter this by reminding ourselves that the success of TfD as a disciplinary study is partly based on the acknowledgement that it is adaptive, it constantly grows and embraces other approaches, hence the 'methodological conversation'.

*Challenge Three:* There is still the belief among some academics and TfD enthusiasts that 'popular theatre' is a rough theatre that requires no skills or experience, and that anyone can do it (Ahura 1990). As a result, there exist many versions masquerading as Theatre for Development. When the application fails, it does disservice to the practice. TfD requires skill; it demands a nuanced understanding of community issues, community performance and facilitation of community discussion so that no TfD project produces a backlash. Therefore, training is essential (Iorapuu 2013; Abah 2004).

*Challenge Four:* Funding – My experience of forty-five years in this practice has shown that most TfD projects depend on donor funds. Such funds are not always guaranteed beyond the short project life. Therefore, there is no sustainability of the engagement with designated project communities. Compounding this is the shortage of personnel to commit to engagement with communities over a sustained period. Due to lack of funds to employ personnel, most people in national NGOs work part time or on a voluntary basis, while keeping their regular employment. This partly explains why a lot of NGO actors in Nigeria are also academics in universities.

*Challenge Five:* Theatre for Development is both research and action. Consequently, it requires evaluation of any project undertaken. This should take place three, six months or one year after the project. However, the reality is that very few TfD projects have such follow-up evaluations because the funding makes no such provisions. This has been one of the serious challenges to the practice and practitioners. The intensity of engagement through the TfD cycle in any community creates strong bonds, which is an advantage. In addition, it raises expectations. The flip side is that when community members have trusted facilitators and

have talked about their problems in the hope of solutions that do not happen, there is resentment. Communities therefore become unsure whether academic researchers and NGOs are indeed partners in progress.

*Challenge Six: Publications* – Although TfD has been going on for fifty years in most parts of Africa, there are not enough publications commensurate with the amount of work done and the period that this practice has been in existence. In the early years of TfD this was not the case. The enthusiasm about the new discipline spurned many publications. Are we now so familiar with the practice that we stopped publishing? We must write more, and not just for promotion, but for scholarship! Let us document, let us interrogate and let us make our theories out of our experiences!

**Where and What Next?** After fifty years, after several successes and after outlining some of the gaps, what next? Since most TfD engagements take place as funded projects, we need to think of ways to define a longer period of relationship with our project communities. The factors here are time and funds. The programme is time-bound as students have to graduate. I think that a creative customization of our time and programme can address this issue, if not completely, then partially. We need to look beyond the little funds given by universities and ask: How can university theatre departments secure funding to deepen their research and to increase contact with communities eager for change? I would suggest that one route is endowments. The second path is partnerships with INGOs, development agencies, ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). This might raise some eyebrows!

*Training* – TfD has gone beyond a rough theatre practice. It is about people and their lives. Therefore, the practice demands sensitivity, respect and nuancing. In an article on skills development in TfD, I asked this critical question: ‘How do animateurs manage research, drama and performance so that desired results become achievable?’ (Abah 2004)

This would seem to me the fundamental question in the Theatre for Development process. The answer to this may not be about gut feeling and gut reaction to deal with emerging issues, crises and contradictions. It is about the ability to understand the situation – the politics and cultural dynamics, the layers of meanings and the nature of relationship that exist in the community. Sometimes the ontological is important

in as much as development is not simply a satisfaction of the physical needs. The psychological, the spiritual, the religious and social must all be embedded in the process. These understandings are the first prerequisite. But beyond knowing the community, the ability to handle and manage difficult situations is unavoidable. So, the animateur must read meanings, must notice trends and sense dangers and conflicts. Very often, one may be required to think on his/her toes! Are all these abilities inborn or learned?

There is no doubt that the very first body of knowledge that we build our experiences on is our native intelligence. However, our environment and culture condition such intelligence. What may be considered appropriate in one cultural location may not apply in another. This is the whole *raison d'être* for an understanding of the prevailing traditions and politics in a place for TfD to be able to deal with issues. Caution: We must respect the sacredness of some of the cultural practices and keep them out of the remit of our engagement. How then may one apply the knowledge to doing TfD? The trajectory that I see would be a movement from native, inborn intelligence to the learned. This movement is not abandonment of what we already know and grew up with. Instead, it is an exercise of a more critical rapprochement and enhancement of the inborn with learned abilities.

*Writing and Documenting* – Who are we documenting for? We are documenting for other researchers like ourselves; we are documenting for development agencies and also for scholars and students. We are also documenting for the communities. These categories of users or stakeholders are the consumers of the document and perhaps the experience. The uses to which they are put, however varies, from one stakeholder to the other. The researchers may use it as a reference point to ask whether it is an example of good or bad practice. A benchmark can then emerge from here to be taken forward. The scholars and students would very often use it as teaching and learning materials respectively. Here it is a methodological issue of moving beyond failures or of improving on the practice. However, the community from where the experience is tapped remains outside benefiting from the reification of their experiences. In their own case, what happens is the exposure of their practices, problems and aspirations to others. What do they

gain from this? Very often, nothing! Sometimes another workshop! And perhaps some funds for certain community projects (such as the Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance was able to achieve in Otobi, Benue and Kwanga, Plateau States, where grinding machines were installed for women). Or perhaps a small gain in letting their voices be heard.

I also want to emphasize the importance of telling the Tfd story. It is in the documentation that we capture the stories. Such documentation may be workshop/project report, journal article or a book. Our stories outline community needs; they set out approaches; they offer templates upon which strategies and solutions are conceptualized. In this technological age there has been a lot of emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). But I draw readers attention to the relevance of our craft. That is why there is now STEAM – science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics! You know why? STEM must have a story to respond to; it must have an issue to address. Our responsibility is to tell the story. We must create the society in which STEM needs to operate. Our media and space for such stories are live performances, radio, television, cyberspace (social media). Let us engage in cyber skitting!

## Conclusion: An Epistolary Message to Our Tfd Ancestors

It is pertinent to see that, although Theatre for Development is a participatory tool for research and is part of the toolkit for development action, Tfd is not in itself a development solution. It is a process towards seeking solutions. When therefore, it is enlisted in the field either as a research tool, as an evaluation tool or as part of project implementation, it is best regarded as a storyteller that gives voice to communities to articulate their positions, to name their aspirations and it is a tool through which to discover their potentials and abilities.

While concluding, permit me to evoke, as well as send messages to some Tfd ancestors (living and dead). I begin with Michael Etherton who established the Theatre programme at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria in 1975. I was in the very first set of students who studied Drama/Theatre in that University, graduating in 1978.

**Michael Etherton:** You are a living ancestor and as you sit in your porch by the wind-swept seaside home in Cork, Ireland, let me tell you that the seed you planted 45 years ago has multiplied across the whole of the country and our names are heard and known all over Africa and the world. The games we played in the dust formed us and made us strong. Our community theatre practice is still alive. Tell the people of Chikwakwa that we have taken the lessons of their experience forward in Nigeria and many parts of Africa. If you are still in touch with Kabwe Kasoma, tell him that our community theatre practice has firmly established the practice and principle of 'theatre going to the people'. Another development of interest is that the Drama Village that you designed with Steve Ehrlich has become a pilgrimage site for those who want to learn about the relationship of performance space and cultural embeddedness. It has also become a heritage building for many theatre scholars in Nigeria. You may not know, but on the 35th anniversary of our first community project, I went back to Soba where the first community theatre performances took place; and know what? Some of the villages like Ungwan Tanimu, where we performed the Green Revolution skits in 1977, have become extinct! They told me the reason is 'development'! Everyone moved to Soba in search of the good things of life and the urban razzmatazz! Kai! Sadly, too, some of the vibrant people you nurtured have passed on – Michael Adeyemi, Michael Gujiya, Ishaya Blackman, Sale Dantala, Philemon Bagaiya, Inuwa Garba, Dave Gana, Jenks Okwori and lately, Segun Oyekunle and Okwute James Abah! But, be happy also that many of us have used the Tfd knowledge to chart different life paths, and we continue to hold the torch high: James Alachi, Andrea Jogo, Elizabeth Aleva, Data Fiberesima, Saddik Balewa, Ruth Sankey, Danladi Bako, Zainab Bewell, Shade Olatoye, Adetutu Abatan, Patricia Bala, Thomas Anpe, Samson Shuaibu, Mahmud Umar, Nathan Sanda, Taiye Ogundiran and my humble self, have made our mark in Nigeria and abroad. There is also a host of second-generation products all over Nigeria.

**Ross Kidd:** You are not far away in Botswana and I wish you were here. When we went to Benue State in 1981, I did not know that I would stick around with Popular Theatre/Theatre for Development for this long. The generation of students whom I have taught in these past forty-

three years now call me the Masquerade! Some call me an Ancestor! I agree to both! Perhaps I should learn to dance the ethereal TfD dance now! Listen, tell Martin Byram, and others with whom you blazed the path that we thank all of you for being pioneers. That is why Igyura, Wombo, Akpagher and Yandev in Benue State made meaning. I know Kees Epskamp and Tar Ahura who were part of that early experiment and theorization of Popular Theatre in Nigeria have passed on to be TfD Ancestors. But Iyorwuese Hagher and Frances Harding are still around. I cannot fill the pages with an unending eulogy because I have to dedicate some to others. What I can assure you is that your admission to accepting that your practice in the early years of Laedza Batanani was pseudo-Freirean opened our eyes and signposted the departure for a better practice. And so, when we met in Murewa, Zimbabwe in 1983, our approach was more nuanced and critical. Comrade Chimombe in Karumazondo taught us some useful community lessons through his mbira dancers who serenaded us. Do you remember the fight that the politicians engineered, which gave us entry points into community analysis? It is a long story which I shall leave for another day. Thank you for writing the chapter in *Theatre Unbound*... from your hospital bed. I pray the replaced hip is fixed and good now!

**Ngūgī wa Thiong’o:** When we met in Leeds in 2016 you were learning to play the piano! I am struggling to play the saxophone as my old age pastime too; and sometimes it takes so much effort to bring out any sound! I will improve by and by!

Let me now report to you that the lesson of disrupting the performance of corruption in Kenya, which was symbolized in the Kamiriithu project in 1977 is still a legacy we are learning from today. At the time, we did not know that Kamiriithu and Soba Project in Nigeria were taking place in the same year. That was when Michael Etherton, Brian Crow and Tony Humphries shepherded us into five villages in the Soba district to actualize Kabwe Kasoma’s injunction to take theatre to the people. Thank you for the play, *Ngaahika Ndenda (I Will Marry When I Want)* even though scholars of Theatre for Development have not stopped asking whether the play was written by you and Ngūgī wa Mirii. We know wa Mirii has crossed over to the ancestor world and cannot answer our queries anymore. I am not sure you are ready to

answer either. But the interrogative spirit represented in the Tfd arena is saying that after all the communal work in Limuru district with village women and men, *Ngaahika Ndenda* should have carried their names. Nonetheless, we cannot run away from acknowledging the price you paid in prison. We also remember your experiences that are well documented in *A Writer's Prison Diary* and *Barrel of A Pen* as testimonials to your courage. If you are still talking to Kimani Gecau and Waigwa Wacira, salute them for us. Finally, I ask that you teach us how to be courageous because now most of us, *including my own self writing these words to you*, only fight on the Internet and we are too afraid to sacrifice our comfort. What do we need to do differently? I await your response.

**Augusto Boal:** Sorry for breaking your legs in Los Angeles in a fall after we met at the workshop in Omaha, Nebraska, USA in 2005. How could I have known that the meeting in Omaha was going to be the last? Remember we talked about the possibility of your trip to Nigeria, which you were excited about? Well, it never happened. Also, I want you to know that Jenks, with whom I raised this idea, is there with you. Maybe you have met. I am sure you have, because we cannot have so many ancestors of Tfd over there without a performance taking place! Ndumbe Eyoh, Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ, Eberhard Chambulikazi, Eckhart Breitinger, Tar Ahura, Mapopa Mtonga, etc. The roll-call is painfully impressive. Well, Boal, the rehearsal has not stopped here. And the Forum is expanding. The gathering you see here is evidence enough. However, I am not sure that the forum is increasing at the sites where change is needed. Tell us, tell us please, if there are any new approaches that we do not know and may not be aware of so that we can deploy them to change the dance of the oppressors!

**Ndumbe Eyoh:** When in 1984 you led a determined team of animators to change the hammocks to an enduring bridge over the Mungo river to connect Konye, Ngolo-Bolo and Ndoi, you were applying the knowledge from the Murewa District (Zimbabwe) experience. You knew how to negotiate between the technocrats and the grassroots; you spoke English and French and the Aristocrats in Yaounde embraced you. Indeed, you had been part of them. Since you left, Cameroon has not been stable. The Anglophone and Francophone sections have been at war! There is an urgent need for dialogue. Freire taught us how; Boal

instructed on the process and when you screamed in Onyuwei that the people had taken over the drama process away from what the team had scripted, we could not help but evoke Bertolt Brecht when he said, “Our own conception of development is the people taking it over, deciding and controlling it.” I do not know if Bole Butake, with whom you ripped off the hammocks, is still alive. Penina Mlama, who was with you in Ngolo-Bolo, will bear witness to TfD actions in Cameroon. I have not heard from Asheri Kilo in many years. If you have not forgotten, and if you have been rehearsing the revolution in the ancestor world with Jenks and others, this is the time to strike!

**Rose Mbowa (Mama Africa):** Your power was in the ability to tell stories in the streets, in villages and in performance. You practiced when the denial of health issues, especially HIV-AIDS, was rife. You knew so well as the health ministry did, that the denial was not because the disease was a lie. It was due to fear. And you refused to be afraid. Well, I am wondering what has happened since you left. In 2013 I went to the University of Makerere, which was once upon a time the Harvard of Africa. Sadly, the havoc that Idi Amin unleashed in that place has not completely healed yet. I also travelled to Katanga, the largest slum in Kampala; and another slum, Bwaise 3. I was there with the Makerere Women’s Development Association (MAWDA) and Tusitukirewamu Cultural Association. We *TfDied* the many issues, ranging from overcrowding, sanitation, alcoholism, teenage pregnancy and a whole range of other health issues. The performance was electric and provocative. The community was angry at being so blatantly abandoned and the Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development (HEPS-Uganda), the NGO that organized the training, said it would intensify its work and advocacy on behalf of the people.

These were the issues you spent so much time sensitizing people on; you also tried hard to make government take action. Rose, I am sure you still remember the many problems of alcoholism, sanitation, the unchecked population and health implications. Sadly, Katanga had not changed when I was there. And, one of the politicians who watched our TfD performance in the street blamed the victims that it was embarrassing for the sanitation problem to be there! Nor has Museveni done anything! Mama Africa, they have not changed!

## The Zaria Quartet – Jenks Okwori, Samuel Kafewo, Martins Ayegba and Aisha Ali

When in that fell swoop on 7 February 2014, all four of you made the transition, you made me a chief without subjects! You left me stranded! It is not a departure that I can ever get used to. All I have done is accept that from that day I could no longer work with you. But I remember with fondness all that we built together: The Benue workshop of 1989 where we learned so powerfully the significance of the rhythm of community life as the driver to new consciousness. We saw the talent of community members who understood their terrain and overtook the egg heads in performing their lives. That is why Ndumbe screamed for help, and we shushed him to be silent to learn from the people. Ukalegwu and Ochobo taught us the resilience of women in their rugged environment. Mazah and Kwanga opened a space that was never collectively inhabited by women and men prior to our workshop. Jenks, Tor, Morrison, Christie, etc., did we not witness the debate on what development meant between men and women? Was it to be road or the control and ownership of land, the core livelihood asset? The women knew very well the value of land as invaluable asset and they discounted the call for road, as useful as it was in their daily struggles. Sadly, today the fear expressed by the women that the men would sell off the land and leave them landless has been largely proven to be right! The positive side of it is that our work bridged the gap between Jos and Mazah and young men from the village now have University degrees. I am praying that they will fight on the side of the poor.

There are many more experiences, all of which I do not have time to narrate. But I cannot forget Birnin Kudu, Ringim and Enugu, where Ogbodo danced. Jenks, Sam, Martins and Aisha, it was when your dance steps were beginning to catch fire that you left! As I continue to practice in your absence, I shall be looking to see if I can build new friendships, assemble a new team of performers with whom I can disrupt the performance of graft; a team that can address the issues of marginalization and establish a movement for transformative action.

On behalf of all practitioners globally, I solicit the support of you, our departed ancestors, and I beg to waken your anger so that the

forum can enlarge. I charge the living masquerades of Tfd practice as I evoke the spirit of Chikwakwa (Zambia), Laedza Batanani (Botswana), Kamiriithu (Kenya), Murewa (Zimbabwe), Chalimbana (Tanzania), Kumba (Cameroon), Onyuwei and Mazah (Nigeria), the many experiences in Lesotho, in Swaziland, in Sierra Leone, Uganda, Ethiopia, indeed, all over Africa for us to rewrite development in the language and the practice of those who own the earth – the ordinary women and men who toil every day.

## Epilogue: Avatars of Development

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me end with an epilogue that asks questions. What are we in the discourse and practice of development? Who are we in the constellation of people in the Theatre for Development universe? In addition to the above, let me also ask you this question: Are you here because you chose Theatre for Development, or did Tfd choose you? I repeat what I have said several times in the past that “No one chooses Tfd. Instead, Tfd chooses its practitioners.” (Kafewo et al. 2013). Many of the ancestors we just summoned were chosen by Tfd and they performed their bits till they passed on. My charge to everyone is that we shall be avatars who perform beyond theory, who do not only shout principles; but that we shall show that we are living masquerades who will engage in a practice of development that in true form will speak to life.

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# Theatre for Development in Africa: The quest for empowerment of grassroots communities for critical participation in development processes

Penina Oniviel Mlama

## Introduction

Theatre for Development (TfD) has received extensive scholarly attention and critique over the years and numerous publications on its history, theory and practice in Africa and the world at large are available. The purpose of this article, however, is to explore TfD practice as it relates to the empowerment of grassroots communities for critical participation in development processes. This has been the goal and indeed, the driving force behind the enormous efforts put into the TfD movement in Africa. After several decades of such efforts, there is need to take a step back and reflect on the extent to which TfD has achieved that goal to empower communities for their own development.

Let it be noted from the outset that the reference to Africa in this article is applied generally, noting that Africa is a big continent with fifty-four sovereign states. The practical participation of the author in TfD processes referred to in this article is limited to a small number of African countries including Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Gambia, Senegal and Namibia.

The first part of the article explores the socio-economic context of TfD and empowerment of grassroots communities. This is followed by a brief discussion on TfD as a development model and the forces behind its emergence. A discourse on TfD and the empowerment of grassroots communities for critical participation in development processes constitutes the next section where the main focus is on interrogating the challenges related to the process of empowerment of communities.

## The Socio-economic Context of TfD and Empowerment of Grassroots Communities

The notion of “empowerment of a people” connotes a context where there are two entities in conflict; one, a dominant, exploitative or oppressive and the other, a powerless entity bearing the brunt of this dominance and seeking to free itself from such bondage. In other words, the notion of empowerment is contextualized within a struggle for self-determination, for freedom and for socio-economic advancement.

The African continent’s history of subjection to slavery, feudalism, colonialism, capitalism, imperialism and a host of differently-styled oppressive regimes has persistently bred socio-economic contexts where the majority of the people have had to fight for their very survival.

In recent years, Africa is being projected as the rising continent, with statistics indicating that many of her countries are recording impressive annual economic growth of above 7%, beyond the global average of about 3%. Yet Africa’s grassroots people, who form the majority, are still wallowing in abject poverty. According to the World Bank, currently 69.9% of Africa’s population live on less than 2 US\$ a day. (World Bank 2019)

One illustration of the intensification of poverty in Africa is the high rates of unemployment of her youth. For example, Ethiopia, is said to hold the number one position for the fastest growing economy in the world with an annual economic growth of more than 8% (World Bank 2019). Yet hundreds of Ethiopian youth are frequently apprehended by the police in Tanzania, hidden in lorries and cargo containers, on transit to South Africa, in search of economic opportunities. Thousands of young people in West and North Africa have been labelled illegal migrants and are crossing the Mediterranean on a daily basis, in a search of better livelihoods in Europe, with hundreds of them drowning.

In most African countries, we witness a deeper entrenchment of the forces of capitalism and the unrelenting intensification of poverty among grassroots communities of small farmers, artisanal miners or fishermen. The forces of Africa’s exploitation have now extended beyond the former colonial powers to other players in Europe, America, China, Russia, Asia and Latin America. The techniques for the exploita-

tion of Africa's natural resources have become more sophisticated especially within the context of the fourth industrial revolution based on the new information technology, which is often beyond the comprehension of most African leadership and more so, grassroots communities. Mega corruption, economic mismanagement, mal-governance, ethnic tensions, political repression and armed conflict are tearing many African communities apart. Undemocratic rule, disregard for the rule of law and election rigging are preventing many nations from getting a leadership that is devoted to protecting the rights and welfare of the poor and marginalized. All these factors make TfD's goal to empower grassroots communities for self-determination more complex than might be expected.

As we discuss the role of Theatre for Development in empowering communities to effectively participate in processes of their development, we need to be reminded that, sadly, some artists in Africa have collaborated with the oppressive forces to marginalize the poor. Due to the power of the arts to pull and influence crowds, it is common practice to see musicians, dancers and poets staging performances to lure voters during political rallies, especially during general elections for the presidency, members of parliament, governors, councillors and such other political posts. For a pittance, artists are contracted to stage performances in praise of political leaders, regardless of their ineptness, corrupt practices and inability to deliver development to the majority poor. Unfortunately, in many cases these contracted artists and the duped voters are the very poor and marginalized members of the community.

In the 2015 general election in Tanzania, for example, the author came across a group of dancers in Kerege village in Bagamoyo district, who had been dancing in very hot and dusty conditions, singing praises of their incumbent member of parliament and the ruling party. The author asked the dancers why their dance songs were campaigning for this person to be re-elected even though he had done nothing for their development during his term just ending as member of Parliament.

One of them replied saying;

Mama, don't listen to what we are singing. For us an election year is a 'harvest year.' We sing their praises, they pay. We know that they never come back here until after five years to campaign for the next general election. No politician cares for us poor people. So we might as well eat a little of their money now. (Khamis Abdallah)

This duping of artists for meagre pay has created a class of artists whose creative production is premised on the use of the arts for propaganda for political regimes instead of directing their creative resources to confront the forces of their exploitation and oppression.

It is also disturbing that even though political regimes do not care for the welfare of artists beyond the election campaigns, they are quite aware of the power of the arts in mobilizing communities and the potential to empower them for change. As such, the ruling elites have applied different strategies to contain this power of arts.

One strategy is to refrain from any meaningful government investment towards the development of the arts. Many African countries have left the artistic industry to grow on its own, knowing very well that the majority of the artists, especially those from the poor communities, have no means to grow their artistic talents and potential. Government ministries responsible for the arts often have blurred visions on how to grow the artistic potential in the country. Many officials of such ministries see their duty as not going beyond organizing artists for performance at political campaigns and rallies. In Tanzania, for example, where the arts portfolio is always combined with sports, ministerial officials devote most of their efforts to sports and often, only soccer. As such, the potential for the arts to empower communities for effective participation in their own development processes is thwarted.

The second strategy is to control artist creativity so that it refrains from challenging the powers that be. Government regulatory bodies are established to censor critical artistic productions and promote propaganda and praise singing. Artistic productions, particularly pop music, have been banned or their composers jailed. A few examples include Pilato of Zambia who was arrested in 2018 for his song "Koswe Mum-poto" (Rat in a pot) which criticized the government and Thomas Map-fumo of Zimbabwe who in 1990 was forced into exile to avoid arrest

for his song “Hokoyo” (Watch out). Bobi Wine (Robert Kyagulanyi of Uganda and Fela Kuti of Nigeria have both been arrested and harassed for speaking out against their governments.

Regulatory bodies for the arts often extend their powers down to the grassroots level where structures are available to keep an eye and act on dissent art. The author recalls an incidence in 1980 in Mallya village in Shinyanga, Tanzania, where villagers were involved in a Theatre for Development process and engaged in analyzing the development challenges the village was facing. One of the village ruling party leaders, who was participating in a Tfd workshop, secretly send information to the District Commissioner some fifty kilometers away, that the Tfd team was disturbing the peace. Two land rovers descended on the village, one carrying the District Commissioner himself and the other, government security officers. It took some time to explain to the District Commissioner that the Tfd team meant no harm and instead the process was meant to empower the villagers to solve their own development challenges. Fortunately, the District Commissioner was wise enough to stay and observe the Tfd process as it unfolded and ended up acknowledging the importance of the process and gave it the greenlight to continue.

The third strategy is to promote politically “harmless” art production. Pop music content focused on love relations and social issues inconsequential to the real struggles of community for change tends to prevail. Presently in Tanzania for example, the pop song trending at the top is “Beer Tamu” by Marioo which goes as follows;

(In Kiswahili Language)

Kamata kamata kamata

Bebi wangu wanivuruga ubongo

Hata kazini kwangu wanichanganya kichwa

Siyu kweli

Bia tamu

Asikwambie mtu tu tu

Bia tamu

Bia bia mitungi bia tamu

Bebi wangu wanivuruga ubongo

Hata kazini kwangu wanichanganya kichwa

Acheni tu nile bata zama za kale nishalizwa  
 Acheni tu niinjoi huko zamani nishaumizwa  
 Maisha mafupi ukikunja kunja sura utazeeka  
 Usikunje kunje sura utazeeka  
 Usibanebane sana utazeeka nalo  
 Enjoy life is too short  
 Nani kamwaga pombe yangu nauliza  
 Nani kamwaga pombe yangu nauliza  
 Mi nshalewa niko chakari nshalewa  
 Mi nshalewa nyakanyaka mshalewa  
 Mi nshalewa sijielewi nshalewa  
 Mi nshalewa nitazima nshalewa.

Bia tamu

(Translation by the author)

Grab grab grab  
 My baby you are confusing my brain  
 Even when I am at work you rattle my brain  
 Not true  
 Beer is sweet  
 Don't let anyone tell you anything else  
 Beer is sweet Beer is sweet, by barrels, beer is sweet  
 My baby you are confusing my brain  
 Even when I am at work you rattle my brain  
 Let me enjoy life back then I was mistreated  
 Let me enjoy in the past I was hurt  
 Life is short if you frown you will age  
 Don't frown you will age  
 Don't be mean you will die with it  
 Enjoy life is too short Enjoy life is too short  
 I am asking who spilt my beer  
 I am asking who spilt my beer  
 I am already drunk I am drunk  
 I am totally drunk I am drunk  
 I am drunk and don't know what is happening  
 I am drunk I will pass out I am drunk.  
 Beer is sweet.

Such music content which is uncritical, politically harmless and meant to just entertain the audience constitutes the bulk of contemporary locally produced and imported pop music in Africa. The same claim can be extended to dance songs and other artistic productions in the continent.

The end result of such artworks is that a huge section of artistic production in Africa is devoted to serving the interests of powers that be instead of being an instrument to liberate the poor and marginalized from their oppression.

The attempts by the above-mentioned strategies to render the arts powerless have, however, not succeeded in killing the intrinsic power of the arts to critique and mobilize for change. Throughout history, Africa has witnessed the use of the arts in the struggles for freedom and self-determination.

Kalikali, a Tanzanian Sukuma dancer, is one such example, as seen in his dance song below, composed in 1964, just three years after Tanzania's independence from British rule.

(In Kisukuma language)  
 Ukitawala twitawalile A bana  
 Tanganyika Nghana  
 twitawalile  
 Bakulumbagawitawaji Abo bali  
 na milimo mitale Abo  
 balipandika magana Buli  
 ng'weji  
 Al'abalimi ba baluba Nduhw'  
 iyakupandika Litingang' ili  
 busese Ililima Iyingile  
 Tubyulima buluba Buguji  
 bushike Guchel'  
 umpango Tuliginya sumba  
 Ng'wana Mbagule  
 Ming'wana gakwigutaga  
 Kulola ha sa kwesa  
 Na kumigija mu shitambala

(Translation)

We have really got independence  
 The people of Tanganyika (now Tanzania)  
 Truly we are independent  
 They are giving thanks to independence  
 The ones with big jobs  
 The ones who earn hundreds month after month  
 But the growers of cotton have nothing to gain  
 Prepare farms as the planting season come  
 Growing cotton, the prices fall  
 This is not a good plan  
 We are fattening other people, son of Mbagule  
 They are really eating  
 They are laughing and dancing  
 And blowing their noses with handkerchiefs  
 (Songoyi 1990, 57–58)

Mlama (2020) shows how pop music in many African countries has galvanized protests against oppressive conditions citing such examples of musicians such as Fela Kuti (Nigeria), Ouma Sangare (Mali), Roma Mkatoliki (Tanzania) Gidi Gidi (Kenya), and Anselmo Ralph (Namibia), to mention just a few. Gidi Gidi's "Unbwogable" became a popular expression of defiance that contributed to Kenya's President Arap Moi's defeat in the 2002 general elections. Sangare uses music to speak out against gender injustices. Mkatoliki's "Amka Tanzania" (Wake up Tanzania) is an exposé of corruption in Tanzania and its effect on ordinary citizens. Corruption also features in Kenya's Eric Wainaina's "Nchi ya Kitu Kidogo" (The country of something small).

Mlama further cites the example of how Senegal's pop musicians put up a strong front against violations of democratic rule during Senegal's 2012 general elections, by protesting President Abdoulaye's decision to run for a third term, contrary to the country's constitution. Didier Awadi's song "Ma Waxoon Waxeet" (I said it, now I take it back) ridiculed Wade for falling back on his previous promise not to run for another term.

It is this potential for critique and protest that renders the arts a powerful tool for empowering people to interrogate their conditions, analyze the causes of their marginalization and express their desires for change.

The proponents of the Theatre for Development movement in Africa realized this potential and set out to galvanize it for purposes of empowering grassroots communities to effectively participate in development processes critical to their welfare and advancement.

## Theatre for Development as a Development Model

Before we embark on a discussion on TfD and the empowerment of grassroots communities a brief reflection on the notion of “development” maybe in order. “Development” is a concept that has elicited numerous definitions but for purposes of our discussion today let us pick the definition of development advanced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which defines development as: “The expansion of people’s freedoms and capabilities to lead lives that they value, ...to meet their basic needs and to have the opportunity to lead richer and more fulfilling lives” (UNDP 2019).

The entire world has, for centuries, struggled to advance the welfare of different societies so that their basic needs are met and their freedoms and capabilities to lead the lives they value expanded. Significant successes have been scored in various aspects of development, such as rises in national GDPs and per capital incomes, attainment of universal primary education, eradication of diseases, improved access to primary health care, improvements in democratic rule, reduction in violation of human rights and a general improvement in the lives of people in both developed and developing countries.

It is undeniable, however, that one major challenge to development agents across nations and political ideologies, has been how to meaningfully engage grassroots communities, particularly the rural and urban poor, in key processes towards their socio-economic advancement. Various development models have been advanced, debated and tried to address this challenge. These include “rural development”, “decentralization”, “people-centered development”, “multi-party democracy” and so on.

It is our contention that, although not often recognized as such, Theatre for Development is yet another development model that seeks to achieve the meaningful engagement of grassroots communities in processes towards their own socio-economic development.

## The Concept of Theatre for Development

What is Theatre for Development? Theatre for Development in Africa has witnessed many definitions and approaches. This is also reflected in the different labels applied to this notion including, “Community Theatre”, “Forum Theatre”, “Popular Theatre”, Protest Theatre, Resistance Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed and so on, which connote as many approaches in its practical application.

We are also aware of definitions of TfD that have focused on theatrical production technique emphasizing audience participation in the performance, including reshaping the content of what is being presented. Other definitions go beyond the participatory nature of the audience to emphasize the empowerment process by which communities gain the capability to challenge and confront the forces that stand in the way of their socio-economic advancement.

Instead of dwelling on definitions, we wish to highlight what we feel are the salient features of TfD, with the understanding that its intended goal is to empower grassroots communities for critical participation in the processes of their own development.

One, is that TfD is community-based, whereby the concerned community is the main player in the creation and production of the entire TfD process of; identifying the challenges that deter the community's socio-economic advancement; analyzing the root causes of the identified challenges; speaking out their views in the form of a theatrical performance; identifying possible solutions to the challenges and taking action to solve them.

Two, TfD is a participatory process whereby there is active participation of all the stakeholders in the community involved in the TfD process.

Three, the engagement of animateurs who work closely with the community members as they go through the processes described above. The basic principle here is that the animateur's role is to help the mem-

bers of the community to understand more deeply the nature and power of the forces of their domination and exploitation and to gain the confidence to confront such forces. The animateur helps the community members to reach a deeper level of analysis of the causes of their under-development and disadvantaged positions as well as the nature and magnitude of the forces working against their economic, social or cultural advancement. The animateur, furthermore, encourages all the members to air their views, facilitates the accommodation of diverse views and to help the participants to work towards consensus at every stage of the TfD process.

Four, the application of artistic forms in a theatre performance to present to the public the views and feelings of the members of the community on the challenges they have identified, the causes and possible solutions. Like in all the other processes, the theatre performance is created and performed by the members of the community themselves, using theatrical forms familiar to them. While the animateur plays the role of director to assist the participants to come up with a credible theatrical show, the ownership of the artistic creation of the performance, in terms of both form and content, is vested in the entire team creating the show.

Five, the engagement of the community in discussing the identified challenges and the possible solutions advanced and taking specific action to solve the problems underlying those challenges.

As can be seen from such features, this TfD process is, in principle, a transformational process, and an empowerment process of a people to identify and confront the challenges of their development. The purpose of this article is to reflect on TfD's quest to empower grassroots communities. We ask the question "Has the TfD movement in Africa really managed to empower the grassroots communities involved in its processes?"

## The Emergence of Theatre for Development in Africa

Before we attempt to respond to the question on the efficacy of TfD to empower grassroots societies, let us digress a bit and briefly review the forces behind the emergence and development of TfD in Africa. We wish to do this because we see an opportune moment to correct what we view as a possible misconception that TfD in Africa has its roots external to the continent.

### TfD and Influences External to Africa

One commonly cited theory traces the emergence of TfD in Sub Sahara Africa to Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed movement in Latin America (see contribution by Clara de Andrade). While some influence of Augusto Boal, particularly his Forum Theatre technique, to TfD in Africa is undeniable, caution should be taken that we do not lose sight of the fact that the use of the arts by communities to fight against oppression and marginalization is linked to the existence of oppressive socio-economic structures in any society.

Historically, Africa has never been in short supply of such oppressive socio-economic structures. We believe that, long before Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, the oppressed and marginalized communities in Africa were applying the arts to interrogate the forces of their oppression, express defiance or mobilize for action against such forces.

Colonial rule in Africa for example, produced many artworks that interrogated and defied colonialism and instigated action against it. For example, long before TfD in its present form was introduced to Zimbabwe in the 1983, freedom fighters against the Rhodesian minority rule used theatre in the *Pungwe* ceremonies to rally communities to join the armed struggle for independence.

During British colonial rule in Tanzania, for example, people composed dance songs that denounced colonial domination. Here is an example of such songs from the Disumbi dance of the Wakagulu community of Kilosa region, which was performed in the presence of the

British colonial Governor who did not understand the local language used in the song;

Kingi Joji kingi Joji eeee  
 Mlajoni chelu mlajoni  
 Mundewa mlagiso  
 Lekela Mandege  
 Lekela Itumba  
 Si nheifo uta ukole ee  
 Fitung'ati ki delele  
 Kingi Joji Kingi Joji eeee  
 Mlajoni nyee mlajoni (Mahuwi 2002)  
 Translation  
 King George, King George  
 He surely is uncircumcised  
 The king who rules from afar  
 Let go of Mandege (an area occupied by British settlers for coffee  
 plantations)  
 Let go of Itumba (an area occupied by British settlers for coffee  
 plantations)  
 Or else come yourself and hold the bow and arrow  
 And meet our mighty warriors  
 King George  
 He surely is uncircumcised.

When the Governor asked what the song was about, he was told it was in praise of King George.

There were artistic forms for conflict resolution even for oppression within community members. The Diwiku post-burial ceremony of the Wakagulu of Morogoro region is a case in point. During this ceremony anybody who has been aggrieved presents his or her case for interrogation and resolution.

The case, however, is presented artistically in the form of a poetic recitation. The accuser recites his or her case through this poetic recitation format. The accused defends him or herself in a similar manner, as well as witnesses for both sides. Anybody present was free to contribute

their views to the interrogation and the performance continued until the case was put to rest, the guilty fined and peace restored.

The argument we wish to advance by citing these examples is that throughout Africa's history, the arts were applied to interrogate problems, express viewpoints, protest against oppressive forces and initiate action. It is important to acknowledge that such art forms set the foundation for the emergence of TfD in Africa.

Therefore, while African TfD practitioners may hold Augusto Boal and his Theatre of Oppressed approach in great respect, while they accept his influence on Africa's TfD practices and even as they acknowledge possible influences from other TfD practices in Latin America, such as the Nicaraguan Movement of Peasant Artistic and Theatrical Expression (MECATE) or practices in Asia, including the work of Proshika in Bangladesh or the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) or the The Philippines Educational Theatre Association (PETA), they must first acknowledge their own roots in Africa and take caution that this external influence on Africa's TfD does not negate their own roots.

Maybe the challenge to TfD practitioners in Africa, has been the failure to adequately research into their own historical backgrounds, identify the wealth of their cultural and artistic heritage and use that as a premise for their own understanding of the evolution of theatre movements in the African continent.

## TfD and Top-down Development Models

The second theory links the emergence of TfD in Africa to an attempt to correct a post-independence development paradigm that intentionally or otherwise, marginalized grassroots communities from participating in national development processes. In desperation to build new independent nations, African governments were in a hurry to apply development models that they thought would bring quick recovery from the colonial economic and social ravages. In the process, top-down development models which largely excluded the participation of grassroots communities were adopted. Numerous development projects on health, education, agriculture and so on were imposed on communities, often with minimal success levels.

These top-down development models were another force behind the emergence of TfD which, as mentioned earlier, is intended to increase the participation of grassroots communities in the processes of their own development. TfD practitioners will, undoubtedly, be aware of the tensions that often arise during TfD processes where government officials used to making all decisions without involving communities have been rattled by seeing villagers taking control of the process of interrogating the forces behind their poverty and taking decisions on what action to take to solve their development problems.

For example, in a 1983 TfD workshop in Murewa, Zimbabwe in which the author participated, government officials decided to stop the TfD process half way through claiming that it was a “double edged sword which was meant to incite people against the government.” The officials managed to mobilize a large number of the TfD participating members of the community to refuse to continue with the TfD workshop. It took a lot of negotiations with the officials and their supporters to get the process back on track again but trust had already been dented and at the end of the process no one was willing to take any follow-up action to solve the identified problems.

## TfD and the Empowerment of Grassroots Communities for Critical Participation in Development Processes

Let us now turn to a brief review of TfD and the empowerment of grassroots communities. There is no denying the fact that TfD has scored many successes in empowering many grassroots communities to confront the forces of their domination and under development and to take action to better their welfare. Many publications are available that cite how, through TfD, communities have overcome problems related to health care, education, good governance, management of resources or participation in decision making. The late Prof Hansel Eyo in his book, *From Hammocks to Bridges* cites the example of how, through TfD, villagers in Kumba in Cameroon managed to overcome their rivalry and raised funds with which they built a bridge across the river Mongo that was critical in transporting their agricultural products to the market.

The late Chris Kamlongera, relates how in Malachanda in Malawi water-borne diseases were drastically reduced after a Tfd process. Other Tfd successes are highlighted in studies such as Abah (1997), Banham et al. (1994), and Dogbe (2002) and many others.

The following are a few examples from the author's personal experience in Tanzania.

In 1989 in Namionga in Mtwara region, Tanzania, a Tfd process revealed that the village had gone for eight years without safe drinking water because some large-scale farmer had bribed the government officials in charge of the village water supply system to divert the water from the village to his farm. Through the Tfd process the officials and the big farmer were exposed and the village water supply restored.

In 2007, in Kwala village of the Pwani region in Tanzania, girls' retention in school was a major challenge. Besides other causes, including cultural attitudes that saw no value in educating girls, there was a high rate of pregnancies among school girls. The headmaster of the secondary school in the village was notorious for having sexual affairs with his students. It was claimed that six girls had gotten pregnant by him in a span of two years but because he had connections with the district level officials, no legal action was taken against him. After a Tfd process, the villagers got the courage to apprehend him, catching him red-handed with a schoolgirl in a guest house. He was apprehended and charged in court for sexual molestation of a minor and jailed for five years.

In 1986 in Mkambalani, Morogoro region in Tanzania, the village had been refused official registration because some government officials had appropriated village land for their personal farms and feared to lose it if the village was registered. Without official registration the village was not included in the regional development plan, as a result of which no schools, health facilities or water supply systems could be established in the village. Through the Tfd process the village got registered, leading to the establishment of a school, health centre and safe water supply.

More examples of such Tfd success stories can be cited from across Africa, to prove its potential for empowerment of communities. The intention of this article, though, is to focus more on interrogating the challenges of Tfd in relation to its intention to empower grassroots communities to participate in development processes.

## Challenges in TfD in Empowerment of Grassroots Communities

We are aware that numerous challenges faced by TfD practitioners have been mentioned in various studies and debated extensively in Africa. These include concerns over sustainability of TfD processes beyond the TfD workshops led by people external to the communities (Mlama 1991; Shule 2012). Shule also offers a critique of the hijacking of TfD processes by donor agencies to push for their own development agenda and dependency on external funding as a major constraint to the TfD movement. Other highlights into the challenges to TfD are found in such studies as Dianga et al. (2014) Mbachanga (2014), Morrison (2003) and Salhi (1998).

The focus here, however, is on interrogating the challenges related to the effectiveness of TfD in empowering grassroots communities for critical participation in the processes of their own development.

## Empowerment of the community beyond the TfD workshop

It was mentioned earlier that the TfD process is a participatory process where the community members actively participate in identifying the challenges that hinder their socio-economic advancement, analyzing the root causes of the identified challenges, speaking out their views about the causes and their possible solutions, and taking action to resolve them.

TfD practitioners will bear witness to how they are often mesmerized by the power of the TfD process to transform participating communities into gaining enough self-confidence to pinpoint their development problems, analyze the root causes and speak out on what needs to be done to resolve them. Members of communities taking part in the TfD processes are often subdued and uncertain at the beginning of the process. As the process unfolds, the participants are galvanized into confident and courageous advocates of their rights and interests and critical analysts of the powers that keep them oppressed and marginalized.

The challenge, however, is that this empowerment of grassroots communities is not long lasting, rarely continuing beyond the animateur-led TfD workshops. There is little evidence that the concerned grassroots communities on their own, sustain the TfD process to empower themselves to confront their many development challenges on a long-term basis. A major reason for this state of affairs lies in the inability of TfD to develop local and community-based animateurs who can continue to rally the members of the community to use the TfD process as an empowerment tool on a continuous basis.

Going forward, there is need to reflect on how the empowerment process in TfD can be grown within the community members themselves to enable them to use it on a long term and sustainable manner.

## The Use of Art Forms Mastered by Community Members

It was mentioned earlier that another salient feature of TfD is community members using their own artistic and theatrical forms to speak out about their development challenges, their root causes and action required to eliminate them. The theatre performance is created and performed by the members of the community themselves, using theatrical forms familiar to them.

The focus on artistic forms indigenous to a community has caused a number of challenges. One, is that many TfD animateurs who lead the TfD processes have little or no performance mastery of the indigenous art forms. The majority of TfD animateurs belong to the class of Africans who have been uprooted from their indigenous cultural practices, including the arts by their colonial heritage of western education and foreign religions, particularly Christianity.

In addition, western education inculcated in them a disregard for indigenous African art forms, feeding them with Eurocentric theories that placed the origins and existence of art, only in the Western cultural heritage.

Such TfD animateurs go to grassroots communities and lead TfD processes that use indigenous art forms of which they have little or no knowledge. It, therefore, becomes difficult for such animateurs to

assist communities to fully and effectively exploit the artistic potential of such forms as a viable expression of their views and feelings about their welfare through the TfD process.

The author experienced this challenge in 1980. During a TfD workshop in Msoga village, in Bagamoyo district, Pwani region in Tanzania. One of the TfD groups which the author was facilitating decided to use the Bigililo women's dance of the Wakwere to present their views on the problem of teenage pregnancies prevalent in high levels and causing many girls to be expelled from school. The animateur had never come across this dance before. Moreover, the dance had a unique production process. The women dancers looked for shade under a tree and sat down to make their hair into a special style that women wore specifically for this dance. Breaking into pairs, one woman lay down to allow her partner to make her hair. When the hair was done, the roles were reversed.

The animateur had no idea just how this plaiting of hair had anything to do with the creation of the performance the women were supposed to do on teenage pregnancy. Several times the animateur politely requested the women to get up so as to continue with the creation of the performance but the only response she got from the women was not to worry, they would come up with the performance. Besides those responses, the women were very quiet as they proceeded with hair plaiting.

After some time, the leader of the group started humming a tune to which the other women responded with a chorus. She then started adding words to the tune while the other women added words to the chorus. The hair plaiting was continuing undisturbed, but all the concentration was now on the composition of the song. The composition went on until they came up with a full song whose content was on the problem of teenage pregnancy in the village. The song lamented how men who were well off, including the village leaders, used their financial power to prey on their children and how the investment of the poor families in the education of their daughters went to waste. The song further expressed how the government authorities took no action against the perpetrators of the practice because some of them were the culprits. At some point, just as the hair plaiting of the last person was coming to an end, the women sang the song with much vigour. Suddenly the lead

dancer who was composing the song, stood up, the drummers clutched their drums and started beating them and all the women formed a circle and danced with a lot of excitement.

The performance rehearsal was done and the women were ready to perform their creation to the larger audience. As can be seen, the animator had almost no role in this artistic production due to her unfamiliarity with the Bigililo dance production processes.

Although this may be an extreme case, it is an illustration of possible challenges animators face when working with unfamiliar indigenous art forms in TfD.

To avoid such challenges emanating from their own alienation from their indigenous artistic expressions, many TfD practitioners have opted for the use of drama as the main art form for TfD performances simply because they master it better than the indigenous forms. This however curtails the artistic creativity of the communities because even if they may be familiar with the basics of drama, their best creativity is unleashed when using the forms emerging from their own cultural heritage for which they have great artistic mastery.

This situation calls for a serious discussion among TfD practitioners and an interrogation of their own artist inadequacies in the application of indigenous art forms and how this affects the effectiveness of TfD as an empowerment process and curtails communities' expressions of their views on the forces of their exploitation and oppression.

## The Animator

The third challenge relates to the “animator” whose role was earlier stated as assisting the members of the community to understand more deeply the nature and power of the forces of their domination and to gain the confidence to confront such forces. It is our contention that the animator, therefore goes beyond just making the TfD workshop activities happen, like a workshop facilitator would do. He or she becomes an activist for a cause that is intent on transforming the community for the better.

In our experience, many TfD practitioners struggle with internalizing the role of animator. In 1984, for example, the author took a class of

her students to conduct a TfD workshop in Namionga village, Mtwara region in Tanzania, as part of their practical training as animateurs in TfD. On the third day of the TfD process, a group of angry local young men came to the author, as the leader of the team, and demanded to know whether the male members of her team came to their village to seek the improvement of their welfare or to take advantage of their poverty and take away their wives and spoil their daughters. The author had not realized that in the evenings after the workshop sessions, some of the male students went after the women and girls in the village, luring them with the money they had been paid as upkeep for the TfD workshop, which was more than the villagers could have.

This behavior happened despite the orientation the students had before the workshop on their role as TfD animateurs and how they were expected to interact with the members of the community.

What struck the author the most, however, was that when she called a session with the students to discuss this matter, they argued that actually it was the girls and even the married women who were approaching them for sexual favours. So, according to these students, it was not their fault.

One student who had been accused of sleeping with someone's wife defended himself by saying that the women in this village had very interesting ways of approaching men for sex. He said that this woman came to him with a small basket full of roasted groundnuts. And in the middle of the basket there was a raw egg. The student said that he thought the woman was just giving him groundnuts to eat but he did not understand why the raw egg. So, a local young man explained to him that the egg was a sign that the woman wanted him for sex. Then after this narrative of what this student thought was a novel approach for sexual favours the student turned to the author and said: "So Professor what was I supposed to do?" The whole TfD process was nearly destroyed by an "animateur" who was himself disempowered by just a "raw egg in a small basket of roasted groundnuts"!

We mention this example of these students because again and again, we have witnessed TfD practitioners experiencing difficulties in managing power relations between themselves and the grassroots communities they are intending to empower. In 1983 we experienced an official in Murewa, Zimbabwe who joined our team of animateurs for a TfD

workshop but refused to sit down during the sessions with the communities because he felt the places were dirty and would spoil his attire. We have seen TfD practitioners talking down to villagers, disrespecting or dismissing their points of view as of no consequence or rudely telling members of the community that they could not eat food or drinks offered to them because they considered them a health risk and many other such examples.

The question here is to what extent are the TfD animateurs really committed to the socio-economic empowerment of the poor and marginalized communities? Are the animateurs themselves empowered enough to identify with the struggles of the poor and disadvantaged members of our communities? How many TfD animateurs realize that the role of a TfD animateur is equal to being a catalyst for the empowerment of the community one is working with?

## Vulnerability of Animateurs

It is, however, also important to mention that since TfD is about struggles for self-determination, sometimes animateurs, though quite aware of their empowerment role, can be caught up in existing community conflicts.

The following are two examples experienced by the author as a TfD animateur. One was in 1983 in Zimbabwe during a TfD workshop in a rural community in the outskirts of Murewa township. We were eight animateurs working in a community of a little over 200 people. On the first day of the TfD workshop we had a full morning session where the community members identified the development challenges they were facing, just a few years after gaining independence from the Rhodesian minority rule. Then we took a lunch break. Our Zimbabwean hosts had thought it appropriate to carry packed lunches for the animateurs because they had not managed to make arrangements for food at the village. The villagers participating in the TfD were told to go and have lunch at their homes and come back after one hour to continue with the workshop. We sat under a tree and the lunch boxes were distributed to us. Before we could even open the lunch boxes, a large group of the villagers descended on us demanding food. When they were told that there

was no food for them, they started abusing us and saying how dare we eat food from their President Mugabe without bringing some food for them too. They angrily took away the lunch boxes from us and fought for the food therein which was not much to go around. We had to stay calm not knowing if this would end with us getting physically hurt.

The question before us was whether to continue with the afternoon session of the workshop or go back to where we were staying, a two-hour drive away. After long negotiations with the village leaders, it was decided that the workshop should continue even though the amateurs had to work on empty stomachs. Impromptu arrangement also had to be made for food at the village to feed all participants for the remaining days of the workshop, an unexpected expense that led to cutting down the number of days for the workshop from seven to four.

We later discovered that the lunch box fracas was not so much a reflection of a lack of hospitality among the Zimbabweans but rather a power struggle between two existing political factions in the village. One interpreted the Tfd process as a scheme of the other faction to discredit the authorities by exposing the development challenges of the community. This faction, therefore, instigated members of the community to dispossess us of our lunch boxes. The goal was to stop the Tfd process altogether and thus win political favours with the ruling regime. The other faction, however, was in favour of the Tfd process believing that it would empower the community to address their development challenges.

In 1983, the author was involved in conducting a Tfd workshop in Koita village, Bangladesh, organized by Proshika, a civil society organization for landless peasants. Through the analysis with the community members, a deeply rooted feudal system was exposed which left most of the members of the community landless. A few landlords, who owned all the land, exploited the landless peasants as under-paid farm labourers. The farm labourers worked for over twelve hours for a daily wage of one Taka (less than 1 US cent). Because of such meagre pay, the farm labourers were forced to borrow money from the landlords. The landlords willingly gave the loans but at such exorbitant interest rates that the farm labourers could not repay them. The landlords then used these unpaid loans to keep the farm laborers in permanent bondage to them. Most of the members of the community were virtually slaves to

the landlords because they could not pay back the loans they had accumulated. And since their pay was so low they kept going back to the landlords for more loans thus cementing their bondage.

On top of these slave-like conditions these farm-labourers belonged to the Harijan community, also known as the “untouchables”. This is a caste system which places these so-called “untouchables” at the lowest rung of the caste ladder and blocks their access to land, education, health and other services. Since they could not own land, they built their houses, basically small shacks, on small hills protruding out of a swamp which the landlords could not use as farmland. During the rainy season the swamp was flooded, some of their shacks were swept away and some people drowned.

The intensity of the suffering and oppression of these people was so great that every time we sat down with them to go through the Tfd process, the community members started with songs pleading to God to end their suffering and all of them, men and women would break into tears.

After a few days, the team of animateurs and the villagers reached a point where the community had identified the root causes of their problems and were discussing what they needed to do to deal with the landlords and the exploitative and oppressive socio-economic system that bound them to servitude.

On the fourth day of the Tfd process, we were preparing to go to the workshop, which started around seven o'clock in the evening because the farm labourers had to work for the landlord until six o'clock in the evening. One of the villagers came running to where we were staying to tell us that he had sneaked out to come to tell us not to go to the village because one of the landlords had ordered his private army to ambush and attack us on the way for spreading poison among his farm labourers. The Tfd workshop had to be delayed for two days while we sought peace with the landlord who eventually agreed not to disturb the workshop.

As much as this incident presented a real threat to the lives of the animateurs, it should not be forgotten that the main issue here was the plight of the landless peasants whose basic human rights were seriously violated by this feudal system. The severity of the reaction of the landlord emphasized the point that the empowerment of these landless communities required action beyond the empowerment of the people

through the TfD process. Fortunately, in this case, Proshika, the organization for landless peasants, was taking various steps to organize these landless peasants into a larger movement for a wider political, social and economic struggle.

In the book *From Hammocks to Bridges* Hansel Eyoh cites an example from Cameroon on the workings of feudal systems as witnessed in a TfD workshop in Kumba, Cameroon in 1984. The author had the privilege to be part of the team of animateurs of this TfD workshop Eyoh is referring to. One small community had split into three independent chiefdoms and there was so much rivalry between them they could not agree on any joint development programme. Even though, as cocoa farmers, they could raise enough money to build a bridge across the Mongo river, they refused to do so because each chief wanted the bridge to be located in his land. Their subjects defended the decisions of their chiefs and the bridge could not be constructed. So, they continued to use a hammock or hanging bridge, which sometime broke, causing people to drown.

As animateurs, we tasted these hostilities between the three chiefs when one morning as we moved from one part of the village to another, a group of angry youngsters confronted us with clubs threatening to beat us up arguing that since our sleeping quarters were located in a part of the village which belonged to another chief, we were considered enemies of the chief on whose land we were then passing through. It took the breaking of kola nut ceremony and profuse apologies to make amends with the chief. We had to repeat the peace-making ceremony with the third chief who, when we arrived at his compound, he sent a teenage girl to shout abuses at us for having disrespected him too by not selecting our sleeping quarters in his area.

These examples go to show that TfD animateurs, besides the skills to empower communities using the TfD process, they must acquire skills on how to deal with emergencies related to existing socio-economic conflict in the communities where they conduct TfD processes. This calls for prior deeper understanding of the socio-economic framework of the community one intends to work in as animateur.

## TfD and Socio-economic Constructions

We cite the above examples about the vulnerability of animateurs not only as a matter of caution but more seriously, to reiterate the point that TfD is about confronting socio-economic constructions that bind our grassroots communities to a life of exploitation and oppression by powerful forces.

This, in our opinion, constitutes a major challenge to TfD. In the following section, this challenge will be illustrated with examples from the author's experience in conducting TfD processes to empower communities to confront the socio-economic forces emerging from patriarchy as manifested in gender inequality.

We are all aware that in most of our societies, gender-based power relations are patriarchal and heavily tipped against women. Gender inequality is predominant as a function of patriarchal socio-economic structures deliberately designed to uphold the superiority of man over woman. The systems of ownership of the means of production, organization of production, control and distribution of wealth, the social, political, legal and cultural systems are often all designed to reproduce, sustain and reinforce patriarchy.

It came out very clearly during our TfD workshops across Africa that gender inequality was a major hindrance to women's participation in development. There were cases of women who had been denied the right to own or inherit property, particularly land, and those who received unfair or no returns for their labour. There were women and girls whose access to education had been blocked by forced early marriage, sexual harassment or the belief by parents that there is no value in sending girls to school. There were legal systems in place which did not protect women's human rights. There were decision-making systems or cultural practices that gave minimal or no space or voice for the participation of women.

The structures of gender inequality were so deeply rooted, it seemed that the TfD workshops conducted were not adequately addressing this challenge.

It was this frustration that drove the author and her colleague, Prof Amandina Lihamba, in 1996, to design and start a special version of TfD

to specifically address gender inequality as part of a community outreach programme at the Department of Fine and Performing Arts, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. We decided to call this version of Tfd, TUSEME (a Kiswahili word for “Let us Speak Out”). TUSEME uses the same Tfd process but is specifically targeting young people in schools.

The original intention of TUSEME was to empower schoolgirls with skills to fight and overcome the various forms of gender inequality in their schools and surrounding communities. We felt that they needed this empowerment while still young to create a new generation with a new gender outlook. As soon as we launched TUSEME in the first seven secondary schools in Tanzania, however, we realized that TUSEME had to be for both girls and boys because both sexes needed to be empowered for gender transformation. TUSEME started with secondary schools but later included primary schools in order to catch the girls and boys at an even earlier age.

When the author became the Executive Director of the Nairobi-based Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) she introduced TUSEME to the FAWE programme to promote girls’ education in Sub Saharan Africa. TUSEME therefore, spread to schools in over twenty countries across Sub Saharan Africa including Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Malawi, Namibia, Senegal, Gambia and others.

The following are just a few examples to illustrate some of the gender construction challenges we faced in our attempt to empower girls and boys to combat gender inequalities.

In a 1998 TUSEME workshop at Ruvu secondary school in Ruve, Tanzania, the issue of sexual harassment emerged. In the analysis of the root causes of sexual harassment in the community, the participating boys admitted that they played a part in perpetuating this practice. One boy explained that after going through initiation rites, the boys were under a lot of pressure from the male community to prove their manhood, especially their sexual prowess. But there were some boys who were not courageous or smart enough to lure girls for sex. So, they often formed boys’ solidarity groups where they helped each other to get girls for sex. This included kidnapping a girl during a night dance ceremony, taking her to the bush and forcing the girl to have sex with their cowardly friend. This was literally male-community-sanctioned rape in the name of the male’s perception of manhood.

At a 1997 TUSEME workshop at Bagamoyo secondary school in Bagamoyo Tanzania, the boys also revealed that they often ganged up to pull down a girl who performed better than boys in class. They lured such a girl into accepting one of them as her boyfriend. This boy would then do everything possible to distract the girl from her studies until she academically dropped to positions lower than the boys.

In another TUSEME workshop in 2003 in Mguu school, in Kilosa Tanzania, a group of participating boys came to me, as animateur, during the break seeking advice. They confided in me that they now understood and supported the idea of gender equality because they realized it was a basic human right. However, they did not know how they would practice gender equality in the community because during their rites of passage into adulthood they were instructed to never allow women to take the lead in anything. They also reported that because they were still young, they had been assigned adult mentors who watched their every action to ensure that they strictly adhered to that instruction. So now they were seeking help on how to deal with that situation. We agreed that we take the matter back to the group for analysis and possible action.

One of the most difficult challenges we faced in TUSEME was in Kenya. Between 2000 and 2006, we were engaged in A FAWE TUSEME programme in Kajiado district in Kenya. Kajiado is predominantly inhabited by the Maasai who are pastoralists. The gender power relations we found in this Maasai community were very challenging.

The gender construction among these Maasai placed the woman at a very inferior position, often considered as having less value than the cattle. Parents married off their daughters at an age as early as seven or eight years in pursuit of the cattle paid for the dowry. Many girls were not sent to school because they were seen as only fit for marriage. Very young girls were married off as the fifth or sixth wife to men old enough to be their grandfathers. There was a case in 2004 where, due to severe drought and scarcity of pasture, a father gave away his school-going daughter to a man in exchange for pasture for his cattle. Girls who ran away from early marriage were ostracized from their homes and community. And despite all these violations of girls' rights, the women in this community had no say or ability to challenge the men.

Our TUSEME intervention required several years of not only empowering the girls but engaging the men, women, and the leaders in the community to change their practices and attitudes towards the girl child. This included persuading fathers to send their girls to school and reaching an agreement with the community leaders to stop parents from marrying off their daughters. Women were organized into solidarity groups to report fathers intending to marry off their school age daughters to the local leaders. The girls were empowered to speak out for their rights and seek help whenever their rights were violated. Parents were also reconciled with the daughters they had ostracized.

The lesson here is that the empowerment for gender equality had to go beyond the TUSEME workshops and tackle the multiple socio-economic forces that perpetuated gender inequality among this Maasai community. The same is true for any other challenges to development because the challenges of poverty, marginalization and oppression often derive from very complex historical socio-economic factors. That makes the empowerment of any community a complex process of attempting to address multiple economic and social forces. Tfd practitioners in Africa must continue to interrogate the effectiveness of the Tfd process to empower grassroots communities to address these complexities.

## Conclusion

The major lesson derived from the above-mentioned experiences from Tfd is the enormity of the challenges in empowering grassroots communities to confront the powerful socio-economic forces that continue to relegate the majority of Africa's populations to poverty and marginalization.

Tfd practitioners need to continually ask themselves the question "To what extent has their Tfd engagement in Africa empowered grassroots communities to effectively participate in the struggles to confront these deeply rooted economic, political, social and cultural forces that continue to keep the majority of Africa's people marginalized and downtrodden?"

It is fair to acknowledge that Tfd practitioners in Africa have, indeed, managed to empower some of our grassroots communities. But in con-

clusion, we must acknowledge that TfD in Africa, as we know it today, has just scratched the surface. Much more work still remains to be done before TfD can claim significant success in empowering grassroots communities to critically participate in the processes of their own development.

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# Theatre for Development within and outside Academia:

## Critical Reflections from Experiences

Selina Banda and Daniel L. Mpolomoka

### Introduction

Experience has highlighted key issues of theatre for development (TfD) in study programmes that are directly involved in development of communities. TfD as a development practice uses participatory techniques to help individuals and groups share their experiences with the intention of initiating social transformation. Its practical and theoretical attributes are instrumental in empowering communities with needed skills for self-improvement. Since TfD is democratic, participatory and sustainable in nature, it benefits communities by enabling them to become actively involved in their own development. For this reason, this article argues that TfD should be one of the compulsory courses for study programmes that deal with development of communities. Universities should be seen spearheading TfD activities from which surrounding communities can emulate. Doing so will help to instil in students the required knowledge and skills which are needed for them to perform and help communities.

### The Backdrop

Handling students who have diverse perceptions of TfD is challenging because it leads to some resistance at the beginning. Some show little or no interest in the course, but are compelled to do it because it is a requirement. What is interesting is their change of attitude towards TfD. Experience has shown that TfD is misconstrued and associated with theatrical activities which are not development oriented. Lack of proper understanding of what constitutes principles inherent in TfD puts some people off and makes them miss out on getting critical aspects that are crucial to initiating community engagements and participation. Some

students do not pay attention because they feel that they are compelled to take a course which has little significance to their study programme. Looking at Tfd at face-value misleads some students and makes them misunderstand the gist of the course. Notwithstanding the above, attitudes towards Tfd render it compatible to development. It is only after students engage with and understand Tfd principles that their perceptions change.

## Rationale of this paper

This paper posits that the transformation of dynamism being advanced herein, aimed at embracing Tfd as a requirement in development agendas, is important. It is a sign of the required change in development workers to use effective channels for transforming community members. Without doubt, Tfd can lead to finding constructive resolutions to community problems. This is the essence of including Tfd in study programmes that are directly involved in development of communities. Furthermore, Tfd empowers communities, links them to modernity and trends in the global community. By sharing stories on how Tfd benefits students, lecturers, other key development-oriented practitioners and communities one can make an invaluable contribution to the field.

## Theatre for Development and its philosophical underpinnings

Tfd has a philosophical underpinning and it is procedural in its conduct. Freire's theory of conscientization is key to understanding Tfd in community work because it determines how facilitators relate to recipients. The foundation of Theatre for Development has been strongly influenced by the concept of conscientisation. This concept is defined as the process whereby people become aware of the political, socio-economic and cultural contradictions that interact in a hegemonic way to diminish their lives (Ledwith 2005: 97). Grounded in the theory is also the depth of involvement of the people for whom Tfd is intended. The process inherent in Tfd means that it be conducted in stages each of which allows community participation.

As an approach TfD uses research, education and entertainment to address issues that communities are faced with. Through research, matters of concern are identified by conducting needs assessment. Various issues are unearthed from communities by members themselves who become fully involved in research. These issues are listed and prioritized according to how they affect community members. Secondly, discussions on identified issues are initiated by encouraging community members to express their views on any one of them. Through the use of techniques such as individual interviews, focus group discussions and observations, aspects related to given issues are teased out. Once issues are probed, more insights are gained which allow for deep understanding of the prevailing situation. Because TfD is dialogical in nature, community members are enabled to express their views on pertinent issues affecting their lives. This is the point at which learning takes place and provides room for community members to reflect on their lived experiences. It is this aspect of TfD which characterizes education. Thirdly, the lived experiences shared are portrayed in codes such as plays, poems, or songs. It is at this stage that TfD becomes an entertainment venture because people are given a platform on which to perform their lived experiences. It is done with a view of reliving problems and seeking solutions to them. The sole purpose of drama geared towards development is to arouse emotion within the audience and to compel spectators to think deeply about the issues it brings to the fore (Prentki and Claire 2001). TfD compels people to research with a view of understanding their situation fully. It causes them to learn from one another as they interact and entertain themselves. TfD is a tool for stimulating development among communities.

In the institution of learning, all this is first explained to enable students understand the subject matter first before embarking on applying TfD principles in communities. Of course, rehearsals are done among the students themselves to allow them to apply the concepts of TfD before they actually go in the field. Thereafter, they reflect on how they have conducted TfD as regards the given approach and process. At this point in time, the students are ready to go out and try out their newly acquired knowledge and skills in TfD in various communities. Students in TfD classes have to first understand what TfD is all about. In most

instances, this theory and practice-based course is only appreciated after conducting the practicum.

## Empowering Effects of TfD

TfD has an empowering effect on development agendas. TfD is also educative because it equips facilitators with knowledge and skills of handling development work which are subsequently transferred to communities. In reciprocity, TfD allows facilitators to learn more about communities by getting insights into their experiences. Empowering students with TfD knowledge and skills is crucial to enabling them use appropriate approaches to development work.

Experience has shown that only when students grasp the meaning, theory and procedure of TfD, are they enabled to apply it appropriately in their dealings with community work. They always come back smiling because they find TfD to be an enabling prerequisite to engaging community members in their own development.

Transference of theatrical skills is easy in TfD because it deals with small groups of people at a time. Theatre for Development promotes a true democratic and participatory approach to development which augurs well for smaller and rural communities (Asante 2010). TfD is not only interactive, but it is also contextual. It is grounded in people's ways of life and stimulates them to reflect on their own past with a view of improving on it. It is a determining factor to ensuring commitment of community members by engaging them to plan and implement development agendas required. The transformation of dynamism being advanced herein, aimed at embracing TfD as a requirement in development agendas, is important. It is a significant sign of the required change in development workers to use effective channels for transforming community members. Theatre for Development (TfD) is a community engagement tool which many rural development workers both local and international have described as a democratic way of building societies (World Bank 1994). TfD has been proven to be an effective approach to community engagement for the realization of developmental change.

TfD is regarded as a theatre of ordinary people who address their own problems, in their own environment, from their own perspectives and within their own culture. This is because it uses indigenous cultural forms to define its significant operation in the lives of the people. TfD places authority of determining content of development programmes in the hands of recipients whose lives are directly linked to it.

## TfD in Study Programmes

TfD is one of the courses that is offered to students in selected programmes in higher institutions of learning. It is perceived and handled differently inside and outside academia. For example, the Zambian Open University is one of the few institutions in Zambia that offers TfD as a study area in some of its programmes. TfD is offered at three different levels in the University, namely, one at undergraduate and two at postgraduate, in particular at master's and doctoral degree levels of study. The focus of discussion is on the undergraduate level of study where TfD is offered to students in two different programmes, Adult Education and Development Studies as provided in the schools of education and humanities and social sciences, respectively. The undergraduate students work in various government ministries and non-governmental organisations and bring with them varied experiences to which TfD relates. However, not all the programmes that relate to communities have TfD as one of the courses on offer at the universities. This revelation is indicative of how limited TfD is offered in higher institutions of learning in Zambia.

## Experience of Handling Students in TfD

Handling students whose perceptions on TfD are diverse is challenging because there is invariably some resistance at the beginning. Resistance most of the times comes from students who pursue development studies at Zambian Open University. They develop an attitude long before they start learning the course content in TfD. Looking at TfD as a course from the surface without getting a deeper understanding of the subject matter, usually puts some of the students off. Such are the

students who tend to develop a negative attitude towards the course. These students are only compelled to take Tfd because it is one of the compulsory courses in their programme of study. Negative comments and suggestions from some of the lecturers have contributed to worsening the situation.

It is only after students get a chance to attend lectures in Tfd that the majority of them tend to change their attitude and look at the course in a positive way. Subjecting students to learn the theoretical and practical components of Tfd prepares them for community work outside the classroom. Doing so has helped to change students' attitudes towards Tfd in a positive way. This is because some of the students come in the course with pre-conceived ideas that Tfd is irrelevant to their study programmes. This is especially so among students in pursuing Development Studies programme who clearly show negative attitudes towards taking the course. They feel that it is not developmental at all because they fail to see the relevance of theatrical activities to their work. It is only after the course content is clearly explained to them in detail that they tend to change their perception of the course. This is what makes it interesting and exciting because their behavioural change towards Tfd takes on a positive dimension. This is indicative of students' learning and likelihood of embracing an approach to community work which is not only participatory, but also transformative.

Thereafter, some of the students begin to share their experiences of how they apply Tfd knowledge and skills in their work places. This shows that Tfd can have a positive impact on the lives of the students and the communities they work with. The majority of the students describe how they use Tfd in their work when approaching various communities for developmental ventures. They use Tfd for creating awareness about the kind of development which communities require. Tfd is used as a mobilization tool for engaging community in discussing issues which affect their lives and go on to searching for solutions to the identified problems. Bourgault (2003: 50) postulates that, "Theatre is a tool for sensitization and mobilization of local communities for economic, political and environmental development". Some of the stories from students are given below:

## Stories

True stories have been depicted. They originate from real life experiences of communities for whom and with whom Tfd activities were developed and identified, but also related to contents portrayed herein. The following are four different stories in which students working in different institutions utilized Tfd to advance their work in various communities.

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### Story 1

One of the students used Tfd to create awareness on substance abuse among community members. At a glance, poverty and illiteracy seemed to be prevalent among community members. In order to get to the bottom of the matter, there was a need to conduct an analysis of challenges that community members encountered. Upon realizing that, one of the students decided to use a Tfd approach to address the problem in one of the communities. Situation analysis showed that mainly youths who did not engage in education or employable activities were involved in this scourge. Tfd was used to reveal causes of substance abuse and its effects on people. Recreating their experiences through staging a play, people expressed their feelings towards such a behaviour. Depicted in theatrical activities were ways through which people could identify substance abuse, refrain and recover from its use. Through plays, community members were able to reconstruct their lives in a positive way. Discussions on how to change the situation for the better were encouraged. Consequently, solutions to the problem of substance abuse among community members were sought through shared views on how best they could curb the scourge.

In this case, Tfd had a mirror effect as individuals identified themselves in different positions and examined their experiences to come to new understandings through theatrical means (Nicholson 2005). Tfd becomes a necessity in reshaping people's behaviours in such a situation. Similarly, Prentki and Preston (2009: 9) explain that "the collective story of the community becomes the impetus for change and as such any move towards development lies within the community". Because of its ability to allow people to participate by interacting among them-

selves and focus on identifying problems and proposing solutions, TfD has become an indispensable tool for use in mobilizing communities among some of the students. TfD fosters behaviour change because theatre as an art form is used to understand human relationships and societal situation – hence its description as an art of social relationships (Mbachaga 2014).

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**Story 2**

TfD was used to create awareness about HIV/AIDS among community members. TfD knowledge and skills enabled one of the students to explore social and psychological aspects of community members as regards their attitude towards HIV/AIDS. In particular, how children related to issues of HIV/AIDS and the feeling of the rest of the community members. TfD was used to get insights into how children were treated if they were found to be infected. Views on this matter were sought through the use of interviews and focus group discussions. A play was presented to community members which sparked discussions how to give social and psychological support to children living with HIV and fight stigma among community members.

The second story depicts clearly disclosure and open communication between children and their parents was encouraged. Schechner (2002: 59) notes that theatre is “a powerful way of putting across messages with the aim of stimulating community action to address identified problems and issues”. Children were urged to become knowledgeable about their condition so that they could remain healthy and happy for the greatest period possible. TfD was used to allow participation of community members in discussing their health status. It was used to afford children who in most cases are voiceless and powerless an opportunity to express themselves and act in a direction that can contribute meaningfully to the betterment of their community. Boal (2000: 9) confirms that theatre has been significant in various contexts in providing opportunities for self and social reflection that may contribute to individual or social transformation.

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**Story 3**

TfD was used to address nutrition issues among community members. Community nutrition intervention stimulated use of theatre in one of the communities. Prevalence of non-communicable diseases among adults in communities was on the increase. A social worker and nutritionist at one of the health centres in Lusaka used TfD to address the problem. A situational analysis of the nutritional status showed that community members had low levels of nutrition knowledge and skills. Through use of interviews and discussion, people expressed their views on types of food they eat and how they prepare it. It was found out that people had different perceptions. While some of the people preferred certain types of food, others did not. Likewise, methods of food preparation varied according to people's levels of nutritional knowledge and skills, availability of food and exposure to its use. Using these views, the people were mobilized to act out their experiences on how they handled their nutritional matters. People were allowed to speak across their differences on nutritional matters. These differences were portrayed in a play by a few community members. Thereafter, people were encouraged to discuss pertinent issues depicted in the staged performance. Depending on how they related to nutritional matters, members defended their views. Thereafter, they agreed on the best approach to use in handling their nutritional matters.

The portrait of TfD reflections in the third story corroborates what Mbachaga (2014) noted, namely that change in behaviour can only be effective by understanding why people do what they do and understand the barriers to change. Thereafter, they decided to consult a nutritionist for advice on how to handle their food if they were to be live healthy lives. TfD was used as an intervention in people's lives to improve their nutrition and wellbeing. The nutritionist and social worker together with community members planned a programme for community nutrition which was meant for teaching and sharing best practices on how to use food wisely.

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**Story 4**

Fourth, TfD was also used to get insights into people's perceptions of a male midwife deployed to handle pregnant women at one of the clinics. The situational analysis showed that attendance at the clinic was low despite the number of pregnant women in the community. One of the students used TfD to establish causes of low attendance at antenatal clinic and maternity ward at a health centre in the village. With permission from the village headman, the student and other community development workers mobilized residents to discuss issues related to antenatal clinic and maternity ward at the health centre. Individual interviews and focus group discussions were conducted among community members pertaining to women's low attendance at the health centre. The majority of the villagers revealed that they were not comfortable with a male midwife attending to females at the health centre. More men than women were against the idea of having a male midwife attend to their pregnant wives at the health centre. They even prevented their wives from attending the antenatal clinic and delivering their babies at the maternity ward. Driving such an attitude was the traditional belief that pregnancy was supposed to be handled by females. The majority of the nurses found at most of the health centres in Zambia are female and especially so in rural areas. These are assisted by experienced elderly women or birth attendants locally appointed to deliver babies in the village. The use of a man to handle such a task was strange because of the tradition aspect attached to it. Female issues are mostly handled by females. Men were sceptical because they did not trust the male midwife with their young wives. They instead entrusted their pregnant wives in the hands of traditional birth attendants whose capacity to handle complications arising from giving birth were very limited. Some women lost out by losing their babies while others died in child birth.

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Story four revealed that community members had issues concerning the midwife at the health centre. Notably, preconceptions about a male midwife in a health centre were discussed among community members. They voiced personal issues which had remained private to some individuals for fear of being embarrassed once they became public knowl-

edge. Through theatre, many sensitive issues, which otherwise may have been too delicate or dangerous to discuss openly in the society, can be explored and allow people to say things that would not be possible in their own voices (Asante 2016). In this way, TfD can be used to discuss difficult and sensitive issues in an amicable none-offensive manner.

People spoke across their differences. A few who did not care about the nurse being male were looked at with scorn while the majority whose views were contrary swore not to use the services at the clinic. With the help of the TfD facilitator, community members were recruited to portray their experiences through a play. After the performance, more discussions were done and the people resolved to include a female nurse at the health centre to help in handling cases related to pregnancies among community members. Doing so would allow the people to be handled by a person they were comfortable with.

The student applied TfD in the community to deal with some of the sensitive issues which hinged on matters concerning life and death. TfD helped to reach out to people by allowing them to talk about their feelings and attitudes towards the arrangement at the health centre. Instead of continuing with their silence on engagement of the male midwife, they were allowed to bring out their fears which affected their attendance at the health centre. Since only a few benefitted from the previous arrangement, it almost defeated the whole purpose of having the antenatal and maternity ward at the health centre. TfD was used to address the situation harmoniously by taking into consideration the traditional aspect of the community members. Using their own views, solutions sought were acceptable to all the community members.

The student realized the power of TfD in engaging community members to address their own problems. Not only that, the student played the role of a facilitator in initiating discussions on sensitive issues which adversely affected lives of the people. By allowing them to speak across their differences, the community members reached a consensus on how to deal with the prevailing problem thereby ending the silent conflict which had gripped the villagers. This experience showed how TfD could be used to prepare community members for discussions on pertinent issues which hinge on their own development.

## Reflections on the four stories

Experiences from students have shown that TfD has not only made community development work a lot easier, but allowed them to engage with the people and learn from them what they want done in their lives. TfD paves a way by starting from the grassroots through listening to people's voices and forming a basis for determining what needs to be planned and developed according to priorities given. TfD has shown the need for students to learn to respect community members as important stakeholders whose choices for development must be taken into account. The students taking TfD have vowed to never take community members for granted by determining developmental ventures for them just because they are experts. Bottom-up approaches to development are promoted through the use of TfD because of its ability to avoid externally determined and prescribed projects.

## Conclusion

TfD has a trickle-down effect. Utilization of TfD outside academia with reference to stories of success of its application in communities reached out by students, justifies its inclusion in many other study areas. TfD is limited to a few students whose engagement with communities is crucial. It is time higher institutions of learning revisited their curriculum to include TfD in study programmes that touch on livelihoods of communities. Experience has shown that handling students whose perceptions on TfD are diverse can be challenging because of the resistance encountered at the beginning. However, pursuance of a noble goal for which TfD stands is enough reason to engage with students and persuade them to understand its effect on empowering communities. This is because the transformation that TfD embraces is a requirement in development agendas.

## Reflections for the future

Higher Education Institutions (HEA) and other training institutions should integrate theatre for Development (TfD) subject areas and or

courses in their curricula and make them compulsory for study programmes that deal with development of communities. This would heighten the significance of TfD in Higher Education Institutions like universities and colleges where it is offered to students. Doing so would further instill in students the required knowledge and skills needed for them to perform and engage with communities.

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# Transnational networks of the Theatre of the Oppressed:

## Exchanges and institutionalization of a circulating method

Clara de Andrade

Many essays in this volume make reference to Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and techniques such as Forum Theatre which have found widespread application in TfD. This paper provides reflections on how the transnational networks of the Theatre of the Oppressed contributed to its institutionalization and permanence as one of the most widely implemented theatrical methodologies worldwide. In order to understand the expansion of the method developed by Augusto Boal as a transnational network, a brief review of its history is paramount.

### Theatre of the Oppressed – a circulating method

The Theatre of the Oppressed took shape while Augusto Boal was on the move during his exile which, from 1971 to 1986, led him across borders and through different political regimes. Like the Newspaper Theatre that was created as a reaction to the intensification of censorship in Brazil, Boal's proposals for the radical transformation of the actor-spectator relationship also emerged as a political and aesthetic response to the authoritarianism that then ravaged the South American continent.

Thus, the initial development of Boal's method followed his trajectory of exile in Latin America. Setting off for Argentina, which at the time enjoyed the camouflaged status of a 'democratic dictatorship' (Boal 2000: 291), Boal experimented with Invisible Theatre together with a group of actors from Buenos Aires. Next came a stay in Peru, where Boal, taking part in a program to increase popular literacy inspired by Paulo Freire and working with people from different indigenous groups that spoke multiple dialects, investigated non-verbal communication. This led to his formulation of the technique of Image Theatre. While still in Peru, Boal claimed to 'discover' (2000: 197) the Forum Theatre, a

modality of the Theatre of the Oppressed in which the spectator moves onstage and becomes an actor, or *spect-actor*, as well. By acting out its propositions and transforming the stage into real life, the *spect-actor* is able to rehearse the transformation of reality itself. In Forum Theatre, the most internationally widespread technique of the Theatre of the Oppressed, performance becomes, in Boal's own words, 'a preparation for action' (Boal 1985: 141).

After an initial period of his European exile in Portugal, Boal adopted France as his main country of residence. It was there that he developed his techniques to uncover the internalized oppression of the subject, known as The Cop in the Head and the Rainbow of Desire. During this period, greater systematization and dissemination of his techniques was begun. From France, the Theatre of the Oppressed spread to countries in Africa and Asia. Only then did the method return to a re-democratized Brazil, where Boal would be able to develop his Legislative Theatre. An understanding of the development of his method in France is key to comprehending its subsequent transnational expansion and institutionalization.

## Theatre of the Oppressed in France – the starting point

During Boal's exile in Paris, an entire generation of theatre artists, intellectuals and pedagogues gathered around him and founded the first group devoted to research on and practice of the Theatre of the Oppressed, the *Groupe Boal*. Following the rapid spread of its techniques, the original group perceived an urgent need to found a reference centre for the method.

The institutionalization of the Boal method began with the establishment of the first Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed as a non-governmental association. The *Centre d'étude et de diffusion des techniques actives d'expression – Méthodes Boal – CEDITADE*, founded in Paris in 1979, acted as a studio for creation, research, reflections on and adaptation of the method, while at the same time providing a centre for the diffusion of its techniques. This continual transformation of the Boal method was documented in the *Bulletins du Théâtre de l'Opprimé*. These newsletters were published by the pioneering group of the The-

atre of the Oppressed in Europe. By promoting the exchange of information among TO groups in different countries, the Parisian journal acted as a tool to stimulate the method's circulation. The Parisian centre's efforts in getting these *Bulletins* out thus contributed to the initial formation of an international network of practitioners (Andrade 2017).

Before this point, members of *Groupe Boal* had aligned their experiments in different fields of intervention in France with a search for distinct forms of financial support. One of the routes chosen by the Paris group was to bring the Theatre of the Oppressed into the institutional framework of French art theatre. This was done by organizing regular Forum Theatre seasons, performing inside well-known or established art theatres with conventional ticket sale procedures (CEDITADE 1982).

An important change in the context of the France of the 1980s favored the group's adaptation to modes of production connected to the funding of the social development field. In 1981, François Mitterrand was elected the first socialist president of the country. The financial support provided by Mitterrand's new government was paramount to the institutionalization and spread of the Theatre of the Oppressed.

The Boal method arrived in France precisely at the moment in which the public policies for theatre shifted from the notion of 'cultural democratization' based on the *democratization of art* to the notion of 'cultural democracy' grounded in the notion of culture as an expression of local culture and as *social development*. This led to the novel application of the Theatre of the Oppressed as a mediation methodology within local communities and social centres across France. The method gained further traction from this new and increasingly important notion of cultural democracy, and of culture as social development. Thus, the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed in Paris / *Groupe Boal* was fully co-opted by these new French policies, a factor that accelerated the institutionalization of the method and the professionalization of its practitioners.

By moving into the field of local political action, the Theatre of the Oppressed reached an institutional point of no return. Adapting their techniques to local cultural realities, new practitioners began to perform Forum Theatre by themselves, in conjunction with the social groups of their own cities. Such dynamics of appropriation and, at the

same time, diffusion of techniques contributed to numerous experiments with the method in other European countries, leading to the exponential multiplication of Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners.

The projects and pioneering expeditions of the Parisian core reinforced the base for an even larger scale diffusion of techniques, disseminated through workshops given by Boal or by the members of the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed in Paris. During the 1979 to 1984 period, these workshops were carried out in several European countries, but also as far afield as the island of Reunion, as well as on other continents.

In the 1990s, with the dissolution of the Paris Centre, new independent groups sprang up, contributing to an increasingly autonomous diffusion of the method. In addition, since the end of the 1970s, the publication of Augusto Boal's books in French and English, and later several other languages, allowed the Theatre of the Oppressed to spread geographically all over Europe as well as to other countries in Africa and Asia that Boal and the French had not yet visited.

## Exchanges and institutionalization

In the process of adapting to the cultural policies in France, the Theatre of the Oppressed acquired methodological and institutional capabilities which served as parameters for its subsequent globalization. The growing institutionalization of the method demanded by French state subsidies established a mode of working that could be followed in other countries and territories. This mode includes ideological convergence with prevailing cultural policies, localized methods, NGO status and professionalization of practitioners.

The founding of the first Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed, as a non-governmental organization, instituted an operational technology that served as a model for the creation of new Centres in this same NGO format. Centres were founded in countries such as:

- 1. India** – *Jana Sanskriti* – Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed, in Badu, West Bengal, founded by Sanjoy Ganguly in 1985. It acts through 30 local “satellite” teams that belong to the Indian Federation of the Theatre of the Oppressed, an organization of some 25,000 people based in the region of Kolkata. *Jana Sanskriti* hosts the *Muktadhara*,

International Festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed, which has been organized bi-annually since 2004.

**2. Brazil** – Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed – Rio, in Rio de Janeiro, founded by Augusto Boal in 1986. Managed today by a collective team, the Brazilian Centre acts in conjunction with social movements such as the Landless Workers' Movement – MST. It is a member of the Brazilian network of *Pontos de Cultura* (Cultural Hubs), which consists of more than 3,000 small centres for the promotion and dissemination of culture.

**3. Mozambique** – Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed of Maputo, founded by Alvim Cossa in 2012. It acts alongside the Mozambique Network of Community Theatre – RETEC, which consists of about 120 groups and works with the support of UNICEF.

Nowadays, such centres act as diffusion hubs for the method, thereby strengthening the institutional legitimation of the Theatre of the Oppressed around the world. The case of the Brazilian Centre allows us to study how transnational flows contributed to the method's institutionalization. In 1986, inspired by the successful experience of the French Centre in employing the Theatre of the Oppressed within the field of education, Boal developed a similar project for the public school network of Rio de Janeiro. Under the invitation of the left-wing Rio de Janeiro government of that time, Boal was able to return from his fifteen years exile and finally bring the Theatre of the Oppressed back to his native Brazil. This first project helped Boal to introduce the French notion of cultural democracy in Brazil, to form its first TO practitioners and to found the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed of Rio de Janeiro, CTO-Rio.

In the 1990s, during Boal's 'political-theatrical' tenure as city councillor, he and his new collaborators in Rio developed an innovative way of using the Theatre of the Oppressed which became known as Legislative Theatre. In this new modality, Forum Theatre was applied as a tool for the radical democratization of institutional politics through the direct participation of citizens in the drafting of legislation. This new modality of TO quickly spread to the rest of the world.

Amidst the growth of Legislative Theatre, the post-2004 shift in cultural policies in Brazil contributed significantly to the institutional-

zation and transnational expansion of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Inspired by the previously mentioned concept of cultural democracy, the *Programa Cultura Viva* (Living Culture Program) was implemented during the Lula administration and promoted a national network of Cultural Hubs. This network helped spread the Theatre of the Oppressed around Brazil through a project called *Teatro do Oprimido de Ponto a Ponto* (Theatre of the Oppressed Hub to Hub).

In 2008, an international branch of the program facilitated the transnational expansion of the method to several provinces in four African countries: Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Senegal. This expansion was meant to encourage the formation of International Cultural Hubs, devoted to the dissemination of the Theatre of the Oppressed throughout the African continent, combined with an affirmation of Brazil's historical and cultural bonds with Africa.<sup>1</sup>

In this cultural exchange, Brazil exported a social technology, the Theatre of the Oppressed, as well as a new form of cultural policy which favored its multiplication. In this way, both the Theatre of the Oppressed and the idea of activating hubs within an autonomous network of culture circulated transnationally, taking the same routes, from Brazil to Africa, and then to other countries of Latin America. The confluence of these projects resulted in the largest training program for multipliers in the Theatre of the Oppressed ever run by the CTO-Rio (Santos 2016: 28).

Beyond cultural policies, social funding resources have been mainly responsible for the survival of the CTO-Rio and the continuity of its work in Brazil, mostly through projects in areas of high poverty and violence such as the communities and slums of Rio. Especially since the political turn of 2019, this ability to integrate itself within the field of social development has enabled the Theatre of the Oppressed to escape the recent cuts in art sponsorship carried out by the current far-right government of Jair Bolsonaro.

We note that the spread of the TO method within Brazil resembles its initial stage of its development in France. In both countries, the activities of the Centres for the Theatre of the Oppressed were made viable through the method's integration with social development policies.

1 Information mentioned on the website of CTO-Rio, available at: <https://www.ctorio.org.br/home/projetos/>.

## Transnational networks of the Theatre of the Oppressed

The integration of the Theatre of the Oppressed through socially oriented endeavors within community networks reflects an epistemic shift in the field of culture which began in the 1970s. At that time, there was a broad movement in theatre that questioned the model of high culture and which led to projects in which theatre was redefined as a tool for social development. This ultimately led to the field of applied theatre and its many subfields, of which Theatre for Development is probably the best known and regarding which the seminal contribution of the Theatre of the Oppressed remains an undisputed claim (Prentki 2015: 15–16). By adapting his techniques to the policies of cultural democracy, Boal found ways to systematize and disseminate his method on a transnational scale (Andrade and Balme 2020).

As a sign of recognition of his global importance, it is worth mentioning that in addition to his Nobel Peace prize candidacy, Augusto Boal was nominated Ambassador of Theatre by the International Theatre Institute – ITI / UNESCO, in March 2009. This was but a few months before his passing. Yet despite his death, the Theatre of the Oppressed continued to circulate transnationally through the diverse networks created around the method. Several such international networks – connected or not to the previously mentioned TO Centres – have formed since then, gathering practitioners and groups from different countries. They meet frequently to carry out an exchange of experiences and practices at international conferences and festivals of the Theatre of the Oppressed in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Through these discourse networks, the Theatre of the Oppressed crosses borders, circulating as a political tool for activists – often through social projects, with the support of international and non-governmental organizations that act in defence of human rights.

Begun and developed during its founder's exile, the Theatre of the Oppressed acquired mobility and, at the same time, an open methodological approach that enabled its dissemination through transnational networks. Such ability to adapt directly derived from the modularity of the method. These characteristics of the Theatre of the Oppressed has

allowed for changes, adaptations to and the influences of the local cultures and aesthetic traditions of the territories in which it is applied. The ability of the method to adapt to the most diverse contexts, cultures and especially to the social development field demonstrate that more than just circulating a theatrical method, the global network of the Theatre of the Oppressed reveals itself a vehicle for the circulation of policies connected to the idea of cultural democracy.

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# Back to the grassroots: the global-historical frameworks of Theatre for Development as an organizational field

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This article investigates how the emergence of Theatre for Development was determined by broader transnational movements and pressures. I propose that the globalization and institutionalization of TfD coincided with a seismic shift in development policies and strategies that saw a movement away from top-down centralized strategies and towards a recognition of local needs as the drivers of development aid. Put another way: TfD participates in the move away from constructing hydroelectric dams and towards building latrines, from funding universities to creating grassroots HIV-prevention programs. The shift to a grassroots approach led, however, paradoxically to a proliferation of international involvement: the more local the context, the greater the involvement of NGOs, parastatal and state organisations in theatrical activity.

The article is structured around four main points: 1) The deradicalization of TfD as a response to Structural Adjustment programmes; 2) TfD's integration into tertiary education and research; 3) the redefinition of 'grassroots' as a concept and legitimizing development strategy; 4) how TfD emerged as an autonomous organizational field.

## Structural Adjustment Programmes and Theatre for Development

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a kind of popular theatre began to emerge that espoused political radicalism and had few aspirations towards commercial success. As a widespread interconnected movement, radical popular theatre of the 1970s and 1980s had different institutional frameworks and goals. A highly influential model of popular, grassroots-based theatre was initiated in 1967 with the establishment of the Philippines Educational Theatre Association (PETA). A direct response to the implementation of martial law in 1966, PETA used primarily the

vernacular Tagalog and existing performance forms such as the local version of *zarzuela* and even passion plays to criticize not just the government but American imperialism and persistent feudal structures. PETA was both a production house and a training institution. Although it frequently fell foul of the authorities, PETA also attained a remarkable international impact through its tours, sponsored by a Dutch NGO, managing to set up partner organizations across South Asia. Its fundamental principle was networking on a community level by partnering with churches, schools and other theatre groups throughout the country. By the end of the 1980s it coordinated five regional subdivisions, all of which received funding from abroad (Van Erven 1992: 65). Its self-declared vision of using theatre as a tool for education, social change and development also made it very compatible with the funding agendas of foreign NGOs, church organizations and even UNESCO, despite its initial political radicalism. Versions of PETA's approach were established in South Korea, India, especially Kerala, Pakistan, Thailand, and Indonesia.

PETA's journey from radical liberation to broad-based advocacy of theatre for educational and developmental purposes represents a major shift in theatrical practice throughout the Global South in the 1980s. The importation and diffusion of 'serious' or art-based theatre were mainly contingent on state funding, whether directly through institutions such as national theatres or indirectly through higher education. When therefore the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) implemented by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank began to bite, the effect in the Global South was palpable. SAPs were the result of crises in the North – the oil crisis, stagflation, a debt crisis, and rising interest rates in the 1970s which meant that by the 1980s old loans became almost unserviceable. In order to obtain new loans Global South countries had to submit to strict economic management, often overseen by the IMF and/or World Bank. Primarily a feature of the 1980s, they continued after the end of the Cold War and indeed until the present, although under different names and policies. They had many effects, most of them negative, including a growth in the Informal Sector (a term coined by anthropologist Keith Hart), which, according to ILO figures, can account for up to 80% of employment in some countries.

The most significant effect of SAPs in the area of theatre, especially in Africa, was to severely curtail whatever state funding had been available, including the universities. It could be argued that the theatrical corollary of the SAPs was the institutionalization of Theatre for Development (TfD). In its early iterations TfD had pronounced left-wing inclinations – Soviet agitprop and guerrilla theatre were often invoked including Wole Soyinka's brief flirtation with this form (Jeyifo 1985). Looking back on a practice of the 1980s Chris Kamlongera imagined TfD as 'theatre practice for the masses' (Kamlongera 1989: 223), while Zakes Mda (1993) defined it primarily as a form of 'communication.' They both frequently invoked Freire's notion of 'conscientization' which was implemented using Boalian techniques described in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (see de Andrade in this volume).

Whatever the moniker, TfD has its origins in the mid-1970s and came to full fruition in the 1980s when it slowly shed its radical origins and often forged alliances with various forms of governmental, international, and later nongovernmental development programmes. It is symptomatic that Kamlongera's major study (1989) was funded and published by the German Foundation for International Development (DSE), a parastatal organization of the West German government. Penina Mlama's book *Culture and development* (1991) was published by the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Rose Mbowa in Uganda worked closely with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation. Through a symbiotic connection with the academy and theatre practice, a whole generation of theatre students were trained to go out into the community, carry out theatrical projects ranging from building latrines to popularizing the use of fertilizer, and come back and write up the results. Even the commercial Yoruba Travelling Theatre was harnessed for TfD purposes when the Family Planning Council of Nigeria had 'Kola Ogunmola create a play on family planning titled *My Brother's Children* which was filmed and used by the Council in their campaigns around Nigeria' (Jeyifo 1985: 110).

Research literature on TfD is compendious, produced mainly by its practitioners in the form of case studies of self-led projects and instruction manuals. Largely ahistorical, and highly communication-oriented in keeping with the instrumental goals of TfD, existing research has

only intermittently engaged with the movement's own foundational narratives (see however Epskamp 2006 for a brief overview). While the ideological and practical influence of Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal is clear, what is less understood is how a particular conjunction of international organizations and expert networks led to the deradicalization and remarkable rapid diffusion of this set of practices. With hindsight we can recognize that the originally highly politicized commitment to conscientization and empowerment joined forces at some point with the imperatives and prerogatives of international development aid. Scholars advocating and studying political theatre in postcolonial countries recognized the problematic aspect of an approach to theatre beholden exclusively to developmental agendas. In his study of liberation theatre in Asia Eugene van Erven observed the potentially detrimental effects brought on by this conjunction of interests:

In the final analysis, the influence of Western development agencies can therefore be just as detrimental as government subsidies were to radical people's theatre in the West. Sooner or later, the artists become economically dependent on them and when the external financial incentives disappear, as eventually they all must, their commitment, and subsequently their activity, dies. (Van Erven 1992, 232)

TfD represents an alliance of politically committed, Boalian inspired theatre on the one hand, and educational and developmental agendas on the other, whereby the former gradually ceded to the latter. TfD quickly came to dominate theatrical activity in the Global South, especially on the African continent. It became almost the only way for trained theatre graduates to make a living in the theatre.

The AIDS epidemic in the 1980s was perhaps the single biggest factor contributing to its success where it proved highly successful, particularly in East Africa, as a means to quite literally reach the masses. While TfD was and continues to be used for conscientization on topics ranging from sanitation to ecology, its ability to negotiate the intimate sphere of human sexuality, the main avenue of HIV infection in Africa, proved highly effective. As governments were forced by SAPs to concentrate their meagre resources and focus on debt repayment, NGOs,

and philanthropy, both secular and religious, stepped in to fill the gap with Tfd funding and its associated effects.

## Tfd and the university

The conjunction of developmental aid and Tfd was substantially helped by the fact that institutionally Tfd had close ties with the tertiary sector, especially adult education, which was often based at universities although its activities were by definition much more widespread. The early projects of Ross Kidd in Botswana were conducted within the framework of adult education, Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh was a professor English and Drama at the University of Yaounde in Cameroon, while Michael Etherton and Penina Mlama were lecturers in drama at universities in Zambia and Dar es Salaam respectively.

Universities in Africa, indeed throughout the developing world, had long been a central plank of development programs, both state and philanthropic. The former colonial powers, especially France and Great Britain, sustained and indeed expanded extensive networks of scholarships for students and staff in both directions. Among private philanthropy the most sustained effort was by the Rockefeller foundation which between 1961 and 1981 financed a university development programme (UDP), which was renamed the 'education for development programme' (EFD). The renaming is already significant for its recalibration of priorities. The original program aimed to identify and support fifteen universities in twelve developing countries as a means to help create new elites for the postcolonial world. The university was, as James Coleman notes in his study of the program, 'at the apex of the country's knowledge system' (1993: 2) and its development regarded as the only way forward towards political and cultural autonomy. In sub-Saharan Africa they were University College Ibadan, University of East Africa, divided later into Makerere University College, University of Nairobi, and University of Dar es Salaam, National University of Zaire, and the University of Dakar, Senegal. Rockefeller was just one, albeit a major, player in a concerted effort among Western countries (there also existed efforts from the socialist bloc) to support third-world universities, as they were then known. The Carnegie Corporation also had a somewhat

smaller programme focused on Africa. The Kennedy administration established the United States Agency for International Development (AID) which had a particular emphasis on higher education. At its peak in 1965, '74 universities and 31 countries were being aided through contracts with 72 US universities for a total cost of \$122 million in that year alone' (Coleman 1993: 15). We find similar activity through the British inter-University Council for higher education overseas (IUC) which was backed by the British Overseas Development Administration (ODA).

Theatre studies also participated in this 'big push for development' (Rosenstein-Rodan 1957), most notably the University of Ibadan, which received over \$US 400,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation during the 1960s, by far its largest grant for theatre related activities outside the USA. It is significant that this relatively large sum was channelled into a university department, indeed it was instrumental in establishing theatre studies or drama, as it was then known, as an independent discipline (Balme 2019). A list of the founding members of this department reads as *Who's Who of Nigerian and indeed African theatre*: Wole Soyinka, Demas Nwoko, Dapo Adelugba and Joel Adedeji.

However, by the 1970s university-based theatre makers realised that performing Ibsen, Shakespeare, Brecht, or even indigenous dramatists, was not addressing the needs of the community. This realization went hand in hand with a radical shift in development priorities.

By 1978 the figure of 74 supported universities had dropped to ten as funding for universities was increasingly seen as problematic. What had happened? In 1975 the British government published a white paper entitled 'Overseas development. The changing emphasis in British aid policies: more help for the poorest'. This white paper explicitly announced a programmatic shift 'from helping universities to helping with vocational training and other aspects of education which are closer to the grassroots' (Coleman 1993: 16). This foregrounding of poverty alleviation rather than large-scale infrastructural investment signalled a radical revisioning of priorities away from the elites to education closer to the grassroots. By 1983 Rockefeller had phased out its entire Education for Development program.

## Back to the Grassroots

The concept of 'grassroots' is found throughout the literature on Tfd and is used extensively both by its practitioners and its scholars who are often one and the same. Therefore, the term requires some more detailed parsing in order to understand the confluence of a global developmental agenda advocating 'grassroots' engagements and a new practice of theatre that demanded the same approach.

Oga Steve Abah defines Tfd as 'a means of articulation by ordinary people to discuss their predicament' (1996: 245). Lexically 'grassroots' refers indeed to 'ordinary people', and is often associated with rural areas. In this meaning it is not much older than a century and has its origins in US English according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Today we would probably associate the term with broadly leftist, even Marxist, oppositional strategies to top-down, governmental approaches. Some applications of the term are associated with post-development (Escobar) and coalesce around marginalized groups, whether peasant farmers, squatters or even women (Pietersee 2000: 185).

It is perhaps one of the laws of conceptual histories (*Begriffsgeschichte*) that its objects of research do not necessarily respect ideological borders. Our current understanding of the term in relation to development practice can be traced to US government policy and to one man in particular, David Lilienthal, director of the Tennessee Valley Authority, perhaps the most famous of the New Deal initiatives of the 1930s. The TVA, which still exists, has a fascinating history as a development project and there is no doubt that President Truman's famous inaugural speech in 1949 declaring the development century as a way to combat the spread of communism was grounded in no small way in the achievements of the TVA. A tireless apologist of the TVA, Lilienthal popularized the notion of 'grassroots' administration as a synonym for decentralization and as a program for local consultation as a means to generate policy and practice. Although the massive programs of the TVA, in particular the hydroelectric dams, harnessed huge amounts of state funding, other aspects included fighting malaria, town planning, expanding recreational facilities and promoting agricultural policies, especially soil management, to help alleviate poverty amongst

Southern farmers. Lilienthal's basic principle envisaged and realized 'a national program administered so close to the grass roots that it is possible promptly to see and, by enlisting the interest and participation of the citizens affected, to remedy each conflict between the objectives of general regulations and the problems of the individual' (1940: 366). Lilienthal's grassroots method also contained explicit political goals: 'the vitality of democratic decision also depends in large measure upon the extent to which the grass roots can furnish facts and judgement *to the central authority*, so that it may not grow anemic on a diet of 'fundamental principles' and a priori reasoning' (1940: 367).

Lilienthal's influence transcended the US. His seminal work, *TVA: Democracy on the March* (1944) was distributed widely by the Office of War Information, with 50,000 copies made available in China alone (Ekbladh 2002: 346). By addressing poverty, poor education, over-population and 'traditional' agricultural methods within certain regions of the US, the TVA and its grassroots approach was regarded as a kind of template for developing countries. Lilienthal employed its techniques in various private consultancy projects in Iran, Colombia, and Puerto Rico, before returning to semi-public office in 1960s when he attempted to 'tame' the Mekong river during the Vietnam War, a transregional project energetically supported by old school developmentalists, most notably Walt Rostow. The project failed for several reasons but chiefly because of the deepening war in the region. As David Ekbladh puts it: 'Talk of implementing programs at the grass-roots level based on the example of the TVA was confronted by the fact that people at that level faced lives pushed into a persistent state of flux by armed conflict' (2002: 368).

The grassroots level was explicitly invoked by the Americans during the bloody military conflict in Vietnam where the ideological positions could not have been clearer. Despite the concept's clear association with US developmental policy, it also appeared frequently in connection with the political and military tactics of the Viet Cong. Like most guerrilla movements it operated at the 'grassroots'.

When in the early phase of its history Tfd practitioners invoked 'a grassroots approach', they were ideologically probably more closely allied with the Viet Cong than Lilienthal and the TVA, although both

shared the same basic approach of ‘consulting’ with peasant farmers, albeit with quite differing agendas and methods of enforcing the goals.

## TfD as an organizational field

The shift in funding agendas from hydroelectric dams to latrines – a programmatic desire to help the poorest and work at the grassroots that was formulated in the 1970s – no doubt provided an ideological framework that fostered the emergence and above-all institutionalization of TfD as a set of well-established practices that negotiate between NGO funding and the university. Although not all TfD projects are university-based, many are and there exists a symbiotic relationship between them. TfD has become institutionalized in the sense that it works within a recognizable organizational field. An organizational field is an important term from institutional theory and refers to an intermediate state between institution and organisation. Following Douglass North’s famous definition, we can say that institutions define ‘the rules of the game,’ and constitute ‘the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction’ (North 1990: 3), whereas organizations are the individual players, ‘groups of individuals bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives’ (North 1990: 5). Theatre scholars tend to concern themselves with the level of organization: specific theatres and theatre companies, because it is here that theatre is made and becomes visible. Less visible is the institutional level, which in most cases involves some form of exogenous support, whether through a ministry of culture or state-funded universities, or through private funding, for example transnationally operating private philanthropy. This support is in turn dependent on legitimating beliefs that justify public/state support in the first place. All these instances create rules and constraints which are highly mutable. It is in the interaction between the institutional and the organizational level that structures accessible to theatre historiographical analysis emerge.

Following the seminal essay by Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, ‘The Iron Cage Revisited’ (1983), organizational fields can be defined as ‘sets of organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life’ (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 148). They emerge

when individual organizations coalesce around shared goals and forms of cooperation. 'Organizations compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy (...) Once a field becomes well established, however, there is an inexorable push towards homogenization' (DiMaggio/Powell 1983: 150), which refers to 'the development of a mutual awareness among participants in a set of organizations that they are involved in a common enterprise' (ibid.: 148).

Such groups of organizations are characterized by a high degree of isomorphism, i.e., similarity of form, and it is this process of isomorphic convergence that signals institutionalization in the above sense. According to DiMaggio and Powell there are three main types of isomorphism leading to the formation of an organizational field: coercive, mimetic and normative. Coercive isomorphism results from political pressure and the need to gain and secure legitimacy: the latter is the lifeblood of any institution; without legitimacy institutions ultimately wither and die. External pressures force organizations to act in very similar ways to achieve their goals. Mimetic isomorphism on the other hand occurs when the goals are unclear; here individual organizations tend to imitate a prominent model which they deem more successful. 'The modeled organization may be unaware of the modeling or may have no desire to be copied; it merely serves as a convenient source of practices that the borrowing organization may use' (1983: 152). Normative isomorphism is associated with professionalization which DiMaggio and Powell define as 'the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work' (ibid.). They differentiate two main forms: the production of formal education and of legitimation in **a cognitive base produced by university specialists**; and the growth and elaboration of **professional networks that span organizations** and across which new models diffuse rapidly. The two forms usually work hand in hand to produce norms which result in turn in homogenization on the part of individual organizations who become then recognizable members of an established field. The advantages of membership in a field are obvious: there is an increase in political strength and a greater ease in obtaining resources. It also enables mobility of individuals between organizations as the overall goals and methods are similar.

The label TfD is itself already the mark of a recognized organizational field. It is well established within the institutional framework of the university in teaching and research, particularly in African countries but also in the UK and some universities in the USA. Here TfD has consolidated its 'cognitive base' in the form of curricula and research methodology and outputs.

The historiographical question is how and where did these isomorphic processes come into play? What were the coercive pressures, for example, funding agendas, that shifted the goalposts in such a way that many if not most organisations were shooting at the same goal. Funding agendas are by definition coercive, albeit well-meaning, because by definition they stipulate goals.

As far as mimetic isomorphism is concerned, we could ask which organisations and groups provided the models for others to follow? Prominence and notoriety, for example Ngũgĩ's famous Kamĩrĩthũ project in Kenya, do not necessarily ensure status as a model; they probably have a contrary effect. While inspirational, they are not necessarily exemplary in the sense defined here. We need to study which projects and groups set the standards for emulation and why.

Finally, normative dynamics provide perhaps the richest field for investigation. Where and how did a loosely connected number of individuals organize themselves in such a way that an organizational field began to emerge? Of crucial importance are so-called field-configuring events (FCEs) (Lampel and Meyer 2008). These are temporary social organizations such as tradeshows, conferences or professional gatherings that shape the development of professions, technologies, markets, and industries:

FCEs are arenas in which networks are constructed, business cards are exchanged, reputations are advanced, deals are struck, news is shared, accomplishments are recognized, standards are set, and dominant designs are selected. (Lampel and Meyer 2008: 1026)

While all FCEs may be roughly equal, some are more equal than others. Some actually do define or configure a field rather than just maintain it. I propose that one such field-configuring event was the African

Workshop on Theatre for Development held in Zimbabwe 15 August – 1 September 1983, and sponsored by UNESCO, ITI and the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education and Culture. A report by Ross Kidd is held in the UNESCO archives in Paris and a summary can be found in Kidd (1985). According to Kidd:

this report details the process followed by many groups, and reveals some of the major learnings, dilemmas, contradictions, strengths, and limiting factors found in a practical village-based theater-for-development process. A brief discussion of theater-for-development (TfD) presents this drama form as an experimental collaborative process designed to take theater out of urban enclaves and make it accessible to the masses, presenting such common concerns as crop production, water shortages, immunization, literacy, and family planning. (Kidd 1984: 1)

The workshop was field-defining in several respects. We find the term TfD now established amongst the various competing and cognate terms, albeit occasionally in scare quotes; TfD is defined as a ‘practical village-based...process’, i.e. as an explicitly ‘grassroots’ approach. It is designed to train ‘development cadres’ as they were then termed and function as a ‘model’ in order to define educational objectives for the process as well to start a TfD program in Zimbabwe. Numerous sponsors are named: apart from the UNESCO and ITI they included the African Cultural Institute (Dakar), the Canadian International Development Agency, Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), the Commonwealth Foundation, the International Council for Adult Education, the French Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, the German Foundation for International Development, NOVIB (Netherlands), and the Swedish International/Zimbabwe Authority. The report was published by the Centre for the Study of Education in Developing Countries (CESO) based in The Hague, which would go on to become a key organization for popularizing and institutionalizing TfD among European funding bodies. Participants included thirty-one theatre workers from outside Zimbabwe. Pan-African participation extended to Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, Zaire, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and Mauritius.

The choice of the workshop as the dominant format is significant because of its emphasis on 'practical activity and 'hands-on' experience' (4) as stated in the report. The workshop became, apart from the printed word, the main medium for disseminating knowledge about Tfd. The Zimbabwean example is just one instance of a field-defining event. No doubt there are others, especially in respect to private NGOs. Noteworthy in the 1983 workshop is the large number of parastatal organisations: their involvement provided a crucial proof of concept and legitimation for the next wave of Tfd in the 1990s. Equally important perhaps is the key function provided by the International Popular Theatre Alliance (IPTA), founded and run by Kidd himself. Here we find a professional organization, and an international one at that, which demonstrates already normative isomorphism at work. In the first phase of Tfd's consolidation as an organizational field, the IFTA seems to have played a crucial role.

The workshop also needs to be seen against the background of much older initiatives to foster so-called 'folk media'. The use of various forms of performance (music, song, dance) for instrumental communicative, often state-directed purposes, can be traced back to at least the 1950s in the developing world. The folklorist John Lent documented in 1980 a plethora of initiatives. India was one of the first new nations to use 'folk media' in the 1950s, which established in 1954 a Song and Drama Division as an arm of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to harness indigenous performing arts for development purposes (Lent 1980: 81). In 1959 anthropologist Milton Singer noted in South India 'the use of dramatic media to tell villagers the story of independence, of the five-year plan, and of specific projects for village development' including both 'traditional and modern dramatic forms' (1959: 155). The overwhelming majority of folk media for development initiatives that John Lent documents took place in the 1970s and were frequently state-sponsored.

The Zimbabwe workshop is both a continuation of this trend but also a new direction. While there is some state involvement from the new Zimbabwean government, the organizational field that Tfd has become has been already reconfigured to involve a wide range of NGOs and parastatal actors. It has become more complex and above all more international.

The broader question to be addressed refers to the extent in which the formation of the organizational field ultimately functioned in the long-term to limit and constrain TfD. From the many possible paths it may have taken based on the various 'cognate practices' to be selected from, institutional forces came into play to delimit the new field. Institutions normally serve to constrain organizational activity (Barley and Tolbert 1997), not expand it. This leads to the familiar phenomenon of path dependency whereby 'contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties' (Mahoney 2000, 507).

If the Murewa workshop produced path-dependent qualities, what were they? Critique from Eyoh (1991) and Mluma (1991) has tended to focus on the extent and form of indigenous participation in creating the material for translation into performance. This is indeed the red thread running through much early commentary. It is particularly characteristic of participant observers who are looking for best-practice solutions for their own work. An organizational approach might provide a different reading of the same events. The international composition and support of the workshop already points to the future course of TfD: involvement of NGOs, government and parastatal organizations. The report lists no fewer than twelve separate organizations and at least six different countries. Already we see here the externalization of TfD on the organizational level compared to the limited number of actors in the early work in Botswana.

From a positive point of view such constraints can lead to organizational isomorphism (DiMaggio/Powell 1983), which, while not necessarily the most innovative solution, has the advantage of creating efficiency in other areas and enhancing 'organizational effectiveness and survival' (Wicks 2001: 662). Most, if not all, TfD projects conform to the same set of expectations, which expedites and streamlines funding applications and other areas of activity.

## Summary

An institutional approach to understanding the emergence and consolidation of TfD as one of the most influential theatre forms in the Global South can provide a new way to approach the current, often deadlocked discussions. Critics of TfD, which include its practitioners, have frequently articulated their misgivings regarding the dependence on outside donor organisations. This leads in turn to a putative loss of agency regarding goals and methods. As we have seen, TfD shifted from being a form born of political radicalism to one embedded in complex networks of private, parastatal and state support. This required an ideological realignment away from class struggle and economic redistribution towards more broadly based goals involving poverty alleviation, health, and agriculture. TfD as a grassroots form of theatre emerged at the same time as international development strategies were being realigned from the large-scale programs to a more grassroots approach. The conformity or at least alignment with funding agendas of donor organizations and governments was less of an adjustment that appears at first sight. As we have seen, TfD defined itself as an organisational field very quickly in the 1980s in constant contact with numerous international bodies. It was therefore inevitable that the latter's agendas and expectations were integrated into the field: that is how institutions work.

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## **Part II**

### Country-Specific Case Studies



# Theatre for Development in Ghana: Influences, Contexts and Changing Narratives

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The evolution and development of Tfd in Ghana, as in some other African countries, is directly linked to the political and socio-cultural transformation of the nation. The various influences that created the atmosphere required for the development of Tfd in Ghana today reflect the history and changing circumstances of the nation. It is also part of the historical continuum of drama and popular culture from pre-colonial to colonial and post-colonial Ghana. This is because socially engaged theatre has firm roots in the country's theatrical and political tradition. Indeed, every epoch in the country's historical development usually comes with its performance traditions that either help in political domestication, insurrection or dialectical engagement with the status quo. This extensive repertoire of performance traditions helped shape the field of Tfd in Ghana today. Some of these theatrical traditions developed early and survived all historical epochs, while others were short-lived, but with an impact that is still felt. An example of the former can be seen in the concert party traditions, while the latter can be seen in the travelling theatre experiment of the Legon 7 by James Gibbs and the Legon Road by Mohammed Ibn Abdallah in the late sixties and early seventies. This chapter, fundamentally, re-examines the history of Tfd in Ghana. It discusses the influences, context and varying narratives that created the necessary conditions for the success of the praxis in Ghana. Among the many issues that this chapter addresses include a proposition that seeks to correct the long-held assumption about how institutional Tfd in Ghana began and the controversy surrounding whether Sandy Arkhurst can be solely credited as the only practitioner behind the institutionalization process.

## Contextualizing the History of TfD in Ghana

The mass education campaign of the 1940s and the experiments by faculty members and students at the Department of Theatre Arts of the University of Ghana have traditionally shaped discussion of the evolution, development and institutionalization of TfD and socially engaged theatre in higher education institutions in Ghana (see Abdallah 2018; Yankah 2006; Nyatuame 2017, Gibbs 1999). Although these references are important, they do not tell the whole story. Other landmark projects happened within the context of socially engaged theatre and are worth highlighting, because most of these works either influenced the local evolution and institutionalisation of the genre or had a much more significant influence on the genre's evolution in Africa as a whole. Byam confirms this when she observes that the pioneers of the Laedza Batanani project, which is considered the beginning of contemporary TfD, were influenced by "cultural developments in Ghana where concert parties, a type of traveling theatre, had been used as a means of reviving culture" (1999: 39).

There are many historical events in the field of socially engaged theatre that had a direct bearing on the TfD movement in Ghana. For a thorough appreciation of how the praxis got established as a formidable grassroots empowerment methodology and as a course of study in higher education institutions in Ghana, some crucial events and theatrical experiments need to be examined. These include but are not limited to the concert party travelling theatre tradition, colonial mass education and community development campaigns, the UNESCO puppet for community development workshop, the Institute of Adult Education's people education association's non-formal education and community development project, Efuia Sutherland's experiment at Ekumfi/Atwia, and institution-based community theatre projects. All these programs and projects contributed to the consolidation of TfD in Ghana today and they provided the basis for appropriating concepts, aesthetics and motives for engaging in TfD. It is noteworthy that most of these projects happened because of a need to mobilise the citizens towards solving an identified challenge in a community. Thus, a conscious effort was made at employing theatre and the creative arts for an agenda that

is geared towards either political or social domestication, insurrection, liberation or empowerment.

## Concert Party Travelling Theatre

The concert party travelling theatre tradition started long before independence with a degree of local and international influence. This travelling theatre movement was initially performed purely for entertainment but assumed a different purpose during the post-world war II era because of its capacity to mobilise the masses and shape public perception. It is said that because colonial Ghana was a strategic location for the British, it became one of the most extensive and intensive sites for large-scale wartime propaganda (Holbrook 1978: 401). The colonial government employed a number of strategies to spread information about the war from their perspective. They commissioned concert parties to create performances about the war to shape public opinion and reception in the country.

An example can be seen in the Gold Coast Two Bobs' production titled *The Downfall of Adolph Hitler*. In addition, in the market squares, prayer grounds and in city streets, mobile film units of colonial Ghana roamed the country showing footage from the frontline, all in their bid to ensure there was local support for the war (Clarke 1986: 48; Collins 1976: 52). This can be classified as taking theatre to the people and as a form of domestication theatre; a type of theatre that deliberately eschew social critique and focus on helping the governed to align with the agenda of their governors and people with power. Catherine M. Cole concurs and reveals that because of "their geographic mobility and widespread popularity, concert parties participated first-hand in the transformation of public consciousness in Ghana during the post-war and independence years (1997: 264)." Additionally, she throws light on how their performance aesthetics changed and incorporated the local context depending on where they performed. She writes that "as concert troupes travelled in cities, towns and villages throughout Ghana they adapted their shows to the language needs and aesthetic tastes of particular audiences". The attention paid to local performance aesthetics and communication modes is one of the essential features of Tfd,

and claiming that the concert parties is one of the influences on TfD is not an exaggerated claim, because “like living magazines, they transmitted fashions, manners, dances, characters, and ideas across geographic distances” and more importantly, “in the absence of widespread literacy, the concert party served as one of the primary media through which colonial Ghanaians shifted from local identifications to the more abstract realm of regional, ethnic, and national affiliation as the country moved towards independence” (1997: 264). This places this kind of theatre as one part of the performative practices that share characteristics with the practice of TfD today. It also means that the concert party did more than amuse; it played a crucial role in ensuring local and national cohesion through the performative arts and culture.

Furthermore, after independence, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, made a conscious effort to promote popular drama and specifically concert parties as part of his cultural development agenda, endorsing a number of state and parastatal concert parties. A situation that arose out of his recognition of “the vital role of local popular entertainment in the independence struggle and the creation of national and Pan-African identity” (2005: 23). One important reason for his action is that they had the capacity to tour the country, and at some point, the groups were disseminating his ideology and communicating his policies to Ghanaians. In fact, his involvement was intensive: he is credited with the introduction of female actors into concert parties because of his insistence that women must be made an integral part of all the performance troupes and companies his government supported.

## Mass Education and Community Development Campaigns

Beginning in 1948, a mass education and community development campaign started in colonial Ghana. The aim was “to provide opportunities for training voluntary leaders of social development and Mass Education *and* to organise this training in short intensive courses held in rural areas in such a way that they constituted a technique for arousing and stimulating understanding and enthusiasm among the local community” (Dickson 1950: 22). The idea for this project came from the

Colonial Office summer conference held at Cambridge in 1948. At the conference, it was agreed that it was imperative for the mass education campaign to prioritise the training of leaders if it was to succeed and be sustained. The team were then tasked with, among other things, executing the project in a way that guaranteed the continuous stimulation of social life in the rural areas. They believed that doing this would make it easy for the people to understand the dynamic and exciting prospects in voluntary social service (Dickson 1950: 22). In order for the project to achieve all its stated aims and specific objectives, they designed the course to focus on physical recreation, music, first aid, literacy, craft, discussion groups and later drama which Pickering (1958: 62) indicates was introduced by accident and was, he says, “a happy inspiration”. This is because drama was not originally planned as part of the courses, and Gibbs (1999: 7) confirms that there was nothing in the training manual about drama. Even the expertise assembled from the various organisations and agencies confirms this assertion because there was no drama expert on the team. To this end, Dickson affirms that:

A number of organisations helped the training staff to prepare for this work. Achimota lent musical instruments and helped prepare the mass literacy material... The Army helped with equipment and training for physical recreation, the Red Cross with lecture syllabuses and charts for first aid. The Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic Missions each loaned the services of one of their finest young Ewe teachers. The Police lent one of their best bandsmen and the Medical Department a male nurse-dispenser. (1950: 22)

What is interesting about the entire process is the fact that, as Ken A. Pickering later writes, that “village drama is in many ways the most noteworthy of the audio-visual aids used in mass education in Ghana today” (1958: 62).

The team understood that they needed the acceptance of the people. It was clear to them that if they were to succeed and the project was to be sustained, they needed the people as part of the process. Dickson (1950: 23) reported that “the leader personally visited every Native Authority, every School Manager, every Senior School Head-master

and every Departmental Officer in the area, addressing meetings and answering questions". Much like Tfd today, they realised that the people must be subjects of their own development and not the objects. Dickson further stated that "it soon became apparent that the chances of the work being maintained after the courses depended upon the support of one, or perhaps two or three, of the leading citizens in each locality where the course was held". To achieve this, they ensured that the people who were the main reason for the project understood it and became an integral part of the implementation.

Equally important is the fact that village drama took a life of its own. It developed organically and became one of the most effective information dissemination and training methods. Gradually, both the team and the people realised the potential of the medium of drama because some challenging aspects of mass education could only be resolved through drama. Moreover, more noticeably, "and of first importance, village drama is the most truly Ghanaian audio-visual aid, depending as it does upon a nationwide aptitude and liking for drama and by its intimate relation to local custom and tradition" (Pickering 1958: 62). Preparing and using 'village drama' did not require special skills, neither did it call for complicated scenery or unique settings. "The 'stage' was a clearing in the crowd, a space between two palm trees, an open stall in the village market: the 'stalls', rush mats or the trunk of a fallen tree, and 'raising the curtain' a simple statement by the team leader that the audience was about to see a play" (Pickering 1958: 62). The entire performance was created through improvisation after a thorough discussion of the action, content and context with the people who were selected as actors. They ensured that the performance was interlaced with proverbs from the locality and integrated the people's customs during the improvisation to avoid cultural blunders. Since humour is a given in the communities, all the village dramas employ it. Thus, the people's mode of communication, which was an easy way to get them to appreciate the process, was key to the drama's success. In effect, after the accidental discovery of drama and its integration into the process to the extent of making it a part of the courses taught, it took centre stage in the entire mass education and community development project. Commenting on the value of drama in the entire campaign, Pickering

states that “its value in the special context of mass education in Ghana is greatest in the most difficult campaigns, involving the most radical social change or demanding the adoption of an unpopular course of action” (1958: 67). This contemporary adaptation and renditions of this approach serves as a reason why the mass education and community development campaign is one of the landmark projects that created the needed atmosphere for the success of Tfd in Ghana.

## UNESCO Puppet Training and Polyvalent Workshop

Between 14th August 1962 and 22nd June 1963, UNESCO sent Josef Heller, an expert in puppetry, to Ghana to conduct training on how the Ghanaian community development program could integrate puppetry into their work. He was also to “coordinate teaching by means of puppet demonstration and the presentation of puppet plays with the general programs for the mass education and community development” (Heller 1963: 1). The technical workshop covered eight out of ten regions in Ghana at the time. Each region had three field officers from the social welfare and community development department, with one woman as a representative. They recommended that local people rather than outsiders should create the puppets and perform for their people. The systematic process in using puppetry to enhance the audio-visual technique was similar to that of Tfd today. The process followed a basic pattern: identification of purpose, research, organisation, creation, performance and follow-up.

Identification of purpose in this context means knowing exactly what the people need and the issue to tackle. This stage of the process is used to determine whether the main challenge of the people is sanitation, nutrition, agriculture, child care or any issue as the community and field officials will resolve after their research and investigation. The research stage entails finding out what is relevant to the communities, including its local idioms, customs and the performance needs. In the organisation stage, the field officers liaise with the community people and respective clubs. The final stage is the follow-up, a periodic visit to the communities and places where the performances took place. Seeing this process as another angle of the community development project

means that a new medium was introduced, and this follows the known stages of TfD methodology as practised today. It is therefore essential to mark this development as one of the sources of influence and inspiration when dealing with the evolution and diffusion of TfD in Ghana. This is because, at level of international collaboration and methodological exchanges, this UNESCO project firmly integrated puppetry into community development work and TfD in Ghana.

## Efua Sutherland and the Ekumfi/Atwia Project

The many shades of inspiration in both oral and literary theatre in Ghana can be found in the complex traditional cultures of the country. Likewise, the works of J.H. Kwabena Nketia (1965), A.A. Opopo (1970), and J.K.E. Agovi (1979) attest to the social relevance of theatrical works in the country. They also show us the potency of traditional performance traditions for group cohesion and community mobilisation. Looking at it from this perspective and in the larger context of using theatre for communication and integrated development, the work of Efua Sutherland at Ekumfi Atwia deserves a special mention, because aside from it being an excellent example of socially engaged theatre for integrated community development, it is also one of the training grounds for Sandy Arkhurst, who eventually played a key role in the process of institutionalising TfD in higher education institutions in Ghana. It can even be said that the project is one of the foundational experiments that paved the way for the evolution of TfD in Ghana and perhaps Africa, because while the Laedza Batanani project started in 1974, the Ekumfi Atwia started in 1964.

The Ekumfi Atwia project led by Efua Sutherland was a way of bringing about holistic development in a rural community without diluting their traditional cultural life. It is one of the all-inclusive integrated community development projects which used theatre as its mainstay in achieving individual and community development in Ghana. The project was conceived by Sutherland because she realised through experience that “when people relied on outside assistance, little got accomplished and communities became immobilised, not taking matters into their own hands” (Arkhurst 2007: 168). She, therefore, created a plat-

form, where collectively, the people could design projects and programs for individual and community progress. To this end, she embarked on the Ekumfi/Atwia community project, which among other things, built a theatre named *Kodzidan*. It is essential to point out that *Kodzidan*, the theatre that was built in the community, “became more than just a place for performance”; it became a community centre, a place for mobilising people for collective action. Arkhurst put the concept in context when he observed that:

*Kodzidan* was a concept which encouraged education of the residents to create the desired awareness and motivation for them to want to do things for themselves. It gave them the opportunity to be organised in their programmes for success, and provide the necessary discipline for the sustenance of the community projects (2007: 170–171)

Through the program, the residents appreciated the value of information sharing and community organising. The animateurs led by Sutherland and Arkhurst paid particular attention to the process instead of the product. In fact, “the conscious involvement of the community throughout the processes gave them the opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions, argue and in fact participate in every way so as to ingrain their own belief, values, priorities, problems and goals into the development effort” (Arkhurst 2007: 171). What was unique about this project was that, after the initial discussion between the queen mother of Ekumfi Atwia and Efua Sutherland, the rest of the process developed organically. Nothing was imposed on the community. All the developmental projects and activities that came out of the collaboration were internally generated. The inhabitants of Ekumfi Atwia turned their revered art of storytelling into a weapon and a discursive frame for their developmental needs. The approach was not like most Tfd projects that happened in other African countries. It was not for a fixed duration like the usual project-based Tfd, and it was a process-based project that became recurrent with the focus shifting to another challenge after every project cycle. That is why “all activities were aimed at creating a platform for communal participation through theatre, in all stages of integrated development, from problem identification, through

theatrical presentation of such problems, to collective discussion and, finally, action leading to growth” (Arkhurst 2007: 172). The whole experience of the Ekumfi Atwia can be summed up as a participatory exploration that is essential in preparing and spurring people on for social transformation. What spurred Sutherland and Arkhurst on is the project’s reliance on the people and their modes of communication which gave it an assured way to sustainability. The other thing is that, even when issues that were political in nature were raised, solutions were first sought within. This might be because they resolved to prove that they were capable of managing their own affairs. It stands to reason, therefore, that the Ekumfi/Atwia experiment by Sutherland cannot be ignored when discussing possible sources of influence and inspiration for the evolution and diffusion of TfD in Ghana.

## Higher Education Institutions and TfD in Ghana

There are two aspects worth considering when looking at higher education institutions and TfD in Ghana. One can be traced back to the non-formal education project by the institute of adult education of the University of Ghana, a two-year project which took place between 1976 to 1977 and involved a number of cultural groups in the eastern region of Ghana. The other is the contemporary practice by most theatre departments in a number of higher education institutions in the country. The latter started in the 1980s at the University of Ghana, first, as an integration of the TfD methodology in drama in education course by Sophia Lokko and later, as an independent research and teaching course spearheaded by Sandy Arkhurst. It is now being studied in a number of tertiary institutions in Ghana like the University of Cape Coast (UCC), University for Development Studies (UDS) and the University of Education, Winneba (UNEW).

The non-formal education program was a collaborative program between the Center for International Education (University of Massachusetts, UMass), the Institute of Adult Education, University of Ghana (IAE), and the People’s Educational Association of Ghana (PEA), which is a site/field organisation of the IAE with nationwide coverage. This project defined non-formal education as “a wide range of non-school

activities whose major purpose is to promote in people around the world the development of skills, knowledge and behaviors which will enable them to improve their life situations” (Kinsey and Bing 1978: 16). At the core of the program was a deliberate attempt at engaging people in unstructured activities that had the potential of igniting individual and community transformation. The UMass, IAE, and PEA teams worked with cultural groups in the communities who were themselves members of the PEA. These cultural groups Russell indicates were “village level voluntary organisations that are common, highly creative and very popular in Ghanaian society. They also provide important community services and perform at cultural functions” (Russell 1982: 84). Most of the creation of the cultural groups centred on music and dance. They provided entertainment at functions at a fee.

However, in 1976, there was a change in the way they approached their craft and creations. This happened because of a workshop that was sponsored by the German Adult Education Association (DVV) at Larteh, in the eastern region of Ghana. Participants were drawn from four different cultural groups based in the region and officials from IAE, PEA, DVV and the regional ministry of education. It is instructive to note that “the three-day workshop consisted of a series of small group discussions that merged into larger discussion groups. These discussion groups eventually formed into improvisational drama working groups, and eventually into drama rehearsal groups” (Russell 1982: 93). Improvisational drama was not part of the repertoire of the cultural groups, but the partner organisations believed that it was a “useful tool for adding an educational component to the Cultural Groups’ activities” (Russell 1982: 93). It was at this same workshop that community service was made a part of the work of the cultural groups.

The entire process was based on improvisation, which led to a performance in the community. The groups discussed and agreed on the pertinent issues at three different levels: that which affects the group; that which affects their community; and that which affects the community but demands intervention from the nation’s authorities. Another practical approach they employed in simplifying their work was that the groups made sure.

that each skit must contain three distinct elements: a clear definition of the problem and a clear demonstration of why the problem was a problem: each skit had to propose through its dramatic resolution a practical solution to the problem; those responsible in the village for the solution of the problem, how the problem can be resolved, and what a reasonable time line for action would be. (Russell 1982: 106).

This became the format adopted for the campaign throughout the period of the project. A significant development that needs to be pointed out is that they used improvisational drama throughout the process. The entire procedure was participatory, and participants had every opportunity to contribute to the process and decisions. This changed the dynamic of the cultural groups and made them an integral part of their community's development. Hitherto, they had only danced and sang at funerals and other social occasions. The UMass team, PEA officials and other officials from IAE helped refocus "their orientation towards community education and development through improving their drama skills" (1982: 111). This project, although not termed TfD but framed within the context of non-formal education, had strong community development as its goal. In trying to achieve its desired outcomes, improvisational drama was its primary technique, which also served as the most potent of all the methods employed for social mobilisation for the project.

However, although it was led, coordinated and run by higher education institutions, it was not built into the curriculum at the IAE. It was part of their fieldwork that they conducted with their field organisation, PEA. Nevertheless, when considering TfD in higher education in Ghana, this UMass-CIE, IAE and PEA project cannot be disregarded. It must be regarded as one of the projects that created the atmosphere needed for the triumph of TfD in higher education institutions in Ghana. It has all the features of what can be classified in contemporary terms as TfD. The other initiative is the one by the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, which was led by Sophia Lokko and Sandy Arkhurst.

## Sophia Lokko, Sandy Arkhurst and the Department of Theatre Arts-University of Ghana

Theatre for Development, as a project and process-based research and teaching method, was institutionalised in Ghanaian higher education in the 1980s. As a distinct subject of study and an academic discipline, it was introduced, first at the University of Ghana (UG) by Sandy Arkhurst in 1986, after his return from Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria, where he was a visiting scholar. However, Sophia Lokko, who was one of the pioneers and founding mothers of the movements at the continental level started integrating the TfD methodology in the drama in education curriculum long before Arkhurst. In an interview with Hansel Eyoh Ndumbe, she says that “I have in drama in education been thinking about 3-Cs. Conceptualise, create and communicate. And after Kumba, I have with my students, got more than 6Cs now...I think it really helped me...” (Lokko 1991: 101). This was an admission that the 1983 and 1984 TfD conferences in Murewa and Kumba respectively, helped transform the way she approached her applied theatre work at the department.

Having experienced a new format of socially engaged theatre, which in some ways differed from what he had done in Ghana in the 1960s, Arkhurst brought his technical know-how and experience for the benefit of students, the university community and the surrounding environs of the university. His experience with Sutherland on the Ekumfi Atwia project and in the ABU Collective armed him with varied methods and ideas on how to use theatre and culture for sustainable development.

Sandy Arkhurst worked with Brian Crow, Salihu Bappa, Tony Humphries, Oga Abah, Saddiq Balewa, Tunde Lakoju and Michael Etherton as part of the ABU Collective. He was one of, if not the only trained theatre expert among the team that started the ABU Collective that ran the Samaru projects, the community theatre projects and later the TfD projects. He spent between 1979 to 1984 working at the ABU drama department teaching, researching and experimenting with ideas for using theatre for social change and development. Aside from participating in the TfD projects, he was in charge of most of the practical courses like acting, directing and drama in education. Furthermore, Arkhurst indi-

cates that out of about a hundred and five plays that were staged during his stay at ABU, only two of them were published plays, both of which were by Bertolt Brecht. The rest were from the approach adopted for the Samaru and community theatre projects discussed earlier.<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning, the University of Ghana resisted the introduction of the course until after negotiations that lasted for the entire period of 1985 till it was agreed that the course could be allowed on condition that the name be changed from Tfd to Theatre for Extension Communications (TEC). Hence, Tfd started at UG with the label TEC (Deh 2019: 10–11). However, it was in 1987 that students attempted mini projects on various spots on the UG campus. Their lab sites were mainly student markets and eateries on campus, including the Bush Canteen, Night Market and Commonwealth Hall market. Theatre Arts students went to these locations to gather information on various themes and created playlets and skits out of them. The first year's project focused mainly on health and hygiene (Arkhurst 1994: 4).

The first community theatre project outside the university campus happened in 1988 due to the realisation that they could make a more significant impact beyond the university environs. The students researched the various communities to gather information, came back to campus to have a discussion to prioritise the issues, improvised to create skits and playlets and performed on the streets in the communities. This characterises the first phase of the community theatre project of the department of theatre arts, UG. It did not involve the people in the process; it followed the taking theatre to the people concept and was more in line with the Samaru experiments in ABU. Arkhurst (1994: 4) expressed his reservations about the process, especially about the analysis that the students engaged in after gathering data in the communities. He observed that “these discussions and the identification of focal areas unfortunately take place in the Theatre Arts Department on the University campus and away from the people of the various communities”. He further asked that “how then are we sure that we are really dealing

2 Interview with Sandy Arkhurst by Abdul Karim Hakib on 27th May 2021 at Ashaley-Botwe: Accra on his role in the institutionalization of Theatre for Development in Ghana.

with the priority problems of the community?" These and other challenges identified in the initial approach made him rethink the process.

The rethink, as Arkhurst puts it, happened because, among other things, they realised that "the final performances are ephemeral and the experience, though interesting, is a fleeting one for the audience. The consciousness of the experience and the fragility of that consciousness find their solution in continuity" (1994: 5). If that was the case, then the community people must be factored in at all stages, but unfortunately, they were not involved at any stage in the process and since it was "a component of a comprehensive academic program" it was challenging for lecturers to insist on students exploring the TfD methodology comprehensively, which would have meant the students compromising on other vital academic requirements. Moreover, "community theatre is, ideally, conceived as a continuing and regenerative, rather than conclusive, process, which must outlive each single generation of students" (Arkhurst 1994: 5). Therefore, Arkhurst proposed a new phase of TfD that looked at communication on two operational levels.

The first stage is where the university adopts a cluster of communities for open experimentation. Here, the students are allowed to carry out projects by exploring the fundamentals of the TfD practices and theories related to development communication and community development. The projects should be on a short-term basis and must not require a long-term commitment. One of the things this first phase will achieve is to equip the students with the basics of TfD so that they can be prepared to undertake their own complete projects.

The second stage is where the school adopts a community based on mutual agreement and on the basis of its viability with regards to problem potentiality, its proximity and the community's commitment. The idea is that students will have the opportunity to continue the work started by other students. There will be a continued and consistent analysis as well as generational project implementation that will establish a basis for evaluating the impact of TfD. In essence, "this stage involves a Permanent Community Project (PC P.). This way, there would always be available, a permanent, familiar research and experimental community project with testable indices that have evolved at a logical and natural pace" (Arkhurst 1994: 5).

These two approaches then became the method UG adopted for training TfD students. An important factor here is the influence of both the Ekumfi Atwia and the ABU experiences used by Arkhurst in trying to find a solution for a more impactful and sustainable approach to TfD teaching, research and projects by the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana. It is in this same vein that the diffusion of the TfD praxis started with the department collaborating with national and international NGOs on projects, programs and training.

## Conclusion

The TfD movement in Ghana cannot be credited to one person or one initiative. Several initiatives coalesced to help establish TfD as a significant course of study in higher education institutions and a community development approach. Initiatives and performance traditions such as the concert party travelling theatre tradition, colonial mass education and community development campaigns, the UNESCO puppet for community development workshop, the Institute of Adult Education's people education association's non-formal education and community development project, Efua Sutherland's experiment at Ekumfi/Atwia, are parts of the crucial cultural markers that cannot be relegated to the background in discussing the history of TfD in Ghana. They played significant roles in ensuring the integration, establishments and institutionalization of TfD in higher education institutions in Ghana. The contemporary practice of TfD, however, can be attributed to the works of both Sophia Lokko and Sandy Arkhurst. They led the process of integration and subsequent institutionalization in higher education institutions. This chapter helps contextualize and offer essential information which will help change the narrative when discussing the history of socially engaged theatre in Ghana.

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# History and Evolution of Theatre for Development in Cameroon:

## Implications for Formal and Non-formal Institutions

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### Early beginnings: the mid-1980s

Theatre for Development (TfD) has gone through several mutations with different practitioners in the two linguistic parts of Cameroon. Most of what has been recorded as workshops par excellence have taken place in the English-speaking part of the country. The reason behind this could be the fact that TfD was first introduced in Cameroon, specifically in Kumba, which is in the Anglophone part of the country. The second reason is that Anglophone Cameroonians have always considered themselves marginalised and have been in constant search of platforms from which to fight oppression. Thirdly, Anglophone Cameroon boasts of a history and culture of community endeavours making it easy for participatory theatre, which is community oriented, to thrive in this part of the country.

As earlier mentioned, the first ever documented Theatre for Development workshop took place in Cameroon in 1984. It was a hallmark in Theatre for Development not only for Cameroon but for Africa at large because it brought together eighteen facilitators from thirteen different countries, who had participated in the Murewa (Zimbabwe) workshop. According to Eyoh (1986: v), the main host and coordinator, the decision for Cameroon to host this workshop was taken during the Murewa Theatre for Development conference that had been held two years earlier. For this workshop to take place, the Ministries of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon had to give their approvals. The workshop was sponsored by the then University of Yaounde, now known as the University of Yaounde I, The International Development Research Centre, OXFAM (Quebec), The German International Development Foundation, The Swedish International Development Authority with assistance from the

Cameroon Ministry of Agriculture and the International Popular Theatre Alliance (Eyoh 1986: v). Students of the Community Development School, Kumba came in as assistants and they worked in five different villages: Kake, Kurume, Ngolo-Bolo, Ndoi, and Konye under the coordination of Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh, a lecturer of theatre and drama of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences at the time.

Eyoh makes clear in his introduction to the workshop report entitled *Hammocks to Bridges* (1986) that the workshop did not transform hammocks into bridges but rather resulted in the mobilization of local communities towards the realisation of the need to and the launching of contributions towards the construction of a bridge to replace a hammock. What seemed remarkable about this workshop was the government's condition for sponsoring it: all the discussions were supposed to be apolitical. This was ironical for the essence of Theatre for Development as Augusto Boal states, is to break the culture of silence of the oppressed. For the experts, it was an opportunity to experiment with Theatre for Development methodologies at an international level, while for the students of the community development school, the workshop was a summary of their two-year programme for through the workshop they came to understand how community development could be achieved through dramatization.

With this first field experience of Theatre for Development in Kumba, came the introduction of popular theatre/Theatre for Development as an optional course in the English Department of the then University of Yaounde. Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh who headed the project was at the time the only Cameroonian with a PhD in Theatre. With his research and experience, it was easy for him to develop a program on Popular theatre that lasted till 1989/1990 when the Performing Arts and Cinematography Section was created under the Department of Arts and Archaeology. Bole Butake, who had diligently assisted him during the workshop joined him in the teaching of not just mainstream theatre but also the theories and practice of Theatre for Development. Until 1997 when Bole Butake got involved in field work, Theatre for Development was only a classroom subject with students reading theories and concepts related to popular theatre/TfD and comparing TfD experiences from different countries like Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda, etc.

## Experimenting with Tfd: The late 1990s to the mid-2000s

The mid-1990s marked a new and glorious phase for Theatre for Development practice in Cameroon. After the 1984 theatre for integrated rural development workshop, it took more than ten years for the next Tfd workshop to be organised in Anglophone Cameroon. Interestingly, the idea of a Tfd workshop did not come from the practitioners but from NGOs (Helvetas, A Swiss Organisation for Technical Assistance), Cameroon and A\*WICO: Association of Women's Information and Coordination Offices), who, having watched Bole Butake's play, *Shoes and Four Men in Arms*, a play on social justice, oppression and the misuse of power, requested him to run three workshops on women's empowerment in the North West Province of Cameroon. This first series of workshops took place with A\*WICO women in Bamanda, Batibo and Ndop on the themes early and unwanted pregnancies, forced marriages, widowhood rites and inheritance.

The success of these workshops in mobilising communities to reflect on existing power relationships, community cohesion and possible collective problem identification and problem-solving techniques proved that Theatre for Development was a veritable weapon to fight oppression, discrimination, and power misuse. Bole Butake, assisted by Emelda Samba and Jane Mbacham, ran three-day workshops with rural women who had either been forced into early and/or unwanted marriages, early pregnancies, been denied the inheritance of landed property, been forced into unhealthy and dehumanising widowhood rites, been refused the right to buy land, or borrow money from banks, and the right to education. Through a participatory method, problems were identified, analysed, prioritized and stories created. Contrary to convictions expressed by some male African intellectuals, the workshops proved that uneducated rural women have problems similar to those of urban educated women (Samba 2005). The difference might lie in the absence of a platform for the rural disfranchised woman to make her voice heard, a possibility offered to her by the participatory and inclusive nature of Theatre for Development.

Alongside the workshops with A\*WICO women were land-use management theatre workshops organised and sponsored by HELVETAS, first with farmers (men and women) in Batibo, Ndop and Esu with the view of providing them with technical assistance towards better farming methods and later with children (Samba 2019). This went alongside a workshop on theatre for environment education run by George Mofor under the auspices of the Mount Cameroon Project in 1996/1997. In the case of the Northwest Region, working with adults did not seem to create enough impact on the agricultural sector, for the same farmers would, after the workshops continue with their traditional farming methods. This led to the shift to children's theatre for environmental education where primary school pupils of class four to six from six primary schools in the Bamenda-Nkwe Upper Zone of the Northwest Region were engaged in creating and performing plays on environmental education in their communities, palaces, church yards, school fields, market places, etc). The protection of water catchments, the planting of fruit trees, farmer grazer conflicts, and sustainable farming methods, among others, were at the centre of these workshops. Elements of popular culture; songs, dance, theatre games, and story-telling sessions characterised the collective play creation process and facilitated the appropriation of the solutions proposed and the entire process not only by the workshop participants but the community members who watched the plays and participated in the discussions.

Interest in Theatre for Development as a communication medium that engages community participation increased and embassies and NGOs who found this medium more effective than focus group discussions, seminars, conferences, and workshops they had been accustomed to appropriated it. The US Embassy in Yaounde, for instance, funded several workshops on Theatre for Development with the National Travelling Theatre (coordinated by Donatus Fai Tangem and Emelda Ngufor Samba) and with TfD experts like Bole Butake and Gilbert Doho with focus on such themes as human rights and democracy, wildlife preservation, gender equality, etc. The twist with the embassy workshops was the need for visibility which could only be achieved through cinema. This need gave birth to what Bole Butake and Gilbert Doho later called cinema for development whose fundamental difference from participa-

tory cinema lies in the methodology. While community members shoot scenes in participatory cinema, professional film makers work with community members to create story lines, but the filming and editing are done by experts in the case of cinema for development. Such films are eventually broadcast on national and private television stations or viewed in less inclusive set-ups like annual village meetings.

## Mid-2000s to date

In Cameroon, the years since 2000 have witnessed a great number of Theatre for Development projects nationwide. As usual, academics from university milieus have been at the forefront of these experimentations. Students and lecturers of the Performing Arts and Cinematography Section of the University of Yaounde I between 2000 and 2020 carried out study visits in different communities in and around Yaounde where Theatre for Development workshops were run by lecturers with the assistance of students. Examples of such workshops took place in the Borstal Institute Buea in 2015 with the objective of enabling the juveniles realise that they too could be useful in their community if they changed their mind set. A second example was the workshop in SOS Village (2012) in Mbalmayo where facilitators from the University of Yaounde I experimented with David Cooperrider and Susan Whitney's Appreciative Inquiry approach to uncover what was working in this village and to investigate how the children living in the village could together with the village mothers and aunties put their strengths together to make living conditions better for both parties. In another workshop held in Mbameborong (2016) a village in the Western Region of Cameroon, the objective was to enable the inhabitants and the government officials working there to reflect on the near absence of basic social amenities like electricity, pipe borne water and roads. This workshop was again run by the lecturers of the Performing /Arts and Cinematography Section of the University of Yaounde I who experimented with Jacque Raymond Fofie's Theatre for Lobbying concept of making people in high offices stakeholders of workshops. In 2016, Masters Students of the University of Yaoundé I ran a workshop at the Kondengui Central prison in Yaoundé with young male prisoners as participants

with the objective of furthering the agenda of the Borstal workshop, which was the reintegration into the society after serving a prison term.

Several other workshops have been organised by students at other state universities both in and out of campus as class projects. Table 1 below gives a summary of the applied theatre workshops that have taken place in Buea sometimes with, and at other times without the students of the University of Buea.

From the opposite table, it is clear that over the years students as part of their course work and NGOs have experimented with applied theatre forms in the Buea neighbourhood to meet community needs. Considering the relative lack of interest in this field by the Cameroonian government, it could be concluded that Pat Nkweteyim's persistence in experimenting with this art form is a consequence of her conviction of the power of theatre to provoke change in communities, no matter how small they may be.

As is the case with the other universities, students at the Institute of Fine Arts in Foumban do both theoretical and practical courses at the institute. The 2017 Tfd Prison Project is so far one of the most memorable and crucial. Through the course Masters students were able to reach out to the prisoners. In 2018, the Performing and Visual Art Unit of the University of Bamenda organised a cultural week during which a three-day workshop on Living together based on the Anglophone crisis took place. As Samba (2019) explains the workshop enabled students and lecturers of the University of Bamenda to break the silence and discuss a topic that for almost one year had been considered a taboo.

Theatre for Development experiences from the mid-2000s to date have focused on such themes as poor waste disposal, juvenile delinquency, drug addition, sex workers, education of the girl child, violation of traffic rules, etc. The evolution of Theatre for Development in Cameroon has been spear-headed mainly by higher education institutions: the University of Yaounde 1, the University of Dschang, the University of Buea and the University of Bamenda. Not only have these universities included Theatre for Development as a course in the curriculum but they have also sponsored outreach programs for community conscientisation and mobilization.

Date	Project	Story Idea	Objective	Facilitators	Remarks
2020/2021	Invisible Theatre in UB	An indecently dressed female student is sexually harassed by an equally indecently dressed male student. This leads to a free for all fight.	Sensitize the University of Buea community on the dangers of indecent dressing.	Nkwezeyim P Pani Nalowa Fominyen TFD students	Objective attained. A crowd of students who unconsciously took part in the performance were later engaged in dialogues.
18 March 2018	Invisible and Forum Theatre Projects in Sumnerset Bilingual College Buea	A student collapses on campus and is helped by students passing by.	Need to stay hydrated by owning and moving about with water in bottles. Sensitizing youths against deviant behaviours.	Nkwezeyim P. Nde Zama	Objective attained.
1998	Theatre for the people: Sarah Politik	A young lady campaigns and becomes a political leader.	Sensitize women on the need to get into politics and run for elections.	Nkwezeyim P Gospel Nti and the women of Nkong Hilltop Development Association	Objective attained.
April 2017	Theatre for Development project in Tole Buea	See articles: "Peaceful Coexistence with the Natural Environmental" and "partnership and Accountability in Development Initiatives".	Creating awareness among the inhabitants of Tole in Buea on the need to protect their Environment and Culture as well as take possession of their destiny.	Nkwezeyim P.	Objective attained.
February 2015	Invisible Theatre in Mile 17 Buea		A campaign against indecent dressing.	Nkwezeyim P. Mfone Zama	Objective attained.
July–August 1997	Workshop: HIV/AIDS Education among children and youths in Buea		To create awareness of HIV/AIDS and its preventive measures.	Nkwezeyim P.	Objective attained with the Play <i>The Fight is On!</i> Produced.
March–June 1995	Community Theatre Projects	A man goes to harvest honey through the traditional way of burning the bushes but gets stung by bees.	Sensitize and educate communities in the Mount Cameroon Area to engage in sustainable bee-farming.	GTZ/ Mount Cameroon Project, Buea Nkwezeyim P. Mofor George	Objective attained and play <i>Power no bi</i> Sense produced. <i>Community members began domesticating bees.</i>

Table 1. Summary of TFD projects by Pat Nkwezeyim

Over the years, there has been a divergence in the practice of Theatre for Development in Cameroon. The Performing Arts and Cinematography Section of the University of Yaounde 1, has developed the concept of cinema for mobilization and conscientisation based on community needs, and being the mother university has been reaching out to the Performing arts Units of the other Universities. Practitioners of theatre for Development who happen to be university lecturers as well, in the past conducted mainly Theatre for Development workshops in community. After several workshops, they came to the realisation that the problems in different villages were almost the same and realised that it could be more cost effective and more rewarding to do films that could be viewed by a wider audience unlike theatre that has a spatial and temporal limitation. With cinema for development, the process of data collection and analysis, and story creation are facilitated by a Theatre for Development practitioner through a participatory process. The story is then given to a script writer who transforms it into scenarios. The film director takes over and gets members of the community cast into roles and shooting takes place after rehearsals. The rushes are later edited and broadcast to different audiences. The added advantage with cinema/film for development is its ability to impact to greater numbers if people in different communities with similar challenges at different times. This was the case with the film for development '*Ngomen na we*' (We are the government) a film on participatory governance produced by Kwasen Gwangwa'a and *Nyang nyang* and '*Bush meat go finish*' two films on wild life preservation produced by the same team and sponsored by the US Embassy in Yaounde.

In francophone Cameroon, the trend has not been different although one cannot fail to notice a certain conceptual difference in the practice of theatre for development. It was not until during the UN decade of Arts and Culture that Ambroise Mbia, one of Cameroon's theatre icons of French expression engaged in a project called Culture in the Neighbourhood (1998–2001) whereby forum theatre was used to build a sense of community among certain communities. This was an Afro-European Interaction which was a follow up of the world decade for Cultural Development from 1988 to 1997. Cameroon was one of the ten countries that participated in this program that sought to revive the

concept of using African culture to encourage development in neighbourhoods and to build a sense of belonging. In addition to other African artistic forms, forum theatre was used elaborately to address community concerns.

The general coordinator, Ursular Restab defines the objective of the project as follows:

The project joins together four African and European countries. In each of them, a neighbourhood – located either in the capital or a major city – has been chosen. Eight neighbourhoods take part in the project. Its aim is to foster a cultural co-operation between an African neighbourhood and a European one. (Restab 1998: 1)

She further explains that the purpose of the project was to promote ‘cultural activities performed by the inhabitants of neighbourhoods for the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods on themes directly related to their life, in order to draw them closer together and thus reinforce their sense of belonging to the place they live in and to its social entity’ (1998: 20). Although the concept of participatory creation was at the core of this decade of culture, Theatre for Development, in the full sense of the word was not the main agenda. Rather, ‘making a film, staging a musical, painting a mural’ were considered activities that could bring community members to engage in physical activities which they could share with other members of the community. From the reports of the project, it is clear that its main tools were culture and development as opposed to Theatre for Development since each of the projects was put under the guidance of a specialist of music, theatre, dance, visual arts, or film. (1998: 24).

One of the trainees of this program, Massan Abiroko, under the auspices of her theatre troupe, *Compagnie Labyman*, a theatre company with its headquarters in Yaounde, has for the last decade organised annual international festivals on what she calls Theatre for Development. While it is true that the methodology of TfD might not have been appropriated to the latter, one cannot deny that the festival organiser tried to include participatory theatre in its agenda. These festivals have brought together troupes from different African countries who have

assembled in Bafia, the Centre Region of Cameroon to present plays, traditional dances, songs, creative writings, slams, with the concept of theatre in public places. Although the organiser has given the last edition the nomenclature 'La 10eme édition du festival international de théâtre pour le developpement' there is nothing much, if any, of Theatre for Development on their agenda. In an interview she justified her use of the term Theatre for Development with the argument that the plays are about the problems of the villagers and there are discussions afterwards.

Since 2014, another theatre troupe in the French-speaking part of the country, Création Collective Zouria Théâtre (Cameroun), coordinated by Ousmanou Sali and Edouard Elvis Bvoumas, has been working in the northern part of Cameroon to produce short sketches which are recorded on DVD and broadcast to the public as need arises. For instance, *Vivra bien qui rira pour la vie*, six short sketches on sensitisation were directed by Ousmanou Sali and Edouard Elvis Bvoumas and produced with German cooperation. *Hautfarben* was directed by Ousmanou Sali (Cameroun) and broadcast in Limbe, Cameroun during a regional conference organised by the NGO, Bread for Life. *Altération* (2014), sketches to sensitise people on corruption in enterprises, written and directed by Ousmanou Sali, was sponsored by Business Coalition against Corruption (BCAC) and was broadcast in Yaounde during the international day for the fight against corruption. Other themes they have worked on include inter-generational dialogue, education of the girl-child, unwanted and forced marriages, fight against drug consumption (2015), living together, fight against radicalism, the dangers of social media, the dangers of pre-marital relationships.

## Impact of Theatre for Development workshops on universities and communities

The institutionalisation of study visits by the University of Yaounde I was without doubt one of the most significant influences of TfD on communities in Cameroon. In compliance with the university outreach mission, lecturers of the Department of Arts and Archaeology together with students identified communities that were challenged

in one way or the other and engaged them in community theatre and cinema projects. Several disadvantaged and disempowered groups of people like street children, women, young people, and prisoners in and out of Yaounde benefited from this program. Performing and Visual Arts units of other universities tapped from this experience and reached out to communities in their neighbourhood. During the four-day Tfd workshop held in SOS Village in Mbalmayo, for instance, the children of the centre created plays that highlighted their plights. For the first time, the director of the village came to a clear understanding of how much his efforts were being appreciated by the children and in addition to know the expectations of the children. It is worth pointing out that SOS Village is a German-founded organization that caters for children from needy backgrounds. These children live in homes of three with SOS mothers/aunties who take care of them. Before the workshop, the director of the village was convinced that that the children were all very happy and more than satisfied with their living conditions, which were of course much better than what they experienced in their homes. This workshop however served as an eye-opener to the administrators who came to understand that in as much as they strived to give the children education and a better standard of living, there were still loopholes in the management.

The experience and workshop outcomes at the Borstal Institute were not much different from the SOS Village. The institute is a rehabilitation centre for juvenile delinquents who have been brought there by their parents for reformation. In some cases, young people have escaped from their environments which they considered dangerous or insecure to seek refuge at this institute that is celebrated for strict discipline. The play created by the Borstal boys was entitled "*My future self*" and was performed at the Franco Alliance to an audience of about 100 people. To the Borstal boys, the entire process of reflection and play creation was a rare opportunity to look into themselves through imaginary mirrors in order to understand why they were considered terrors in the town of Buea. Their performance at the Franco Alliance put them in the limelight positively and they began to see themselves differently, as people who could contribute to the development of their community. At the end of their performance, they all gathered on stage and listened

to the audience comment on their great performance and request that they elaborate on some of the concerns they had raised in the play. The fact that people from different walks of life had come to listen to them tell stories about their past and where they were heading to build self-confidence and self-esteem. This workshop was also an opportunity for collaboration among four stakeholders: students and lecturers of the Performing and Visual Arts Unit of the University of Buea that came in to experience another TfD technique, lecturers and students of the Performing Arts and Cinematography Section of the University of Yaounde I that ran the workshop, a Fulbright Scholar from the Ithaca College, New York and a Fulbright research student still from the USA who wanted to have hands-on experience in Theatre for Development.

Another branch of Theatre for Development that has been experimented on in Cameroon is what Jacques Raymond Fofie (2007) has termed “Theatre for Lobbying”, a form of applied theatre that requires the presence of administrators and decision makers. The main thrust of Fofie’s argument is that in as much as communities desire to bring change in their communities, they lack the technical know-how and the financial power to do so. It becomes necessary, he argues, to bring in elites and administrators like senior divisional officers and politicians who have the financial power to realise a concrete development projects. To Fofie, it is not enough to just mobilise and conscientise people through an art form. The TfD agenda should go further to realise community projects that are for the common good of the people. Unfortunately, more than 2006 that this concept was borne, a theatre for lobbying workshop has taken place just once with very little success. This failure simply confirmed Augusto Boal’s assertion that the theatre is a tool that only the oppressors can use to wield power against the oppressors.

Theatre for therapeutic purposes is yet another form of participatory theatre that has evolved in Cameroon within the last decade or so. In his report on a therapeutic theatre workshop that took place in the Jamot Mental hospital, Yaounde, Cameroon from January 14th to March 2nd 2012, Paul Animobom Ngong (2017: 277–278) came to the conclusion that ‘the need to use theatre in therapeutic settings is gradually but surely being seen a necessity in Cameroon’ for through its

use ‘...participants attain deeper understanding of their psychological states and develop coping mechanisms and re-adaptation of skills vis-a-vis depression, anxiety and stress.’ Arguing for the long existence of this form of theatre in Cameroon Ngong (2018) posits that most of the Theatre for Development workshops (SOS Village, Ndop workshop on HIV/AIDS, Borstal Institute workshop with Juvenile delinquents, Fomban and Nkondengui prison workshops) that have been carried out in Cameroon by Bole Butake and Emelda Samba have been therapeutic even when it was not the intention of the practitioners.

Looking back at the various workshops, their objectives and outcomes, it is time for us to begin a systematic assessment of the impact and implications of Theatre for Development in Cameroon. First of all it should be noted that most, if not all the workshops were intended for social change, or change in people’s attitudes and mentalities. For university-run workshops, one of the main objectives was the training of trainers in the techniques of Theatre for Development. Measuring intangible outcomes still remains a challenge to social scientists and it is not different with Theatre for Development practitioners and researchers. To measure how impactful these workshops were, one would need to ask the following questions: Were the workshop participants and community members committed? Were they involved from the planning to the implementation stages of the workshop? Did their voices count in problem identification, analyses and prioritization? Did they identify with the stories? Did the solutions they suggested seem feasible to them. Was there follow-up of any nature? Did they sufficiently learn the methodologies of Theatre for Development?

We will attempt answers to these questions with reference to some of the workshops discussed above. Beginning with the Kumba workshop, the level of community engagement was commendable considering the three villages joined the international and national Theatre for Development experts in the process of problem identification, prioritization, story creation and performance. The farm to market roads remained impassable long after the workshop and the bridges along the Kumba Manfe highway were constructed more than ten years after the workshop. True enough, hammocks are something of the past and the villages in Konye have placed sticks across the river to get into the hin-

terland.<sup>3</sup> Another example worthy of mention was the workshop with the disabled at the centre for the disabled, Etoug-Egbe, Yaounde in 2006 where one of the concerns of the workshop participants, mainly people with physical disability was the deplorable state of the roads for people moving on wheel chair. One can still not say with certainty that the construction of the road, barely two years after the series of workshops, was as a result of the plays created and performed. However, what is clear in these two instances and others is that the performances were attended by representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs who could have taken a report to the government about the content of the play. For those present during the open-air performances, there was a high level of engagement from what Augusto Boal calls spect-actors and there is no denying that there was a visible paradigm shift as deduced during the post-performance discussions.

An instance of clear positive change occurred with the A\*WICO workshops where the women performed a play on widowhood rites in the presence of the Fon and his attendants at his palace as indicated by Ngong Violet, president of A\*WICO Ndop. The Fon was shocked at the level of oppression and suffering widows went through and immediately reduced the number of mourning days and eliminated those rites that were harmful to the physical and psychological health of widows. SOS village is another good example where the Director summoned the SOS mothers and Aunties for a meeting even while the workshop was still going on to discuss some of the concerns the children had raised during the play creation process and the performance. Finally, participants of the Ballotiral project appropriated the workshops to the point of playing back daily challenging occurrences during their weekly meetings. This project had been sponsored by Helvetas and other funding organisations to provide civic education mainly to Mbororo women and girls on the theme of alphabetisation.

Although the initial idea to run Tfd projects after 1984 came from NGOs and university people, the nature of the workshops have often been determined by communities. For years, practitioners of Tfd in Cameroon focused on theatre only. In informal discussions, it became

3 Interview with Balbina Ebong on June 12th 2021.

clear to practitioners that Tfd was not cost effective enough. For one thing, funding is limited to run workshops in many different localities, and for another, the man power is limited.

For decades, Cameroon prided itself as one of the most peaceful countries in the world. Although it boasted a democracy, and sometimes advanced democracy, it was common knowledge that the peace of this nation had hardly ever been threatened, or if it had, everything was done to 'neutralise' the so-called subversive elements or put them under control. Tfd hasn't been exempted from this excessive control whereby workshop themes and venues have been censored by the government. Workshops that carried such themes as democracy and human rights have been given more scrutiny than those on women's empowerment, health issues, education, etc. The more threatening to the status quo the themes are, the less likely one is to receive authorisation for the workshop. It was therefore not surprising that when in 1984, Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh solicited funding from the government for the Kumba workshop he was told the workshop would be subsidised on condition that the discussions were apolitical. This whole tendency of censorship, of sponsoring only that which advances the sponsor's agenda started way back in Greek theatre with Maecenas, Thespis' sponsor who told him 'It is right that you should say what you like, and it is right that I should pay for what I like' (Boal 2000: xiv). Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* reiterates the need for breaking the culture of silence of the oppressed, a silence that had overpowered oppressed people including theatre practitioners even in ancient Greece. When Thespis finally broke this silence by letting the chorus express itself openly on stage, he was threatened by Solon:

What you actually said does not matter. It does not matter which words you used. What mattered was that you demonstrated that things could be said. You showed them it was possible to speak out. You showed the people that each can think with his own head, choose his own words, this just won't do; it sets a bad example. I know that they can, but it must not be generally known. (Boal 2000: xiv)

From the above excerpt, it is clear that attempts by governments to encourage dormancy among its citizens is an age-old practice intended to maintain the status quo. In the Cameroonian context, Anglophone Cameroonian writers and theatre practitioners who are often considered subversive have suffered the most from this censorship for their writings are grounded in their colonial past that has a bearing on the present socio-political situation in the country. Hilarious N. Ambe (2007: 15) puts this succinctly when he asserts that:

In Anglophone Cameroon Drama therefore, change and liberation rhetorics are emphasised and transmuted into the dramatic action and dialogue of the oppressed characters, so that the mode of existence of drama challenges and confronts the conditions of the characters' alienation. Liberation is thus placed side-by-side dictatorial discourse in Anglophone Cameroon drama.

More than thirty years after the Kumba workshop, the situation has not quite changed in Cameroon. Authorisation for public/open air performances are given but not for overly crowded areas. Though one might see this as a means to maintain social cohesion, one cannot also deny the fact that there exists a latent element of fear on government's part. For example, Performances on human rights and democracy that were sponsored by the US Embassy in Yaounde in the late 1990s and run by Bole Butake and Gilbert Doho were programmed near the Divisional Office and police stations. Requests to perform the play in open market places were turned down, I suppose, for fear that they may lead to rioting.

In informal sectors where workshops have taken place, the tendency has not been different. Directors would come around once in a while to listen to the testimonies of those under them. Fons in villages would tell their subjects what information to give out during the data collection phase of the workshop. For fear of being victimised after the workshop, community members would give out information on condition that their identity were kept secret. So even in the absence of officials and authorities, informants exercise self-censorship for fear of being considered traitors in the community.

## Conclusion

So far, mainly university lecturers and their students have been at the centre of Theatre for Development in Cameroon. Every workshop has been an opportunity for new learning both for the students and the lecturers who have tended to develop new techniques and adapt old ones to every given circumstance. Cameroonian universities see Theatre arts units as their window to the world. Through these units the universities are able to achieve their mission of community outreach and also directly contribute towards the moral development of communities. For NGOs that fund and participate in such workshops, it has been for them a learning process and a more efficient technique of data collection due to its participatory and inclusive nature. Individuals have come to a greater understanding of themselves and their communities, have received individual and community healing, and have developed a greater sense of community and belonging.

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# A Typology of Theatre for Development in Ghana

Victor K. Yankah

In traditional African society, the performing arts – music, dance, drama, folk tales – are not just entertainment or objects of curiosity; to a significant extent, they perform a functional role. Among other functions, they ensure social cohesion, communication and education. Music is a means of bringing people together, for social control, as well as a medium for the transmission of history from generation to generation. Work songs sung by people engaged in physical tasks for example, are used to promote efficiency in the task. Music is also used in the control of excesses in society. Drums, especially the ‘talking drums’, are a traditional means of sending messages over long distances and were an important means of communication in traditional society (Okpewho 1992: 115), before the arrival of telecommunication. Dance can entertain and at the same time the appropriate dance vocabulary can, for instance, incite rivalry, promote friendship, etc.

In relation to the social functionality of the arts, drama is perhaps the most significant. Deriving, as is often claimed, from ritual, (see for instance, Okpewho 1992; Mlama 1991) various forms of drama have often been employed in rites of initiation, marriage, death and other ceremonies. It thus becomes a tool for ‘the transmission of knowledge, values and attitudes’ (Mlama 1991: 27) in these rites. One may proceed to say that the acknowledgement of this social functionality of art has engendered the employment of theatre in the service of society’s contemporary developmental needs. A number of studies have unearthed the versatility of theatre as a tool for social engagements and transformation around the world, addressing issues like HIV AIDS, Human Rights, business, among others. (see Chisiza 2017; Khan 2005; Boggs et al. (2007; Tsiaras 2016).

The discussion in this paper centres on the phenomenon of Theatre for Development which emerged in the early 1970s, and has become an important tool employed by development agencies in many Afri-

can countries. It would appear from the existing literature on the subject that Theatre for Development (TfD) is still an evolving theatrical genre. Zakes Mda (1993) has identified what he calls ‘methods of popular theatre in non-formal education’, and here he lists agitprop, participatory theatre and theatre for conscientisation. He also makes the following significant statement on the categories we can claim as Theatre for Development in his description of the mode of operation of the Marotholi Travelling Theatre in Lesotho:

At times scripted plays are performed to live audiences or broadcast over radio. At others, small format film and videos are used. All these lack the elements necessary to make popular theatre such as people’s participation in the creation and performance. They are not rooted in tradition, nor do they always enrich and expand the people’s own forms of expression. However, in so far as they are modes of theatre whose objective is to disseminate development messages, or to conscientize communities about their objective social, political and economic situation, they are modes of Theatre for Development (Mda 1993: 48).

The overriding question then is, what qualifies as Theatre for Development? Put in another way, if we acknowledge the existence of various popular and interactional theatre forms in the ethos of African performance, would it not be practicable and convenient to attempt a typology of Theatre for Development? Following Mda’s statement above, I identify two forms of Theatre for Development in Ghana: structured and unstructured. In evolving this typology, I am conscious of the fact that what has been labelled as ‘unstructured’ Theatre for Development is not often considered as Theatre for Development at all. However, for reasons which will soon become apparent they need to have a place in discussions on Theatre for Development.

Before proceeding any further in the examination of the types of TfD in Ghana, an overview of the general practice of theatre in the country might be instructive. James Gibbs (2012) provides a comprehensive history of theatre in Ghana. His discussion commences with traditional theatre then incorporates influences that have shaped it. The analysis terminates with an examination of Theatre for Development. Concert

party which has morphed into a uniquely Ghanaian theatrical form, and which forms part of the discussion below, equally finds space in Gibbs' discussion.

Since this presentation discusses dimensions of Tfd praxis, it might be instructive to revisit some definitions of Tfd, if only to ascertain the extent to which the categories identified below answer to the definitions. Different practitioners have attempted to provide definitions for Theatre for Development from different perspectives. For some of these practitioners and theorists, Tfd represents an evolution in relation to the less interactional styles of popular theatre, while for others Tfd is also associated with scripted plays. Aba (1996: 247) identifies Tfd as

People's theatre, addressing their own problems in their own language, using their own idioms on their own terms. The ordinary people are the subjects, and in practice, the ones in control. That is, they decide the agenda and participate in making the drama on those chosen issues.

Tim Prentki (1998: 420) proposes a more sociological definition, stating that Tfd is theatre:

Used in the service of development aims: a tool available to development agencies which pursue the goals of self-development and an improved quality of life of all people whose material conditions leave them vulnerable to hostile and predatory forces ... In other words, it is an instrument in the struggle to help such people become subjects, and cease to be objects of their own histories.

There are several terms which are sometimes employed synonymously with Tfd, such as 'popular theatre', 'community theatre', 'people's theatre', 'theatre for change', 'theatre for liberation', and 'theatre for integrated rural development'. (Nogueira 2002) Admittedly, the convenience of using such terms interchangeably is open to question. For instance, Mda attempts a distinction between popular theatre and Theatre for Development thus:

The dichotomy here is a simple one and lies in the fact that theatre for development may not necessarily utilise popular theatre ... So not all theatre-for-development is popular theatre and vice versa. However, Theatre-for-development is most effective when it is popular theatre (Mda 1993: 48).

Theatre for Development is considered as people-centred – people become the subjects of the production. The second feature of TfD is that it is participatory in nature, in that it often ‘blurs the demarcation between performers and audience’ (Prentki 1998: 4) thus creating an interactional space for performers and audience. Finally, TfD disseminates messages intended to change people’s conditions of life. On the basis of these features, I now proceed to categorise the practices of TfD in Ghana into structured TfD which I also call purposive TfD, and unstructured TfD, termed non-purposive.

## Structured Theatre for Development

Structured Theatre for Development is the purposive use of theatre to promote development in a target community. For the purposes of this presentation, structured Theatre for Development has to do with any theatrical activity that to a large extent targets a specific rural or urban population and employs the methodology of Theatre for Development that has evolved over the years. This kind of activity begins with research in the target community, followed by analysis of the research, development of the drama based on the research, the performance of the play in the community using either participatory or agit-prop methods (Mda 1993), followed by post-performance discussions with the spectators, and a subsequent follow-up to the performance. This format, evolved over the years through performances and workshops, is what distinguishes structured Theatre for Development from conventional or literary theatre – its involvement of the target community at the research, performance and post-performance stages as well as its message-oriented nature (See: Kerr 1979). This format which engenders a confluence of performers and audience promotes dialogue leading

to conscientization about the need, on the part of the society or the under-privileged, to take action to improve the quality of their lives.

The use of 'structured' as the defining term for this type of TfD derives from the recognized structure discussed above – the step-by-step presentation which incorporates a reflexive assessment of the project. An alternative term for this form of TfD is 'purposive' TfD. This designation arises out of the fact that this form of TfD is planned and initiated with the fixated purpose of obtaining a verifiable result.

Structured TfD by virtue of its inherent flexibility lends itself to varied applications. The Boalian paradigms that fuel and dynamize the practice makes its employment in various aspects of social, political, economic and human development communication possible. It has been used by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) which work directly with the communities in various development projects to communicate with both rural and urban peoples. My research in the use of TfD in Ghana spanning three regions, Eastern, Greater Accra and Central regions reveals the involvement of both local and international NGOs which employ 'experts' to undertake community theatre projects on their behalf. Based on the approach of these 'experts' to the projects, I identified three strands of Structured Theatre for Development practice in Ghana: Community-based theatre groups, one-off practitioner projects and professional groups. The community-based theatre groups are formed by local NGOs with international collaborators (sponsors) who insist on participatory approaches. Such was the case with Pro-Link, an organization sponsored by Plan International to carry out projects in towns in the Volta and Central Regions of Ghana. Pro-Link employed drama groups that already existed in the communities or, where there was none, set up drama groups in the villages. In a performance at Abura Patuako, it emerged that when the drama group was formed the actors insisted on using their own names rather than character names in their performances. One of them explained thus:

We are in the village here with them (community members) and because of the performances many of them respect us. They come to us for advice and we like it when they call our names instead of any other name. (Post performance discussion with actors and audience 19<sup>th</sup> April 2006)

It was worth consideration. Incidentally, the group became a permanent drama group in the village, and Pro-Link went back to them anytime they had a project. In essence then, the villagers thought that using their real names posited the experiences of the performance within a realistic social milieu.

In the case of the one-off practitioner projects, a group of people who may not be theatre practitioners come together, and source for funding from bigger NGOs involved in community work. They are contracted to undertake projects on an identified developmental issue in specific communities. A theatre group is formed to rehearse a performance which is then taken into the communities (outside-in). The group called Positive Lifestyle Network was formed in this fashion and did performances in three communities in the Greater Accra and Eastern Regions. The effectiveness of this type of project is often undermined by what can be termed the contract syndrome. Once the performance is done and participants paid off, the project ends – there is no possibility of a follow-up.

The third strand of structured Theatre for Development involves the work of professional theatre groups. Mention can be made here of the Centre for Intercultural Learning and Talent Development (CILTAD), also called Agoro. As drama consultant for this group based in Cape Coast and operating with support from the Danish Embassy, I was engaged in 1998 to undertake a Theatre for Development project which involved nine village communities bordering and within the Kakum forest which at the time of the project was being designated as a conservation area. However, preliminary research in the villages revealed deep-rooted objections to the several restrictions imposed on them by the conservationists. On their part, Conservation International, the sponsors of the project, together with the Regional Development Commission could not appreciate the difficulties of the communities. Eventually, CILTAD/Agoro had to develop the grievances they had gathered from the community into a play which was performed for the conservationists and officials from the Regional Development Commission. The post-performance discussion with them took the form of responses to the issues raised in the performance. This paved the way for a final play which incorporated issues from the community and responses by the

sponsoring agencies. This way, understanding was reached after each performance of the final play in the villages. This form of TfD which I call 'Shuttle TfD' (See: Yankah 2011: 207) was found to be useful in resolving a conflict situation. It is hoped that this novel theatrical initiative will find commensurate deployment in conflict situations.

A final structured TfD practice, one that has not often been considered among TfD praxis owing to the notion that it is undertaken by students, is what I call Institutional TfD. This refers to the practical community projects that students of TfD undertake during their training. Scores of these projects have been done by students of the School of Performing Arts in the University of Ghana, and several others by the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Cape Coast. Ordinarily, these could be discounted as mere student research projects that belong to academia. However, these projects have had considerable impact in the communities in which they were done and as such they deserve mention in a typology of Ghanaian TfD.

## Unstructured Theatre for Development

Unstructured Theatre for Development involves theatre whose primary aim is entertainment, but into which development messages are incorporated. This form of theatre may not employ the methodology described above, hence it is not 'structured' according to the known methodology of Theatre for Development. Popular theatre types like Concert Party and Akan drama on radio and TV fit this category.

### Concert Party

Concert party is the popular theatrical form that has gained the most scholarly attention. The literature on the development of this dramatic form however suggests a bifurcation at some point as is evidenced in Barber and others (1997: 18)

Concert Party has diversified into television and print. In the 1970's television became a major medium for Concert Parties. Some established regular series, the first and most famous being Frempong Manso's 'Osofo

Dadzie,' which stars the popular bald-headed comedian, Super O.D. (Kweku Darko). Some groups perform on television in languages other than Akan...

These performances on television came to be known as Akan drama, or 'showcase' in Ga, Ewe or Dagbani as the case may be. Thus, they are not now strictly speaking called concert party.

Concert Party has been used to promote development in Ghana, since the 1960's. The CPP government's financed Workers Brigade Bands and their concert parties became organs of Kwame Nkrumah's propaganda during the period. In the seventies, concert party groups tended to focus on social criticism and morality tales (Collins 1996). This trend continued in the nineties, with other topical development issues like girl education, HIV/AIDS, etc, added to the repertoire of themes.

## Drama on Television and Radio

The most popular televised drama in Ghanaian languages is Akan drama, which is an off-shoot of Concert Party. In fact, drama of any kind in Ghana is often referred to popularly as 'concert'. The first group, the Osofo Dadzie group, has been described as a concert party group that 'diversified into television' (Barber et al. 1997, 18). Later, other groups like Daakye, Adasa, Obra and Adehye joined them. At a point, there were so many groups that they had to take turns for the once-weekly slot on television. Apart from these groups, other Ghanaian language groups also perform on television. These other performances have been given the tag 'showcase' in Ga, Ewe, Dagbani or Hausa. Like the Akan Groups, they also treat topical developmental themes.

In Ghana, radio drama does not appear to be as popular as television drama. Between 2006 and 2010 the national radio network (GBC) broadcast a drama series on health, with support from Johns Hopkins University and other NGOs. The series dubbed 'He-Ha-Ho' (Healthier-Happier-Home) was a home-based healthcare campaign, broadcast once weekly. It employed some of the methodology of Theatre for Development in that the drama was often followed by a post-performance discussion. In structured Theatre for Development, such a dis-

cussion is between the performers and the spectators. In 'He-Ha-Ho', the discussion was normally between the host and a panel of health experts. However, owing to the mediated nature of the practice coupled with the fact that it does not strictly adhere to the 'structure' of Tfd, it can best be classified as a form of unstructured Tfd.

Included in the category of unstructured Theatre for Development is what I term 'exhibition drama'. This is usually a sketch presented by a group at a public gathering. For example, at a gathering of queen mothers (female traditional rulers with substantial authority in society) to discuss girls' education, a short sketch on the topic would be performed by a group rehearsed for the occasion. This is meant both to entertain and educate at the same time.

## Concert Party, Akan Drama and He-Ha-Ho as Tfd

While recognizing the concert party origins of Akan drama in particular, it is my view that such drama is not concert party. Some of the reasons for this can be deduced from Barber et al. (1997). These include the fact that occasionally there are location shots, and there is an absence of the black-and-white minstrel make-up we find in concert party. Besides, concert party acting tends to be stylised with minimal use of props, whereas in most current TV drama in Ghanaian languages, there is a good deal of naturalistic acting, with ample use of props. In addition, whilst concert party performances are punctuated by music, such musical interpolations are rare in Akan drama. Admittedly, however, the boundaries between concert party and Akan drama are quite fluid indeed, lending support to the evolution of one from the other.

At the same time, both Akan drama and concert party have their roots firmly in traditional performance aesthetics. In the situation of the Ghanaian traditional folktale performance for example, the story normally ends with a moral lesson of some kind. This is so because the folktale was used as a means of education in traditional society. If we grant that this didactic element of traditional performance is sustained in concert party as well as in drama in Ghanaian languages, then it will be appropriate to classify them as aspects of Theatre for Development. The 'lesson' at the end of the folktale, which used to be of a moral nature

is, in contemporary concert party and drama in Ghanaian languages, geared towards topical social and health issues like HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, girl education, etc. In a personal interview in November 2004 with Eric Manu, the leader of the Oguaaman Concert party, winners of the 2002 edition of the 'Who is who' competition, a Concert Party competition sponsored by Lever Brothers, Ghana, he stated to me that one of the criteria the judges considered in the competition was the theme of the play; 'it has to relate to current issues in society. We chose the dangers of civil wars, and we acted well, so we won.' Choice of theme and plot for the plays is thus at the discretion of the group, in particular, the leader, and is not dictated by the needs of a particular community, which makes no input to the performance. Thus, although such performances contain development messages, they do not target the peculiar needs of a particular community. At the same time they do not, to a large extent, follow the methodology of Theatre for Development, hence I classify them as unstructured Theatre for Development.

Art in Africa has sometimes been considered as being functional, and the issue of art-for-art sake continues to be a contentious one in African literary circles. (see for instance: Achebe 1975; Soyinka 1988; Mlama 1991) However, from the African cultural perspective the arts are an important communication medium, as Morrison states, '(f)or a majority of African people, the arts are the only channels of communication at their disposal' (1991: 31). Theatre, by virtue of the fact that it is interactional and involves group experience has been found by development agencies to be an important development tool. While some of these agencies rely on popular theatre, planting their development message within the ambits of the existing performance model as we find in the case of Concert Party, others undertake purposive Theatre for Development projects in the communities. It is on the basis of this that, in this work, I identify two form of Theatre for Development in Ghana: structured and unstructured, and the various theatrical types that fall under these categories.

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# Theatre For Development Practice in South-South Nigeria (1990 to the Present)

Ofonime Inyang and Idaresit Inyang

## Introduction

It is in the nature of disciplines that they transform themselves and generate new methods of practice or principles of operation. Theatre found itself at this juncture in the 20th century. Against the background of various upheavals in the human society including wars, diseases, hunger and the onslaught of powerful information media, theatre around the globe ushered in a stream of practices that aimed to respond to the immediate needs of the society. Emerging from informal and adult education philosophies and theories developed by and popularized in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), a theatre established itself that transcended elitist norms based on and driven by the need for entertainment. This new kind of theatre needs to act as a school, a training workshop, town hall meeting, an activist programme of mobilization as well as a tool of political commentary. When it first arrived in Southern Africa, in Botswana in the 1970s, it sought to address not only the development needs of the society but also saw itself as an instrument of protest against the apartheid system that dominated southern Africa with its most odious imprint in South Africa. From Southern Africa, it crossed to other parts of the continent and also benefitted from the generous embrace and redefinition of ardent practitioners and researchers.

Globally, Theatre for Development has manifested itself in various ways. It has applied itself to various perspectives and methods of interpretation and application. It has even adopted new identities and names and remains perhaps the most reinterpreted artistic practice to date (Inyang 2014). Theatre for Development (TfD) refers to a practice of theatre that addresses issues from a participatory and local knowledge-inclusive context. Seen from this angle, we can, therefore,

say that Tfd has already been sufficiently defined within a variety of practices (Abah 1990; Mda 1993; Kamlongera 1998; Nicholson 2005). Within these varied expressions of the practice, Tfd is summarized in the definition by Ebohon (2018: 420) who describes Tfd as ‘a process of imparting knowledge to the populace using the arts of the theatre.’ Theatre for Development, as already stated, came to Africa with a bang. The momentum brought about a radical shift and a rethinking of theatre theory and praxis. Its initial impact in Southern Africa reverberated in other parts of the continent, notably in West and Central Africa. Nigeria became a natural major port of call given the overwhelming influence of the traditional communication and informal education context especially in different parts of the country. When it landed in Nigeria, the Northern part of the country was the first landing spot. This gave rise to the first Tfd initiative entitled the Samaru Project. The latter was started by Michael Etherton in 1975 and remains the foundation of Tfd practice and teaching in Nigeria and was a collaboration between staff and students in the Drama programme of the Department of English, at the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Nigeria. Influenced by developments in the Laedza Batanani project in Botswana and the massive impact of the developmental paradigm of theatre in Southern Africa, lecturers and students of the Drama Programme in ABU, Zaria, adult educators, literacy officers, peasant farmers, artisans, and local performers under the leadership of Etherton teamed up to address socio-economic issues in rural villages around the university environment using participatory theatre techniques (Abah 2003; Ebewo 2004; Okoronkwo 2012). The experimental nature of the practice, the impact of the initial experimentations and its creative use of improvisational techniques in creating plays that significantly highlighted local development challenges gained popularity within the university and surrounding villages, resulting in a full-scale advocacy project launch titled Samaru Project (a reflection of the location of the university in Samaru area) in 1980 (Okoronkwo 2012: 684). The overall success, the impact and limitations of the Samaru Project, as an innovative theatre practice which lifted dramatic engagement from the confines of a university to open engagement with ordinary villagers, is well established (Etherton 1982; Yerima 1990; Okwori 2004; Abah 2008).

Many other TfD initiatives have taken place in Africa with ample evidence of wide acceptance and impact (Johansson 2006: 90). The list includes the Murewa Theatre for Development Workshop, conducted in Zimbabwe in 1983 as a TfD initiative focused on poverty alleviation, health education and economic renewal (Kerr 1995); the Liwonde Project of Malawi was initiated in 1980 to address health and personal hygiene issues in rural communities (Kamlongera and Kalipeni 1996; Kerr 1997); the Chikwakwa Project based at the University of Zambia gained popularity through its interventionist theatre programme and extensive employment of local cultural materials such as songs, dances, recitals, narratives that resulted in a contextual shift of theatre practice in the 1980s (Roscoe 2007); the Malya Popular Theatre Project focused on health education campaigns against school-girl pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases with extensive focus on HIV/aids in Nwansa region of Tanzania (Johansson 2006); the Kumba Workshop in Cameroon (Eyoh, Amvela, Butake and Mbangwana 1986); the Kwara State MAMSER (Mass Mobilisation for Social and Economic Recovery) Project used theatre in public awareness and mobilisation of the populace in selected local governments to support the eponymous programme of the Nigerian government in the early 1990s (Akinwale 2008); the Ikot Ayan Itam Theatre for Development Project used a drama-based model for sustainable development advocacy in sensitising local communities about the dangers of farming on waterways and erosion-prone locations (Nda 2007); the Esuk Ewang/Ibaka Project for Water Pollution Awareness among riverine communities in Mbo Local Government of Akwa Ibom State (Inyang 2015); the Ntak Inyang Itam Deforestation Campaign (Inyang 2016) and the Ituk Mbang Initiative Against Soil Erosion-promoting Activities in Uruan area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria (Inyang 2015).

Taking this background as context, this article's objective is primarily to undertake a historical survey of TfD practice in the South-South geopolitical section of Nigeria and to highlight the state of the practice under the prevailing circumstances between the 1990s and the present. It is also an additional effort in demonstrating the viability of employing indigenous cultural resources in a TfD dramatisation, involving development teams and members of the communities for various develop-

ment communication initiatives targeting various challenges including but not limited to water pollution, deforestation, erosion menace, health issues, cooperative governance, nonviolence and peacebuilding, agriculture, community education, teenage and youth dislocations in various parts of the world. This paper shall further derive impetus and support from the characteristics and practice of TfD already acknowledged by various researchers and practitioners in various parts of the world but with particular emphasis on its context and practice and expression in South-South Nigeria within the specified historical time. This underlines its suitability and the need to examine its historical development within South-South Nigeria.

## TfD in Southern Nigeria in the 1990s

The South-South region has maintained interest in the use of drama for development advocacy for years. Outside of a non-TfD context, playwrights of the region have always incorporated development issues either consciously or unconsciously into the thematic core of their plays to address notably issues in the area of the environmental degradation in the area (Ajumeze 2018). This points to the fact that there has always been a sort of development advocacy by literary and performing artists in the South-South. The emergence of TfD came to strengthen that already existing tradition of development thinking in the area. Against this background, Theatre for Development teaching and practice in Nigeria at the tertiary level began taking root in the 1990s after the initial experiment in Zaria in the mid-1970s. This was significantly influenced by the activities of ex-students, who had studied at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria returning back to their different states to put into practice what they learned. With many such ex-students taking up teaching positions in the tertiary institutions including polytechnics, colleges of education and the universities, the spread of TfD began like wildfire. With increase activities in various universities in the southern part of Nigeria, the next major part of the country to be bitten by the TfD bug turned out to be the South-South geopolitical section of the country consisting of states in the coastal littoral region popularly called the Niger Delta area. These states also proved veritable testing

grounds for TfD practices because of the various environmental challenges and the onerous socio-economic dislocations arising out of years of the exploitation of abundant natural resources by a combination of multinational oil and gas industries as well as the federal government of Nigeria. The developmental challenges in the Niger Delta in addition to the high-handed crushing of protests by the local populations and the ferocity of armed struggle for resource control by various groups left the population not only highly frustrated but mentally, psychologically dislocated and therefore needing various levels of intervention to see how they can become partners, participants, and sources of solution to the challenges they are facing. Critical to the challenges bedevilling the Niger Delta has been the degradation of the environment through various geological mishaps caused by oil companies and illegal bunkering activities (George-Ukpong 2012). This left the Niger Delta environment as one of the most environmentally despoiled areas of the world. The need for TfD to be considered one of the tools for sensitizing people living in these areas about these challenges became necessary and practitioners seized the opportunity to develop intervention programmes targeting these problems. This led to an upsurge in TfD activities in this area and also interest in the field in the 90s. Add the global pandemic of HIV/AIDS and other development challenges in the world, the role of TfD in tackling development problems was expanded as more people became increasingly aware of the uniqueness and effectiveness of this practice in their communities.

## The South-South Area

The South-South part of Nigeria consists of oil-producing states including Akwa Ibom State, Cross River State, Rivers State, Bayelsa State, Delta State, and Edo State (Adekola and Gordon 2011; Izah 2018). These states are widely recognized for the presence of abundant natural and artistic resources (Anderson and Peek 2002). Bound by their common coastal regional tributaries, the South-South necessarily became the active ground for TfD owing largely to its socio-economic challenges and the increasing realization by development agencies and activists that they need to invent new methods and languages to reach out to the

poor communities and people of Nigeria's mangrove region. Starting at the University of Calabar with an initiative called the Dream Boat Project of the Dream Development Theatre Foundation initiated by Edisua Oko-Ofoboche (Yta) and Living Earth Nigeria Foundation (LENF), a European Union-funded Theatre for Development foundation with major operations in the South-South region of Nigeria (Andrew-Esien 2010). Edisua (now known as Edisua Mera Yta) remains an active practitioner involved in many Tfd projects in the South-South region in Nigeria. Her current focus is in the areas of governance, economic growth and peacebuilding (GEPP) in 'Southern Nigeria covering six states' (Yta 2017: 92–107). The South-South zone of Nigeria is also rich in languages and cultural heritage and is one of the notably active areas of cultural activities, tourism and indigenous knowledge systems (Udoh 2003). Tfd thrives in the use or application of indigenous resources and local idioms in its expression hence its emergence in this region was also effectively fostered by the presence of an already existing interface between culture and societal development aspiration.

## The Current State of Tfd Practice in South-South Nigeria

Tfd is still enjoying widespread acceptance by tertiary institutions, the public and private sectors, and communities as a productive area of research and practice. Many of the Tfd activities are still concentrated on tertiary campuses where practitioners are mainly university scholars who also double as private consultants in projects and interventions often commissioned by government and nongovernmental organizations. A core area of Tfd intervention in the South-South of Nigeria remains in the area of environmental communication advocacy. This is due to the nature of the terrain that is rich in beautiful rivers, waterfronts, swamps, rain forest and agricultural lands that are unfortunately regularly exposed to all forms of degradation (Adekola and Gordon 2011). With insights drawn from intervention in various areas and the impact recorded, Tfd blossomed in the South-South zone of Nigeria within the 1990s to the 2000s. Between 1998 and 2007 for instance, some multinational companies recognized Tfd as a fitting instrument of

dialogue-building towards peace in the communities of their operation and also as a means of creating a platform of community involvement in decisions about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and therefore engaged practitioners as development consultants to conduct interventions in communities in South-South Nigeria. Asagba (2014: 23) who has been involved in one such intervention reports about ‘a collaboration with SPDC (Shell Petroleum Development Company) (...) in using Theatre for Development (TfD) as a tool for cultural communication and development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.’ In 2009, researchers from the Theatre for Development Centre (TfDC) embarked on a TfD project whose objective was to encourage ‘discussion among the communities of the Niger Delta on the breakdown in accountability of local and state leaders to citizens’ (Okwori and Abah 2009: 1). In addition to this, there is also an ongoing collation of various TfD interventions by universities in the South-South as part of the practical component of courses in Theatre for Development or community theatre (Inyang 2016). To provide a broader perspective into the state of TfD practice in South-South Nigeria, it is imperative that we take a panned view of the different states that make up the geopolitical South-South of Nigeria.

## Akwa Ibom State

Theatre for Development practice in Akwa Ibom State started as early outreach programmes by the Film Unit of the then Southeastern State of Nigeria in late 1960 and the 1970s via occasional screening of films promoting agriculture that were taken to villages to educate farmers and villagers on the usefulness of farming as a livelihood-sustaining mechanism after the civil war (Atakpo 2018). This early seed of TfD sown in the 1970s was actually not done with the consciousness that it is a theatre or film for development outreach programme but rather an enlightenment programme to elicit people’s participation in rebuilding the post-war society. With the creation of Cross River state later in 1976, theatre took on a more active life in Calabar the capital city of the new state due to a number of factors including the existence of prestigious colleges and post-secondary institutions that encouraged drama activi-

ties and often featured in the schools end of year activities, the establishment of the University of Calabar and its programme in theatre arts, the establishment of the Cultural Centre Board that had a broad objective of promoting indigenous culture and the arts and the overwhelming influence of the FESTAC'77 that ignited a cultural renaissance all over Africa and in Nigeria in particular. With the splitting of Cross River State into two in 1987 leading to the formation of Akwa Ibom State, the robust environment of theatre and cultural renaissance already-existing connection with the dynamism of the early handlers of Akwa Ibom State Broadcasting Service (AKBC) to promote agricultural extension broadcast, radio drama focused on social development and televisions soap operas with dramatized episodes in indigenous languages aimed at behavior change all acted as the foundation for the development of TfD in Akwa Ibom State.

Moreover, graduates of the University of Calabar's theatre programme, who worked at the existing cultural institutions and in the media especially in the National Television Authority (NTA) and academic staff in the university, returned back to Akwa Ibom State and started teaching in programmes and cultural centres in the University of Uyo located in Uyo, the capital of Akwa Ibom State, and laid the foundation for some level of structured TfD programmes in the state. From this early foundation emerged a larger context of practice and theorizing arising from more knowledge gained from research in the field especially by academic staff who went to specialize in developmental theatre studies at the postgraduate level. With this new upsurge of interest also came experiments in TfD practice leading to the emergence of a basic programme on health education sponsored by various faith-based organisations and NGOs such as the Lutheran Mission in Nigeria that informed the birth of the advocacy TfD play *Generous Donors* (1991) written by Effiong Johnson (presently a professor of theatre and aesthetics communication in the University of Uyo). Many other early practitioners including Sunny Samson-Akpan, Uwemedimo Atakpo, Edet Effiong Etim, Ubong Nda gained more insights into TfD practice through actual experiments in the field and moved on to develop other initiatives. Notable among them is the late Ubong Nda, who played a pioneering role in researching and practicing TfD, building on his expo-

sure to development journalism as a seasoned broadcast journalist who later joined academia, who obtained a doctoral degree in TfD focused on the environmental sensitization using theatre. Nda's interest gained tremendously from the existing curriculum of TfD in the Department of Theatre Arts, the University of Uyo which not only offer two semester-length courses in TfD but also enshrined the practice of practical community engagement in different parts of Akwa Ibom and neighbouring states, a practice that continues to date (Departmental Handbook: University of Uyo Theatre Studies 2017). This practical component has institutionalized and expanded the context of TfD practice in the Akwa Ibom State as well as produced active practitioners, ex-students of the theatre programme in the University of Uyo that have gone on to become active frontline practitioners of Theatre for Development in different parts of Nigeria and outside the shores of the country.

## Bayelsa State

The practice of Theatre for Development in Bayelsa can be traced to the early engagement in TfD in Rivers State which Bayelsa was a part of until its creation on 1 October 1996. Before the creation of Bayelsa State, keen early practitioners of TfD including Barclays Ayakoroma, Christine Odi among others were active in the TfD field working on various programmes as consultants to Living Earth Nigeria Foundation (LENF) in the Port Harcourt Office as well as teaching Theatre for Development in the Creative Arts programme at the University of Port Harcourt. They staged community interventions on various subject matters and even wrote conventional plays that were adapted as intervention instruments in TfD settings. When Barclays Ayakoroma was appointed the Director of the newly created Bayelsa State Council for Arts and Culture, he took with him the practice of TfD and integrated it into the community arts mobilization programme of the Council thereby extending the frontiers of TfD until its formal teaching in the theatre programme at the Niger Delta University, Amasoma later established in Bayelsa State. Reporting on a Theatre for Development intervention in Adagbabiri in rural Bayelsa State, Odi (2012: 145), one of the early practitioners of TfD observes that:

Before October 1, 1996, the geographic location presently known as Bayelsa State was part of the old Rivers State. When in 1996 it became one of the five states to be created in Nigeria, the gross underdevelopment that had been concealed by her being part of a larger entity was brought to the fore. It dawned on all stakeholders that there was an urgent need to address the underdevelopment in the state.

As a key stakeholder in the development of the young state, Odi (2012) opines that Theatre for Development was identified as one of the tools to tackle the state's underdevelopment given its context as a rural area and the demand for bringing development communication to the people. From that early inception of Tfd to the present day, Tfd has been widely implemented in Bayelsa State on a variety of development themes including drug and substance abuse (Zibokere and Ekiye 2020), environmental degradation, violence and militancy, water resources mismanagement among other issues.

## Cross River State

Cross River State is notably a culturally diverse state. It is rich in heritage, history, and very active in the promotion of arts and creativity (Onor 2015). To a great extent, the state is one of the early take-off points for Theatre for Development in the South-South region due to the standing of Calabar as a longstanding cultural and political capital of the then South Eastern State, the old Cross River State and the current Cross River State as geopolitically configured. This background not only activated a robust sense of theatre consciousness in the inhabitants but the presence of key cultural, media and art institutions such as the Cultural Centre, Calabar, the National Museum, the Cross River Tourism Board, the Cross River Television (CRBC), the National Television Authority (NTA) and the active study of theatre at the University of Calabar aligned with the existing love of culture by the people to create a viable ground for theatre including Theatre for Development to flourish in the state. Theatre for Development (Tfd) as already noted above has existed and functioned in Cross River State since the early years of its cross over from Northern Nigeria to other parts of the country. It

bases formed out of the interest of academic staff in the Theatre Arts programme at the University of Calabar and later gained acceptability and employment by Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) in various community outreach programmes targeting poaching of endangered animals, deforestation, environmental education and many other development challenges. Living Earth Nigeria Foundation (LENF) is one of the NGOs active in the use of Theatre for Development advocacy in Cross River State. Their use of theatre can best be understood not only in the acknowledged successes of various interventions but also because a majority of their key consultants and handlers are mostly graduates and staff of the University of Calabar with specialization in Tfd. Betiang (2010: 59) reports that:

About 60 % of Nigerians live in rural areas with poor access roads and health facilities, near-absent communication media, unemployment, alienation, and disempowerment by the political leadership. This scenario has excluded the rural Nigerian from meaningful participation in development action. A bottom-up participatory approach to development/advocacy was used in this project to empower the rural people through strengthening their communication skills and action competence to embark on meaningful development projects. The project was executed under the auspices of Living Earth Nigeria Foundation's (LENF) Community Theatre Initiative. In Cross River State, the project trained, established and empowered community-based theatre groups in six rural communities, using a modified variant of Theatre for Development methodology.

The success of this participatory methodology appears as the major attraction for the engagement of Tfd instead of the conventional media in development information management in rural interventions coupled also with the realization that a top-bottom approach to development engagement is bound to create disconnects in local settings. As an affirmation of this observation, Betiang (2010: 59) goes on to state that:

These community-based groups became the arrow-heads for local development. Post-evaluation results have shown a people hitherto timid and apathetic, waking up to articulate their problems and charting a course towards overcoming them. It also proved community theatre as the most popular of all environmental education approaches. The Project led the communities to witness dramatic changes as local energy and creativity were unleashed and harnessed for the development of the rural communities in different ways. There were also positive behaviour changes and a questioning attitude to traditional practices and governance. These results were achieved not through the conventional packaging of theatre for rural people but by equipping them with requisite histrionic, production, and management skills to develop and practise their own culturally relevant theatre based on identified local problems.

This report accordingly has provided insight into the context of the practice of Theatre for Development in Cross River State today. It has further led us into understanding that LENF not only applied theatre to its development initiative in Cross River State but it also developed an administrative and operational structure that covered the six states that make up the South-South zone of Nigeria with offices in most of the states' capital indicating not only an awareness of the impact of theatre in the peculiar development terrain of the Niger Delta as the South-South is popularly called but also the functional need to initiate rural development using existing cultural and artistic practices in the communities. Theatre for development has benefitted the people of Cross River State in key interventions touching on different challenges in recent times. Duke (2016: 10) cites the application of Tfd methodology in childhood cataract awareness 'in a community in Akapubuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria as a means to enhance community participation, health promotion and education.' Beyond this, most recently, Theatre for Development was employed in peacebuilding in Cross River State (Adora 2020) and in a wide variety of other contexts affirming that Tfd is still an active force in development advocacy in this part of the South-South region of Nigeria.

## Delta State

There is a growing interest in the application of Theatre for Development principles and techniques in tackling development challenges in Delta State. Like most South-South states, Delta State also built interest in Theatre for Development as it came from the North of Nigeria in the 1990s. Characteristic of its expression in other places, Tfd drew from the existing cultural resources of the riverine communities of Delta State to develop a new idiom of development advocacy within the area. Okpadah (2017) affirms the correlation between Tfd and the artistic and development communication norms of Emuodje festival of the Ekakpamre people of Delta State. The rise of Tfd as an academic area of study was fostered by the floating of a theatre study programme in the Delta State University, Abraka as its spread was fostered by the ex-students of the university who moved on to take teaching positions and other job designations in other tertiary institutions such as the Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and in the Council for Arts and Culture. In today's context of Tfd practice in Delta State, researchers and practitioners have worked across a variety of terrains and subject matter. A survey of interventions in different communities indicates concentration in conflict resolution (Ifeanyi 2009) environmental degradation, kidnapping, and youth restiveness among other areas of activities.

## Edo State

The practice of Theatre for Development in Edo State has been active right from the early years of its arrival in the South of Nigeria. Notably rich in arts, culture and heritage (Omoruan 2016), Edo State's Tfd practice as common in most Nigerian states, is active within the tertiary institutions in the state. The Theatre and Mass Communication Department at the University of Benin remains an active point of Tfd teaching and practice in Edo State. Since its establishment in the late 1970 and the eventual floating of theatre studies in the university, the programme has produced notable practitioners and researchers in the area of Theatre for (Zibokere and Ekiye 2020). Development. Prof. Austin Asagba, a notable Tfd practitioner and scholar based at the University of Benin, in

a recent interview pointed to the impact of TfD in reaching unreached communities in Edo State via the agency of Theatre for Development. Given the prevailing development challenges in Edo State, TfD has been at the forefront of development advocacy in the state at various times. It was engaged during the MAMSER campaigns of the 1990s, the anti-crime campaigns of the 1980s and the anti-trafficking campaigns geared towards preventing trafficking in girls to Europe as Edo State is a widely recognized source of trafficked girls. The International Organisation for Migration, a United Nations Migration Agency recently engaged Theatre for Development to help raise awareness about human trafficking in Nigeria (<https://www.iom.int/news/theatre-helps-raise-awareness-human-trafficking-most-affected-regions-nigeria>). TfD is also active at the Colleges of Education in Edo State.

## The Challenges of TfD in South-South Nigeria

TfD is not without its own fair share of challenges. From a history of open acceptance and implementation in various parts of the region and a widely acknowledged success stories and impact in tackling the development challenges of the region, TfD also receives knocks from time to time. Adeseke (2016: 1) for example, condemns ‘how theatre practitioners from that region ignored best practices by using their plays and performances to misinform and mislead the people for personal preferences. They influenced the minds of the people negatively which led to the crisis in the region.’ As serious as this allegation is and implicating seriously on the very soul of TfD as a liberating and empowering practice rather than a misinforming propaganda, the author failed to back up his submission with the hard fact of empirical evidence beyond citing a few plays that were staged in one state during the official visit of a key state official as representing a TfD programme in the Niger Delta. Nothing can be farther from the truth as TfD does not belong to the genre of popular entertainment packaged for visiting government officials. That he also claims that ‘The government and multinationals have done and are still doing a lot in alleviating the suffering of the people...’ (ibid.) smacks of a lubricated and sponsored propaganda to tarnish the well-intended labour of TfD practitioners of South-South extraction

or self-delusion driven by vendetta. This scenario clearly points to the challenging terrain of TfD practice in the South-South without necessarily justifying error or blatant abuse by practitioners or other stakeholders. Beyond this, TfD is still without formal support from the public or private sector beyond the occasional invitation of practitioners to initiate a project based on an identified area of need. Government within the South-South zone has yet to come to the realization of the benefit of TfD as a partner in its development effort thereby seeing the need to strengthen its practice with a policy position that can enable practitioners to take it as a full-time engagement with attractive emolument. This leaves TfD as a practice driven by volunteers and sustained by passion which is not good enough considering the socio-economic realities of the 21st century. Also, the practice of TfD is still active within the university or tertiary institution environment, mostly as a practical component to the theoretical training in the class. This clearly presents an environment of practice often dominated by academics rather than professionals crossly inhibiting the growth of the field in the process. A lot needs to be done to change this context of practice, as TfD is often erroneously seen by the generality of the public as a school outreach programme rather than as a professional field of practice with its own principles, methods and professional status.

## The Future of TfD Practice in South-South Nigeria

The practice of Theatre for Development has a bright future going forward. Its critical imperative as a tool of public engagement to tackle various development challenges including prevailing development headaches such as the emergent culture of violence especially in the South East, Middle Belt and Northern Nigeria has been identified by scholars (Liman 2013). Not only have people become increasingly aware of its usefulness in spreading development information, especially in rural locations, but they have also gained further insights on how it can be better applied in larger contexts of development thinking and planning in the society. Obadiogwu (2004: 2) for instance submits that the essence of TfD is to allow the people to use art to confront their situation because it is a community-oriented theatre for the collective devel-

opment of the people. How is this applied in the varied environments of South-South Nigeria? What is the impact of its practice over the years? As Obadiogwu further notes 'community theatre makes use of indigenous art forms as its raw material' (ibid.), but is that understanding explored by the practitioners and policymakers to further development in the society or is it a practice that is heavy in rhetoric but lean on impact? While it is not the original goal of this paper to critique TfD practice in the study area, we shall, however, use this historical examination to establish the linkages between a practice's objective and its impact in the society it is implemented. This will also lead us into examining whether practitioners have been given sufficient space and support to realize their objectives. Harding (1999: 30) points out that TfD relies at every stage of the process on the contribution of participant-spectators to create the drama meaning that without the support of the society, TfD practice may not receive a full return on investment. Society's interest in a development initiative is a critical factor to its success in the long run. Policymakers have a great role to play in enhancing the impact of an initiative through the offer of sufficient political will to create the needed environment for development initiatives to touch lives. Frequent interactions and reactions from the people and the key stakeholders are not optional. Without it, development drama or TfD may not produce the desired result. Harding adds that the utilisation of existing performance forms in the drama of TfD is created as an extension of indigenous forms rather than an imposed alien form which is what most society yearn for and which also corresponds with one of the objectives of TfD to stem the tide of a borrowed development initiative, draw from local knowledge to implement programmes targeting people in a particular location and centre-stage people as critical partners in the transformation of society.

## Conclusion

Our examination of the rise of TfD as a practice and pedagogic field in South-South Nigeria aimed towards reviewing its context, history, development and challenges. It has provided insights into its functioning within the historical space of the 1990s to the present. From

this analysis, we are able to establish that in Nigeria, rural farming and fishing communities, have a rich repertory of indigenous performances expressed in oral narratives, music, acrobatic displays, dances, songs, visual elements, rituals, and stylisation. These cultural and performance materials are being used in 'devising' performances with the active collaboration and participation of the people, for environmental and other development communication purposes. The application of the techniques of TfD to tackle the development problems of communities in South-South Nigeria is considered very timely and relevant. It is an experiment that has consolidated on the pioneering effort of various initiatives in the past. Considering also that TfD is integrative, as it brings people together, breaks down communication barriers and other biases and enables two groups of people, (the host community and the assistant group or researcher) hitherto unknown to each other, to work together for the development of the community, its application in the South-South Nigeria geopolitical context has produced useful results as well as present some challenges. The greatest advantage of TfD is that it could be used to investigate problems in any area of human development in a rural settlement (Nwadigwe 2000: 4). Environmental degradation for example, which is a core challenge in the Niger Delta region is not just a problem in the present world, it is a human crisis of very serious dimension. Bringing the solution to this crisis is critical to sustainable living in the future. Taking everything into consideration, we can safely conclude that the practice of TfD will continue to expand in South-South Nigeria but there is incremental need to find innovative ways of applying it especially as the society is becoming increasingly globalized and digitalized. It remains our personal conviction that the TfD that will be relevant for the future may have to incorporate the platforms of technology and new media to reach out to the people. This will not take so much away from its original norms except that the idea of participation and feedback may be reconfigured to new norms of digital communication. Disciples and practices have to live with a permanent consideration of paradigm shift as societies change the way it operates.

By saying this, we are trying to articulate the fact that Theatre for Development practice has to find ways to make itself increasingly relevant in the current century. TfD practice in the South-South region

of Nigeria will continue to thrive while also reinventing itself both as a practice and a field of learning. With the expansion in tertiary education within the region and the establishment of new universities and higher colleges, there will be an increasing need to bring on board the teaching and training of future manpower in the area of Tfd. The South-South region otherwise called the Niger Delta region remains a very challenging terrain bedevilled by many years of poor leadership, resource mismanagement, violent agitation, militarization, youth restiveness and environmental degradation meaning that Tfd still has a massive field of development engagement to grapple with going forward. The utilization of theatre as a tool of development communication targeting development issues is gaining new momentum with the rise in a new form of cultural renaissance within the Niger Delta area which has seen renewed interest in the revitalization of long suspended cultural fiestas and periodic indigenous festivals. These festivals have also been rebranded and fit into the model of other global festivals with the objective to turn them into tourism promoting avenues that will attract international visitors. Adding the revival of these festivals to the agenda of using culture as a mechanism of sustainable development in accordance with the goals of the United Nations and the African Union's mission to engage culture as a means of fostering peace in our societies will activate further grounds of practice and productivity for Theatre for Development practitioners in the South-South of Nigeria.

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# Theatre for Development, Community Development and Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Abel Idebe

## Introduction

Active participation of local communities in Nigeria on development issues that affect them are often neglected by those who control power both at the state and national levels of leadership. Hegemonic structures and the proponents of these structures advance narratives and paradigms that further estrange the locals. The consequence of this is that most local communities have become subjugated and over-dependent on the power structures of the dominant (Okwori 2005, Abah 2005, Dutta 2011 and Idebe 2019). Okwori in this regard advocates for a development paradigm that gives people in local communities a more empowering profile:

Relinquishing control of received notions and recognizing local efforts means conceding greater control of development decision making to the people who are suppose to be the beneficiaries of it. Achieving 'greater control' suggests that people must not only be part and parcel of the development process but that they become the subjects of development. This is the only way through which situation of powerlessness brought about by the conventional models of development can be reversed. This reversal is nurtured by participation in which people are involved in deciding what their development is, what they need to do to bring it about and having the necessary will to do it. Peoples' participation is the foundation for a self-reliant and internally-self-sustained process of development. It guarantees peoples' commitment and effective utilization of human resources at all levels and all dimensions. When these happen people will be transformed and they will be implicated in actions which will bring about change (Okwori 2005: 30-31).

Therefore, there is need to develop communication approaches that enable local communities to influence and make vocal the issues that affect them. Thus, communication channels which take into cognizance a democratic and collective approach to issues from the point of those at the margin becomes very key. It is on this basis, that Nigerian tertiary institutions offer Theatre for Development (TfD) as one of the courses to be studied in order to advance effective models of development that help students and researchers to advance greater participation of local communities in determining their growth and development.

TfD as a practice in Nigerian tertiary institutions began at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1976 under the then drama unit of the English Department (Osofisan 2004). Over the years it has become a key part of training for students undertaking Drama and Theatre programmes across several Nigerian tertiary institutions. This chapter examines the impact that tertiary institutions in Nigeria have made in driving the TfD model as a channel that offers local communities the opportunity to make their voice and inputs to community development count. It also examines the challenges that have been encountered by institutions and suggests some ways forward.

## Conceptual Framework: Community Development

As a concept community development has been defined in different ways. For example, Ekanem states that “community development is a conscious and deliberate effort aimed at helping communities recognize their needs and assume increasing responsibilities for solving their problems thereby increasing their capacity to participate fully in the life of the nation” (Ekanem 2013: 251). Ekong (2010) points to the The United Nations that has since 1956 adopted the following definition:

Community development is the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (Ekong 2010: 438).

The process of community development is therefore made up of two essential components: the participation of the people themselves in efforts to improve their living condition, using their own initiatives and secondly the participation of relevant agencies and other services in ways which encourage local initiatives for nation-building. The challenges in achieving community development lie in the effective inputs and synergy of these two essential components with the latter made to be redundant by those shaping the policies within the society. Onwubiko (2010) highlights some of the following basic principles in community development:

1. *Understanding the social characteristics of each community:*

It is evident that the social make-up of communities differs, and this fact should be borne in mind by community development agents in order to achieve success. The social structures of communities differ, so do their norms and values. Community development programmes should therefore be such that it is in harmony with the people's norms and values and its implementation should accord respect to their social structure if friction is to be avoided.

2. *Mass Participation Initiative:*

This is a defining characteristic of community development. This is presupposed that the people should not be isolated in the process of development; rather they should be involved in the initiation, planning and execution of community development programmes. The principles requires considering the people's priorities, involving them in the raising of funds and labour for community development programmes.

3. *Continuous Appraisal of Felt/Latent Needs:*

Communities are inundated with several development challenges and as such the natural consequence of satisfying one need is to face another need. Consequently, community development requires the continuous appraisal of the felt/latent needs of the communities so that when one goal is achieved another one surfaces.

4. *Effective Community Leadership:*

For the goals of community development to be achieved, one of the necessary conditions is availability of an effective and focused leadership. The community development agent should work with acceptable community leadership in order to get the right results. The office or

institution that is acceptable and capable of providing effective leadership in one community may lack such capability in another community.

5. *The Principle of Self-Growth:*

This principle maintains that a community does not have to accept or even to wait to have a ready-made solution to its problems, perhaps worked out by outsiders who have no connections with the community. It has to be able through constant practice to diagnose its own problems and initiate action towards findings solutions to such problems. In this process, the community should strive to rely as much as possible on its own resources and what external resources that maybe infused from time to time into the community effort either by government or external specialized agencies. The principle promotes innovativeness and offers the psychological condition which is fundamental to self-employment and self-reliance.

The objectives of community development beyond addressing the basic needs of community should lead to social transformation for the nation as whole. In other words, this transformation should be capable of empowering these communities in paths that make them see themselves as key stakeholders in the larger frame where they exist. They should become critical influencers of one another, as well as the nation as a whole, making their contributions as best as they can.

Therefore, central to community development is capacity-building, that is to say the conscious drive to empower and unlock the resources from within to achieve real social change and transformation. According to Eade and Williams (1995: 9): "Capacity building is the process of strengthening people's abilities and capabilities to determine their own values and priorities in life. It is about women and men becoming empowered to bring about positive changes in their lives". It is this agenda that informs the idea and practice in Theatre for Development (TfD) model for meeting the objectives of community development.

## The Concept of Theatre for Development

The idea of using TfD to create a process by which development is experienced in communities, has over the years, provided a veritable platform concretely explored by theatre practitioners, to demonstrate the

participatory and pragmatic essentialities of the theatre. TfD as Dandaura notes "...is an alternative grassroots theatre that seeks to engender development and progress in the socio-economic life of a people" (Dandaura 2005: 15). Ayegba further explains that:

Theatre for Development popularly referred to as TfD is an alternative form of theatre practice. It derives its materials from the people's lived experiences (social, cultural, political, environmental etc), conditions and has an empowering process through which individuals and communities examine their objective conditions. It is a tool for building community cohesion and a process of sharing and learning from each other. TfD as a tool helps to focus attention on critical issues and aids planning for action; the process taps from, and also responds to, the rhythm of the community. As a non-formal system of education, it also offers a forum for community entertainment (Ayegba 2013: 293).

In this context TfD is a practice that involves an action process to facilitate change. It is community-focused and ensures that the success of the process is determined by the active presence and inputs that come from members of the community. This form of theatre over the years has been identified by different nomenclatures which further reinstate its primary goal as a community-driven process. Some of these nomenclatures include: Theatre for Integrated Rural Development, Community Theatre for Education and Development, Popular Theatre, Applied Theatre, Theatre for Community Development and Community Theatre.

The idea of TfD must have to do with the people's active participation; that is the galvanizing of the people's collective will and determination in order to figure out possibilities for confronting and challenging the complexities of their existence, with the aim of developing new scenarios of desired changes for their progress and prosperity. Ewu further remarks that "... in order for development to be purposeful, dignifying and sustainable it must evolve with the people and their participation is crucial" (Ewu 2002: 3). To this end, TfD in trying to focus on community members and their depleting conditions engages them as active players, taking into serious account their contributions in the processes of addressing their social conditions. With this they become

more informed, conscientized, empowered and ready to take action for change. Kidd quoted by Osofisan comments that TfD is aimed at "... bringing people together, building confidence and solidarity; stimulating discussions, exploring alternative options for action and building a collective commitment to change starting with the people's urgent concerns and issues. It encourages reflection on these issues and possible strategies for change" (Osofisan 2004: 24). TfD in this light advances the principles of interactive participation. It advocates that the theatre experience must put into consideration the active contribution and participation of the whole community. The goal of TfD as Illah and Warritay also explain is to "make theatre for the people, make theatre with the people, enable the people do theatre by themselves, using their stories, songs, dances, hoping to change negative attitudes; to advocate and sustain new values and behaviours" (Illah and Warritay 2004: 3). Epskamp sheds more light on the concept of TfD as democratic and community-centered as he enumerates and describes a number of objectives which TfD seeks to achieve:

TfD gives a voice to the previous unheard members of the community. TfD confronts participants continuously with the possibility of making choices in order to solve their own problem. TfD offers opportunities to explore social reality by means of improvising and performing for both utilitarian and creative purposes. TfD offers a common playground or laboratory to explore near misses as well as golden opportunities for self-development. TfD promotes behavioral changes by means of persuasive communication, stimulating changes in attitude, belief and behaviour towards development-related practices. TfD motivates active participation in development programmes in order to improve the quality of life and in order to maintain development-related skills, linking them with daily practices. TfD enables one to take collective action by means of a two-way communication process, community discussions and decision making, solidarity and intra-village/inter-village solidarity (Epskamp 2006: 89).

The foregoing itemizations by Eskamp simply highlight the wide spectrum of ideas that have informed the use of TfD across different com-

munities. Nevertheless, it is important to state that the commitment of both community members and other participating agents of the process, in every given Tfd exercise can make or mar these very objectives which Tfd is expected to achieve. Consequently, discussing how these very noble goals of Tfd are made concrete in developmentally challenged communities through tertiary institutions as co-creators becomes very important.

## Tertiary Institutions and the Development of Tfd in Nigeria

Tfd as a method for addressing community issues has been explored by different tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Africa and beyond (Hager 1990, Byam 1999, Ewu 2002, Abah 2005 and Iorapuu 2012). As earlier stated, Tfd began with the setting up of a drama programme under the department of English in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1976. Early practice of Tfd in ABU engaged nearby villages within Zaria and was undertaken as an undergraduate course within the department. Michael Etherton a lecturer with the department was quite instrumental in this regard. Today in ABU, studies in Tfd are now offered both as undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Drawing from the example of ABU a number of Drama, Theatre and English departments/units in Nigeria tertiary institutions have ensured that courses on Tfd or Community Theatre are taken as core courses for their degree programmes at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels. For example, in the department and institution where I am currently based, that is the Department of English, Gombe State University, the 400 level students of English have it as one of the core courses for the first semester with the title “Theatre for Development (ENGL 409)”. The students in the course carry out a homestead approach to Tfd. In this case, they are made to travel and stay with members of a particular community for a few days where together with them they undertake the Tfd process. Prior to this they also offer another course titled “Community Theatre (ENGL 209)” as a first semester 200 level core course. Under this course they visit nearby communities around the university to research their issues and develop drama skits they now take back to the community

for performance and post-performance discussions. The inclusion of these courses in the different degree programmes of tertiary institutions have led to an increasing involvement of students and young researchers in understanding this theatre form.

It is important to also note that the stages of executing Tfd have also been advanced by scholars as against what they were when the practices first emerged in ABU (Illah and Warritay 2004, Abah 2005, Iorapuu 2013 and Boh 2018). For instance, unlike the early beginnings of Tfd that did not give much attention to all stages and steps to be taken in realizing the Tfd exercise, later explorations of Tfd pay greater attention to the different stages and how they lead to the realization or otherwise of expected results for the community. A particular stage in the Tfd process which scholars and practitioners have noted needs to be handled more properly and be given greater attention is that of the follow-through or follow-up stage which essentially involve monitoring and evaluation of a community action plan (CAP). This becomes very essential because it is often the case that some Tfd work becomes stunted as a result of a lack of proper follow-through on what was initially began. Although Tfd does not subscribe to rigidity of processes, however the outlining and commitment given to the different stages provides for an effective assessment of the Tfd project.

Furthermore, Tfd scholars like Steve Abah have also provided useful theoretical perspectives from his engagement with the process. A particular one which he talks about is *methodological conversation*. Here he points out that there is a symbiotic relationship between Tfd and Participatory Learning Action (PLA):

There is indeed a commonality of agenda and sometimes approaches between Tfd and PLA. The defining characteristic of both is the ethics of participation... The two practices are both process oriented. After many years of field experience, and upon reflection, I believe that Tfd can operate from and with PLA; and that PLA can spring from Tfd (Abah 2005: 126).

Methodological conversation as noted by Abah is in keeping with the issues of exploring new paradigms in Tfd research. Although the

advancement in research by scholars affords us the opportunity for better engagements, we are however presented with the need to examine the challenges as they affect relationship of institutional practice and the impacts for local community development.

To do this, our focus now shifts to the roles of students and researchers who explore this form of theatre for the overall benefit of local communities. How well are they equipped to concretely connect with communities and not just fulfill theoretical or curriculum requirements? It is therefore important to take a critical look at some fundamental challenges which academic institutions need to tackle to ensure greater outputs.

### Challenges of Institutions in exploring TfD for Community Development:

The first challenge is that of constrained time for actualizing the demands of the course. As a course, TfD deals with wide range of issues that touch on community development. It therefore demands that students should be substantially exposed to the wide range of issues for them to have a broad view on current and relevant perspectives on them, as they undertake community development research through TfD. Furthermore, the students need to understand how best to put to use the practice and processes of TfD in addressing community issues so as to make them better prepared to handle their own practical experiences. All these require time which is rarely available in most tertiary institutions. This definitely does not give room to get the students adequately equipped to handle the practical needs of the course.

Furthermore, ample time to stay with members of the communities is not available owing to the fact that students and staff will need to come back to the institution to continue with other courses for the programme. For example, in some institutions, the students are rarely given the opportunity to undertake community homestead fieldwork that requires them to live in local communities, and in others they do not have sufficient days allotted for the execution of the field project. This often leads to rushing the process. These challenges usually hamper the community development goals which the experiences should have attained.

A second challenge is that of limited expertise and academic documents in the field of TfD. Most tertiary institutions in Nigeria do have drama and theatre teachers and scholars who take different courses as required for the different programmes done in their respective institutions but a challenge here is the fact that most of them have not advanced their knowledge and research in the area of TfD and Community Development. Outside this challenge of expertise is the challenge of a lack of academic materials and documents in the libraries of many institutions that provides well researched projects on TfD. The limited numbers of experts and academic documents impinges on the depth of research which can be achieved in this area by students and staff researchers who seek to further their interest or specialization in TfD. In this regard, Yerima while pointing out some of the challenges with the ABU TfD programme emphasizes the need for proper documentation:

One of the major challenges of the ABU, Theatre/TfD projects in the twenty-first century should be documentation. Right now, a lot has been written on the ABU Popular Theatre Project, a lot of lectures have been given, and a lot of workshops have been held. But the process of development must be allowed to take place through proper documentation of the process of playmaking. The federal Ministry of Education should be given such document and allowed to appreciate the development of an authentically evolved theatre practice which takes roots from our cultural story telling tradition, our socio-political problems - which gives corrective powers, and which is entertaining. Curriculum must be drawn up. Not the ones that exist within the department of Theatre and Performing Arts in Ahmadu Bello University alone. It must be flexible and attractive so that other universities can fit it into their own academic system (Yerima 2013: 129-130).

This important task which Yerima points out about ABU, Zaria TfD programme/projects is not just a challenge for ABU alone but one that should equally be of concern for other theatre and drama departments where TfD courses are also taken. Furthermore, unlike the ABU TfD projects that have been extensively written on same may not be said of many other institutions across the nation.

Third, is the challenge of sufficient funding. As a practical course that often involve students and staff leaving the academic environment to live in the local communities, the need to adequately fund their logistics and project demands are key to achieving the different stages and objectives of the project. The challenge here is that some tertiary institutions perceive it as some kind of excursion and as such are not willing to provide the project with the funds needed. This challenge usually affects the general organization and execution of the project in many institutions. For instance, instead of the students having a practical appreciation of what the course entails, they just go through it as a classroom experience. Also, the lack of sufficient funding of Tfd project in a number of cases have equally led to the unsuccessful realization of community projects by the community members whose motivation gradually decreases due to the absence of facilitators to motivate the process.

Another important challenge to be pointed out here is the fact that most students often fail to carry their exposure in Tfd programmes to another level of advancement as we often see with other areas of the theatre such as dance, film and media arts. Daniel commenting on this kind of challenge affecting Tfd practice states:

It is also pertinent to draw attention to the training students are currently receiving against the background of Abah and Etherton's critique in 1980s of student's interest in pursuing the practice beyond curricular framework. It will not be out of place to ask if there are enough stimuli for developing student's interest to engage marginal groups in participatory communication process beyond the need to earn a certificate. How can we harness opportunities in participatory communication, provided by international and government agencies to train and stimulate upcoming generations who now dream to get into movie industry rather than engage with people at community level? (Daniel 2013: 144)

The question posed by Daniel shows us the level of impact students are yet to demonstrate or unleash from their experiences with Tfd. Idoko rightly adds that "...all Nigerian universities should be encouraged to strengthen their curriculum in the area of Tfd so that the different geo-political zones can benefit from its tremendous role in community

development” (Idoko 2013: 278). Thus, the need to rethink and reinvigorate students and institutional training in general must therefore be given greater concern by researchers and scholars so that it can yield better results for community and social transformation.

## Ways Forward:

In the light of the above challenges which have been discussed, the need to strengthen capacity that generates new possibilities for increasing impact by institutions in addressing community challenges cannot be overemphasized. The following are here provided as ways forward:

1. *Provision of Tfd documents and equipping libraries for Tertiary Institutional Training:* It is important to state that the development of Tfd practice in Nigeria with its increasing need for better execution of the practice should prompt Tfd researchers and scholars across different institutions to see the urgent need of developing a well-designed document for curriculum training in tertiary institutions. This will become a useful material for undertaking Tfd courses. The design is expected to take into consideration the dynamic/peculiar nature of community development and the principles that undergirds community development. The Tfd practice itself with its different approaches, demands and logistics should also be taken into consideration. A document of this kind will help departments and institutions to understand better what the execution of Tfd practical work entails.
2. Outside a document guide, there is also the need for Tfd practitioners to ensure that the school libraries have a sufficient amount of academic documents and materials. Hard and soft copy materials as well as recorded Tfd projects should be made available for use. The students and staff are better placed to understand and implement their roles in Tfd projects where they have a wide range of materials and documents to support classroom conversations and personal researches.
3. *Two Semester Design for a Tfd Course:* Based on what is obtainable in many tertiary institutions the design for Tfd community fieldwork involves a one-semester arrangement. This is not adequate to pursue

the entire process. Therefore, any curriculum design in this regard should be for a two-semester arrangement. The first should take care of preliminary stages down to the research stage where they end with post-performance discussions that will generate possible community action plans. The next semester should be dedicated to the follow-through and evaluation stages of the project. This will afford the students opportunity to do a better assessment and evaluation of the TfD process. The tools of assessment and evaluation will be studied by the students and can be effectively applied to the project undertaken. As mentioned earlier, this stage in the TfD project have been given less or poor emphasis. It is therefore important for students to have a better executed follow-through aspect of TfD process. This will give them room to re-visit the communities to give them the necessary push and encouragement. They can find new areas of co-operation and development, as well as evaluate the impact of what was done previously and what is going on at the moment to execute agreed set of actions for a better community future.

4. *Annual Publication of TfD Journal*: TfD practitioners and researchers in Nigeria by way of ensuring greater availability of academic materials should consider an annual publication of a journal that is specifically dedicated to publishing TfD case studies and related subjects. A journal of this kind will stimulate academic scholarship in TfD and go a long way to generating wider research and findings from engagement with field experiences by researchers and departments.
5. *Accessibility to fund for TfD projects/Training of TfD Practitioners*: Bamidele (2004) explains that funding is critical for departments and local communities in the execution of TfD practice. Meeting the logistical needs of the TfD projects has been a huge task for many departments due to administrative bottlenecks. Accessibility to funds will no doubt be very useful in addressing this challenge. Funds for training and developing of staff are equally key. Post-doctoral programmes, workshops as well as conferences for staff development must be pursued. Outside TfD researchers, it is equally important that community mobilizers who have over time participated in TfD projects should be considered for training. Con-

ferences and journals should ensure the direct inputs of TfD community mobilizers and participants as this will bring to bear the participatory ideology which the TfD practice advocates.

6. *Promoting Greater Student Interests:* With regards to the students, it is important that opportunities such as scholarship for postgraduate programmes and sponsorship to conferences and workshops are offered students. Outside these, exchange programmes between institutions and grants from relevant agencies and government to support TfD Fieldwork, will aid greater output and enhance their capacity/commitment in the exploration of TfD and other participatory communication approaches. In a similar vein, Warritay notes that “intellectual growth and search for new knowledge among students will also lead to the development of a new relationship and commitments between students and development agencies” (Warritay 2004: 93). There is no doubt that students who have been well schooled in the arts of TfD practices can become vital agents for grassroots transformation movement in the society.

## Conclusion

Fundamental to the practice of TfD is community empowerment. An understanding of applicable approaches of TfD practices will no doubt influence greater interest and commitments to the development of the practice in this regard. To achieve this, institutional training must therefore be revamped. It will be of less or no relevance if TfD courses and projects are seen as another kind of theatrical entertainment/display to be learnt, without a conscious commitment to producing defined community empowerment and development from the experience/process. Therefore, it is important to proffer ways by which institutional impacts from the practice are attained. Even though TfD by itself may not be the answer to addressing the many challenges affecting local communities, however it has proved to be an effective means of contributing to addressing the challenges affecting them. The need to enhance the inputs of students, researchers and practitioners to ensure that the practice produces greater community development and transformation goals become key.

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# Impact assessment of Theatre for Development (TfD)

Academic practice in the Niger-Benue Valley of Nigeria, 1993–2013

Sunday Ogbu Igbaba

## Background

In Africa, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the evolution of TfD practices particularly with focus on subaltern communities where folks have been increasingly and extensively organized and facilitated in terms of acquiring skills that would create an enabling environment for them to make their own theatre for self-efficacy. Practitioners all over Africa were called upon based on the viability of TfD in bringing about facilitation and participation on development issues in communities. Taking inventory of the historical status of Theatre for Development and its link to development in Africa, Penina Mlama stresses that:

The enthusiastic response to Popular Theatre (the label of the practice at the onset) was in a way an indication of the post-independence theatre practitioner's search for a theatre relevant to the struggles for development (Kerr 1991). From the colonial European type of theatre, the theatre in Africa went through various movements. The protest theatre liberation struggles had the attainment of independence as its objective and lost direction after independence. The Travelling Theatre of the 1960s by university-based... (practitioners)... was short lived and discarded as irrelevant to the realities of grassroots communities. Elite Theatre in urban areas and educational institutions was removed from the majority of the citizens who are rural. Popular Theatre's link to the development process at the grassroots level was, therefore, an attraction to theatre practitioners bent on proving to the world that the theatre, as per its African origins, has a direct link to development (Mlama 2002, 45).

Significantly, the practice of TfD from the onset using various nomenclatures has been a facilitating tool for the oppressed people in society to change their disadvantaged position into a state of social transformation through self-help. In the same way, the idea of self-discovery in TfD milieu cannot be divorced from reflecting on past experiences, so as to inform the present situation, in order to find an anchor in the future. This of course, assumes the thought of sustainability in the development process. Paulo Freire, a pioneer Marxist educator, through his theatre of the oppressed, postulating from the perspective of revolutionary aesthetics, is of the position that the oppressed people have the responsibility of seeking out the oppressor; thereby, becoming part of the well-thought-out effort for the purpose of their emancipation and self-affirmation. Accordingly, such struggle for self-discovery is not an intellectual concern utterly, but a mix of feasibility and critical thinking within the prevailing conditions of praxis. It is on this caveat that Freire's concept of praxis which involves action and reflection presupposes that "it is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical thinking" ("Concepts Used by Paulo Freire," par. 2).

Extrapolating from the foregoing Freirian postulation, reflection *via-a-vis* praxis presupposes that the continuous assessment of TfD practices as they evolved over the decades with changing nomenclatures such as Popular Theatre, Community Theatre, Theatre for Development, Child Right Theatre for Development, Theatre for Health and Social Services Promotion, Street Theatre, Interactive Theatre, Applied Theatre. Despite the different nomenclatures, the commonality of TfD variant practices is that they seek to mobilize and awaken the consciousness of community participants, to facilitate their understanding of development challenges, and to facilitate them to take collective action towards making choices and finding solutions to their community development quagmire. Thus, the functional aesthetic focus of TfD is on drama making process in addressing community development challenges. On this caveat, TfD seeks to not only make the people to be conscious of their realities but to equally be involved as full and active participants and to have a voice in their own development process. Cor-

respondingly, Egwugwu John Sani Illah points out within the ambit of democratic parlance that TfD:

(...) is a theatre for the people, with the people, by the people, in their language, idiom, folklore which includes: stories, songs, dances, riddles, etc.; performed in a readily available space identified by the community such as church halls, school halls, street corners, local clubs; about their pains and problems in their own time. (Illah 2004, 1–11)

Furthermore, Steve Ogah Abah clarifies the concept of TfD in Africa when he states that:

TfD is the theatre practice which sets out to address the issues, concerns and problems of the ordinary persons in both rural and urban areas in African countries. It addresses these issues from their own perspectives, using their own language and idiom as the means of communication. (Abah 2010, 185)

In the light of the proceeding viewpoints, the historical perspective of TfD in Nigerian tertiary institutions witnessed the practice evolving through the decades with focus on participatory drama-based methods in addressing development issues, especially in rural communities. In the same tradition, since the early 1980s, tertiary institutions in the Niger-Benue Valley have complemented government efforts in terms of rural development through TfD workshops. But such efforts are more often short-lived by inappropriate development policy blueprint and implementation by successive governments. In addition, the plethora of massive success stories that emanated from field reports on TfD projects that were conducted in the Niger-Benue Valley have been observed to largely pontificate the practice. Therefore, the need for continuous assessment of TfD practice in the long-term feasibility is imperative to determine what works, what does not work, and what adjustment needed to be carried out. Thus, this study seeks to assess the impact of TfD academic practice within the Niger-Benue domain in the long term feasibility, so as to:

- (i.) Determine whether changes take place in TfD project communities within the area?
- (ii.) Know if the attitude of people toward development in the area changed?
- (iii.) Verify if changes in the area occurred as a result of the TfD interventions that were conducted?
- (iv.) Ascertain whether changes in the domain take place as an outcome of other factors?
- (v.) Identify external factors that influenced changes in the area?
- (vi.) If the TfD projects in their immediate feasibilities impacted on communities in the area?
- (vii.) Ascertain whether communities were empowered through TfD method during workshops?

For these and other questions that may arise, it is hoped that the findings from the impact assessment, coupled with the analysis will contribute substantively to the proceedings of TfD historical and institutional perspective in Africa; given that in TfD practice, evaluation is an imperative factor for determining "...as carefully as possible, the relevance, effectiveness, and impact based on the goals established at the beginning of the activity" (Dadzie 2004, 54).

## Theoretical Framework

The impact assessment is anchored in Programme Evaluation (PE) theory which emerged in the early 1990s, with scholars drawn from multidisciplinary backgrounds. Programme evaluation is an embodiment of evaluative stages of a development activity that involves "a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about projects, policies and programs, particularly about their effectiveness and efficiency (*Program evaluation – Wikipedia*). Programme evaluation includes three major types, process, and impact and outcome evaluations.

Process evaluation focuses on the immediate feasibility of a programme by assessing how the activity was carried out in terms of administrative or logistic arrangements. It seeks to ask key questions which include: (i) Where the various activities of the programme planned

authentically? (ii) How resourcefully were the various activities carried out during the programme? (iii) How well did the administrative and logistic arrangements function during the programme?

Impact evaluation assesses the medium-term effects of a programme activity through the use of either quantitative research methods, or a mixed methodology using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. It is aimed at appraising the level to which programme activity objectives have been accomplished. Key questions which IE seeks to answer include: (i) Did any changes occur? (ii) Did participant's mind-set change? (iii) Did those changes happen as a result of the intervention? (iv) Did the change occur by means of other causative factors, if yes which other causative factors?

Outcome evaluation assesses the long-term feasibility effects of a programme activity using quantitative or a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Key questions include: (i) What were the indicators of changes in the development status of the identified population? (ii) where there major changes in the living condition of the identified community?

Significantly, as it is imperative to the existing framework of this study, impact evaluation stands to provide information on the effects established by academic TfD interventions in the Niger-Benue Valley, be they optimistic (positive) or pessimistic (negative), planned (intend) or unplanned (unintended), straight (direct) or twisty (indirect). It follows that impact evaluation of TfD ought to ascertain the causative indicators of observed changes, which are also known as 'causal attribution' or 'causal inference.' Thus, the study is intended to systematically undertake causal attribution that will provide information for scaling up of academic TfD programme in the Niger-Benue Valley and elsewhere. It is in this context that the study empathizes with impact evaluation theory.

## Context of Development Theatre in Africa

In Africa, prior to the advent of colonialism, the idea of theatre was not just a reflection of everyday life, but a communal expression, as anchored in the philosophical thought of *Ubuntu* – “you are because we are, we are because you are;” a philosophical anchorage that permeates

the rituals, religion and belief systems, social, cultural, economic and political fibers of the indigenous people of Africa. It was a functional aesthetic phenomenon that brought people together in communion to celebrate their successes, failures, aspirations, and to commemorate historical events by means of songs, music, incantation, folklores, storytelling, mimetic enactment, ceremonies, festivals, masks and masquerades. Theatre in this perspective brought about integrated communality, coupled with humanistic feelings amongst Africans and their cultures. On the contrary, the advent of cathartic theatre by means of westernization and its superseding colonial influences brought new forms of orthodox theatre practices. Thus, the proscenium architecture and its fourth wall theory of professional theatre uprooted people from their natal place, and brought them to theatre houses to be passive recipients of finished theatrical products. The historical consequence is that Africa is continually faced with eroding identity under the manipulation of western culture and values in all ramifications of economic and social wellbeing. By implication for development in Africa, perhaps, this is why Bishop Desmond Tutu states that, "When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said "let us pray." We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land" (Goodreads Quotes). What a howl of pain by Tutu from the receiving end of African development process which has been experienced as 'cultural genocide'. This echoes Wolfgang Sachs' critique of the rhetoric of development:

The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story; it did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions which catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated. Above all, the hopes and desires which made the idea fly, are now exhausted: development has grown obsolete. (Sachs 1993, 1)

However, it is obvious that, as Sachs further states, "the ruin still stands there and still dominates the scenery like a landmark" (Sachs 1993, 1), coupled with the established divide between countries of the world.

Consistently, historical trends in global relations have instituted definite variables for classifying countries of the world as “developed” or “developing”. Variables such as advanced science and technology, economic prosperity and political stability are determinants of the divide between poor and wealthy nations of the world. Within this classification, countries and by logical extension, people classified as “developing” or “underdeveloped” are striving to attain development albeit preposterously. In Africa, particularly in Nigeria, despite several policy blueprints backed with heavy financial expenditure by successive governments, development remains an endemic problem and the gap between the poor and the rich people, the rural and the urban communities broadens. According to Charity Angya, “development is a term seen as a category fitted for the third world that needs to develop to the state of the first world. It raises pictures of backwardness that need to be addressed in order to reflect what is seen as the desired state” (Angya 2010, 90). Development in this framework entails improvement in the economic and political lives of the people; accessibility to good health care and social services delivery system; accessibility to safe water, hygiene and sanitation; access to functional education facilities; enhanced agricultural facilities; secured and peaceful coexistence. Development programmes with laudable intentions in various sectors which are meant to enhance the economic and social wellbeing of the people in rural communities are ongoing. But the paradox is that most development programmes have failed to achieve their objectives, because they were planned and executed by bureaucrats and technocrats using a top-down approach that excludes the average rural folks in the development process. As a result, over the decades, development programmes meant for rural communities are more often than not met with apathy, because rural folks have lost hope in governments and their agents of development.

In this context, the challenge has always been to deal with underdevelopment and all the consequences it portends through the theory and praxis of Theatre for Development (TfD) in rural communities. The origin of the concept and practice of TfD is rooted in the ideology of revolutionary aesthetics with reference to Marxist tenet, as expressed in the Epic Theatre by Bertolt Brecht, and projected in the works of the Bra-

zilian adult educators, Paulo Freire – *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1972), and Augusto Boal – *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal 1979). Boal believes that education in the third world is a cultural action. For that reason, he advances from the hypothesis that the process of struggle and triumph over oppression in society calls for collective action, combined with the organization of consciousness, awareness and sensitization – the sensitization that community or people, by self-help, create their own culture. His mission has been to demonstrate theatre can be used to create a conscious revolutionary aesthetics through sequential stages of learning, training and teamwork. In view of that, Boal engaged Freire's idea of pedagogy in the world of drama, and by this means, he expanded the prospective of theatre by promoting inclusiveness and active participation of the drama participants, building capacity for them to be able to use drama as a tool for addressing some problems in their own community. Boal's idea of didactic theatre, coupled with the precepts of Bertolt Brecht's *Epic Theatre* canon which gave rise to the revolutionary aesthetics that characterized popular theatre practice in the 1970s, could conceivably be seen as the vanguard of theatre for development in Africa. The genealogy of popular theatre in Africa has been one of struggle by the African people against colonialism, so as to regain control and revitalize their eroding culture. TfD at the onset in Africa was a multifaceted praxis in which novel campaigns of agitation against the forces of western capitalist hegemony were carried out as forms of cultural resistance by Africans in their countries. In this context, the popular theatre experiences in Kenya, South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, Uganda and Zimbabwe are historically notable.

Thus, given that the major preoccupation of governments in Nigeria, particularly the governments in States of the Niger-Benue Valley is focused on rural development. Geographically, “the most expansive topographical region in Nigeria is that of the valleys of the Niger and Benue Rivers...which merge into each other and form a ‘Y’ shape...” ([www.africa.com/Nigeria](http://www.africa.com/Nigeria)). The point where the two great Rivers meet at Lokoja is known as the Niger-Benue Confluence, and the areas are irrigable. The use of the term, ‘Niger-Benue Valley’ has been expressed in the Federal Government of Nigeria agricultural development policy initiatives. The *Leadership* newspaper articulates the official use of

the term when it reports that, “the FG has reiterated its commitment to enhance the volume of food production in the country through the implementation of the Presidential Initiative for the development of the Niger-Benue Valley” (*Leadership* – www.allafrica.com). Thus, this study seeks to evaluate the impact of TfD in the Niger-Benue Valley, given the role of existing tertiary institutions (Universities and Colleges of Educations) offering TfD as academic programme are playing to complement government and other efforts in the development process through community research.

## Evolutionary Trajectory of Theatre for Development in Nigeria

The 1970s in Nigeria and some parts of Africa witnessed growing worries about the nature of elite drama performances that were mounted in public places such as town halls, marketplaces, frontage of banks and post offices, which were not portraying the problems of the average people on the street; as well as not reflecting the real problems of folks living in rural communities. Perhaps, Wole Soyinka’s narrative of such drama performances by the travelling students of drama at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria is lucid when he explains that “this theatre genre in which actors can burst spontaneously on public places like market squares, the post office and in front of banks to stage satirical plays is known as Guerilla Theatre” (Soyinka cited in Illah 2004, 6). According to Michael Etherton, “the campaign for taking theatre out of the University and colonial theatres...performing plays among the people, was perhaps best summed up by Kabwe Kasoma’s slogan: bring theatre to the people, not people to the theatre!” (Etherton 1982, 337). Notably, *Chikwakwa Theatre*, which was a grassroots project, took plays to grassroots communities with focus on health issues and problems of agriculture in Zambia. Sequel to the Zambia template, a similar grassroots TfD movement had commenced in Botswana was called *Laedza Batanani*, the establishment of the Botswana popular theatre campaign was called *Laedza Batanani*, ‘which means the sun is already up. It is time to come and work together.’ The *Laedza Batanani*:

group also made plays about ordinary people's problems including the lack of fertilizer, safe motherhood, exclusive breastfeeding and other child survival rights issues. The plays were then taken to village communities and shown in village squares. After the performances, the people were also asked to comment on what they had watched and to state what their new attitudes would be in the light of the presentation. (Illah 2004, 4)

In 1975, Michael Etherton had participated in both the *Chikwakwa* theatre and the *Laedza Batanani* theatre in Zambia and Botswana respectively, came to Nigeria and collaborated with members of the ABU collective notably Brian Crow, Tony Humphries and Salifu Bappa to initiate Tfd movement as part of academic activities of the Drama Unit under the Department of English at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The Samaru Project and the Community Theatre Workshop were Tfd based academic courses at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. On the one hand, the Samaru Project was designed as an introductory Tfd course. For this reason, students would flood the University satellite village – Samaru, to collect data (information gathering), take the data back to the University campus, where they would analyze and prioritize the collected data, and subsequently create drama skits based on the information that was gathered from the community. Thereafter, the students would take the developed plays back to Samaru village and present them in Sarkin Pawa and Hayin Dogo areas of the community. According to Michael Etherton,

Our approach was to get students to work with ordinary people in a provincial community – nurses, clerks, extension officers. Students were seen to have huge benefits of education. They were to make these benefits available to the less privileged by staging plays for less privileged surrounding communities... (Etherton cited in Illah 2004, 5)

In this context, the Community Theatre Workshop was designed as an advanced scope of the Samaru Project, and target communities were selected for the workshops that would have students living in homesteads for a few days. Since inception, Soba and Maska workshops were the first set of workshops that were conducted amongst the successive Community Theatre Workshops at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Significantly, the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, theatre for development models of taking theatre to the people (Samaru Project), and making theatre with the people (Community Theatre Workshop), proliferated in other tertiary institutions such as Colleges of Education and Universities within the middle-belt region of Nigeria, and to elsewhere from the early 1980s to present times. The proliferation of TfD movement in the region, particularly in the Niger-Benue Valley was made possible by the pioneering efforts of student participants in the Samaru Projects, and the Community Theatre Workshops that were conducted at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in the mid and late 1970s. Notable pioneer student participants of the Samaru Project and Community Theatre Workshop at ABU Zaria include Steve Ogah Abah, James Atu Alachi, Iorwuese Hagher, Salifu Bhappa, Jonathan Okpanachi, Amirikpa Oyigbenu, and John Sani Illah. The aforementioned scholars and practitioners, apart from Steve Ogah Abah, and Salifu Bhappa who took over from Michael Etherton to establish a continuum of TfD movement at ABU Zaria, others went ahead to teach and practice TfD in other tertiary institutions within the middle-belt region and elsewhere in Nigeria. A significant benchmark achievement by the post-Etherton TfD scholars and practitioners at the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in the year 2000, was the establishment of Theatre for Development Centre (TfDC). It was established as the research and training centre of the Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA), an organizational network of people in Nigeria who are using theatre and the performing arts for participatory development activities. The TfDC was established with the mission to practice

(...) social development by sharing with people inside and outside the academic context the wealth of experience with participatory development strategies built since 1989 when NPTA was founded. It similarly seeks to share the expertise of scholars in the ABU Department of Theatre and Performing Arts involved in developing and studying participatory development techniques since 1975.

(<http://www.tfdc.org.ng/about-us.php>)

Unarguably, the evolution of trends in alternative theatre practice at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, initiated a transitional period “on the platform of the Samaru Project, and then progressed into the Community Theatre, that ultimately gave rise to Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that is not, however, bound by the university thrust to work with communities, using theatre as a tool for development.” (Chukwu-Okoronkwo 2012, 63). Overall, it is the trends from the beginnings of TfD practice at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria that “played a pioneering role in establishing Theatre for Development as an academic field of study and action in Nigeria” (<http://www.tfdc.org/about-us.php>).

At the dawn of the 1980s, from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in the Zazzau Emirate of the northern region of Nigeria, the concept and practice of Theatre for Development spread to other tertiary institutions in the Niger-Benue Valley. Notably, the Niger-Benue Valley TfD experiences in the early 1980s was initially influenced by the *Wasan Manoma* project of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. James Atu Alachi and Iorwuese Harry Hagher who participated in the *Wasan Manoma* project were primarily responsible for the birth and growth of TfD in The Niger-Benue Valley. Alachi introduced Theatre Arts as an academic course into the National Certificate of Education (NCE) programme at College of Education (COE) Katsina-Ala in the early 1980s. And one of the core stress areas of the NCE programme was Community Theatre, or Theatre for Development as it is known currently. Hagher who was at that time the Director of Benue State Council for Arts and Culture had organized the first Benue Theatre for Development workshop in 1980. The success of the TfD workshop prompted Hagher to partner with the Department of Theatre Arts, College of Education, Katsina-Ala, which was about to take its first set of students out for the mandatory Community Theatre workshop as part of their NCE programme. Possibly, this pioneer TfD effort marked the first TfD programme jointly conducted by an academic institution, the government, and non-governmental agencies in the Niger-Benue Valley. Tar Ahura who participated majorly during the second Benue TfD workshop had joined the academic staff of College of Education Katsina-Ala from Benue State Ministry of Education, Makurdi. Other members of academic staff who piloted the affairs of TfD

programme at COE Katsina-Ala was Jonathan Okpanachi, and Iortiom Mude. These pioneering efforts at COE Katsina-Ala extended to Makurdi, the Benue State capital at the inception of academic programme at Benue State University (BSU), Makurdi, in 1993. Alachi who had introduced Theatre Arts programme at COE Katsina-Ala, was equally responsible for the introduction of TfD at BSU Makurdi, when he assumed duty at the University as the pioneering Head of Department.

In the early 1990s when Kogi State was created; building on the ABU Zaria and COE Katsina-Ala templates, Jonathan Okpanachi, Awam David Menegbe and Sunday Williams Onogu joined the staff of College of Education, Ankpa, in their State of origin, to continue the TfD movement there as academic programme. The College of Education at Ankpa was established by the Kogi State Government in the early 1990s. Essentially, the academic programmes of the COE Katsina-Ala were adopted at COE Ankpa. Staff of the Department who relocated to Ankpa under the leadership of Mr. Jonathan Okpanachi continued with the TfD academic activities. Prominent among the COE Ankpa team who later relocated to Kogi State University to continue with TfD activities were David Awam Menegbe and Sunday Williams Onogu. In Nasarawa State University, TfD was introduced as an academic programme by the pioneering Head of the Department of Theatre and Cultural Studies, Professor Emmanuel Samu Dandaura, at the inception of academic programme in the Department. Overall, the historical trajectory of TfD practice in the Niger-Benue Valley has its origin in the practice at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, which was initiated by Michael Ehterton and the Zaria Collective in the mid 1970s.

## Impact assessment of Theatre for Development academic practice in the Niger-Benue Valley

The evaluation design for assessing the impact of TfD academic practice in the Niger-Benue valley within the period of 1993 to 2013, which culminates to two (2) decades, was developed by the researcher using qualitative and quantitative research methods that are common to sociological research. These include Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Semi-Structured Interview (SSI) and Community Scorecard (CSC). Six (6) tertiary

institutions in the area involving two (2) State Universities and two (2) Colleges of Education running Tfd programme were selected for the IE. They are Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK); Benue State University (BSU), Makurdi, and Kogi State University (KSU), Anyigba. The Colleges include College of Education (COE), Akwanga in Nasarawa State; College of Education (COE), Katsina-Ala in Benue State; and College of Education (COE), Ankpa in Nasarawa State. In the same way, six (6) Tfd participant rural communities which were facilitated by the selected tertiary institutions in the area were also selected for the IE with 50 respondents for each Tfd project community. Respondents were selected for the IE exercise with consideration of demographic factors such as age, gender, social status, occupation and literacy level. Table one below shows the statistical analysis of the IE selection. The selected Tfd project areas was based on random selection across the span Tfd of 1993 to 2013, given that academic Tfd projects are carried out annually, more or less as a rehash of curricular activities within the framework of academic calendar for tertiary institutions. On this basis, available literatures and field reports on past Tfd projects conducted by the select tertiary institutions showed that the IE period in question indicated significant commonality amongst tertiary institutions in terms of Tfd concept and praxis. Except for some points of divergence in methodological application which will be discussed in the light of findings emanating from the IE exercise.

**Table 1: Institutions Tfd Project Communities and Number of Respondents**

<b>TertiaryInstitutions</b>	<b>Tfd Area and Project Year</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>
Benue Sate University	Anune Project 1997	30
Kogi State University	Ojikpandala Project 2005	30
Nasarawa State University	Panda-Karu Project 2013	30
College of Education Akwanga	Angwan Zaria Project 2012	30
College of Education Ankpa	Ogodo Project 1996	30
College of Education Katsina-Ala	AkeriorUtange Project 1993	30
6	6	180

Source: IE Field Work 2019

The tools that were used during the IE exercise include Focused Group Discussion (FGD), Semi-Structured Interview (SSI), Community Score Card (CSI) and Visual Image Survey (CSI). The IE quantitative tools

include the use of table and simple percentage statistics for analyzing collected and collated data from the field work. In this context, the next section will deal with the statistical presentation of IE findings in response to the set IE questions, and the analyses of IE findings that follows.

## CSC Data Presentation and Analysis

The impact evaluation draws on findings from Community Scorecard (CS), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Semi-Structured Interview (SSI). Community Scorecard was used to investigate the status of infra-structural changes in communities, which is in response to IE question one (i) as shown in the table below:

**Table 2: On IE Question One – Did changes take place in your community?**

Community	Respondents	No	Yes	Indifference
Anune	30	2	26	2
Panda-Karu	30	1	20	9
Angwan Zaria	30	3	25	2
Ogodo	30	2	20	8
AkeriorUtange	30	2	26	2
Ojikpandala	30	1	24	5
<b>6</b>	<b>180 (100%)</b>	<b>11 (36.6%)</b>	<b>141 (78.3%)</b>	<b>28 (15.5%)</b>

Source IE Field work 2019

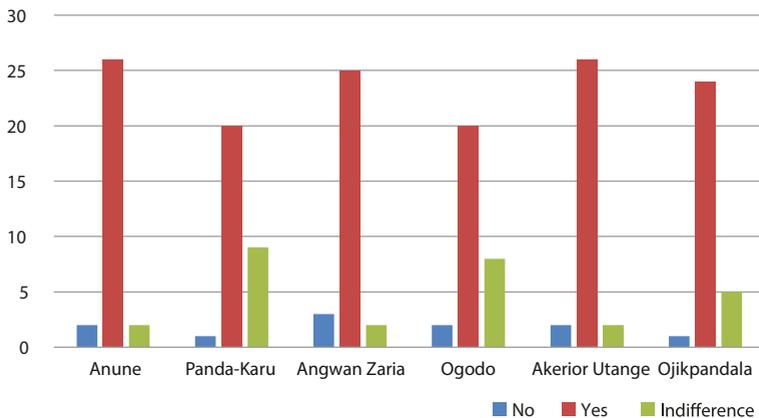


Table one above in response to IE question one shows a high total CSC score of 141 representing 78.3 % of the total of 180 (100 %) IE sample population is for respondents that said, 'Yes', which implies that changes took place in their communities respectively. A low CSC score of 11 representing 36.6 % is for respondents that said 'No'. Another CSC score of 28 representing 15.5 % is for respondents who were **Indifferent** in response to the question of whether changes took place in their communities.

**Table 3: On IE Question Two – Did the attitude of your community towards development changed?**

Community	Respondents	No	Yes	Indifference
Anune	30	22	3	5
Panda-Karu	30	25	2	3
Angwan Zaria	30	27	1	2
Ogodo	30	28	1	1
AkeriorUtange	30	27	2	1
Ojikpandala	30	25	1	4
<b>6</b>	<b>180 (100%)</b>	<b>154 (85.5%)</b>	<b>10 (5.5%)</b>	<b>16 (8.8%)</b>

Source: IE Field work 2019

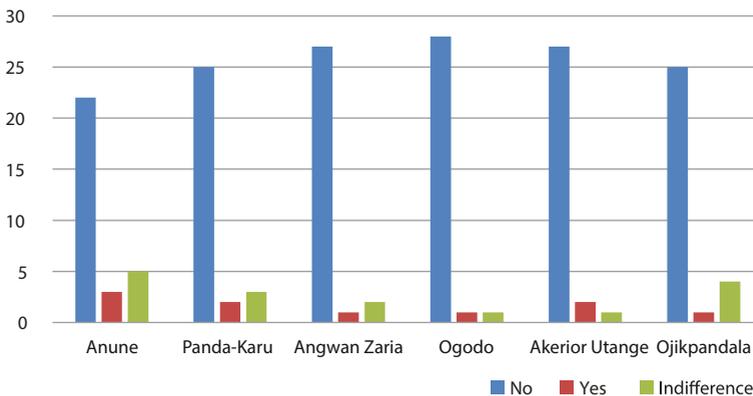


Table three above equally affirms a high CSC score of 154 representing 85.5 % of the total IE sample population of 180 (100 %) is for respondents who categorically said 'No'. Variably, the table shows a low CSC score of 10 representing 5.5 % for respondents who said 'Yes'. The table

shows another low CSC score of 16 representing 8.8 % of respondents who were **‘Indifferent’**.

**Table 4: On IE Question Three – Did the changes in your community take place as a result of the TfD intervention that was carried out?**

Community	Respondents	No	Yes	Indifference
Anune	30	30	0	0
Panda-Karu	30	29	1	0
Angwan Zaria	30	30	0	0
Ogodo	30	27	2	1
AkeriorUtange	30	28	1	1
Ojikpandala	30	29	1	0
<b>6</b>	<b>180 = 100 %</b>	<b>173 = 96.1 %</b>	<b>5 = 2.7 %</b>	<b>2 = 1.1 %</b>

Source: IE Field work 2019

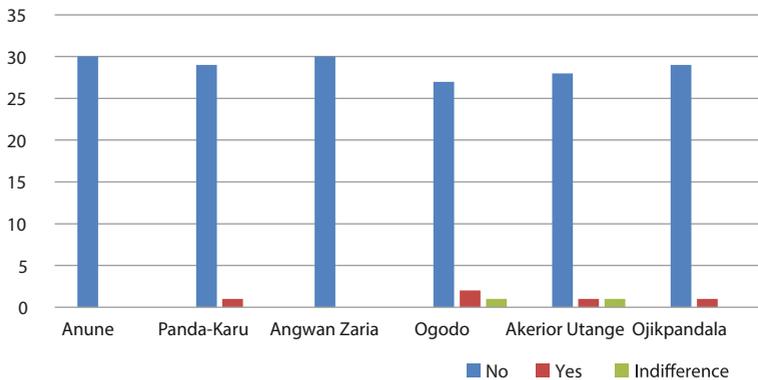


Table four above shows a high CSC score of disapproval with 173 respondents representing 96.1 % of the total IE sample population of 180(100 %) is for those who said, **‘No’**. Only a low CSC score of 5 respondents representing 2.7 % indicates those who said, **‘Yes’**. A very low CSC score of 2 representing 1.1 % is for respondents that were **‘Indifferent’**.

**Table 5: On IE Question Four: Did the changes in your community take place as an outcome of other source?**

Community	Respondents	No	Yes	Indifference
Anune	30	2	27	1
Panda-Karu	30	1	29	0
Angwan Zaria	30	0	30	0
Ogodo	30	1	28	1
AkeriorUtange	30	1	28	1
Ojikpandala	30	1	29	0
<b>6</b>	<b>180 = 100%</b>	<b>6 = 3.3%</b>	<b>171 = 95%</b>	<b>3 = 1.6%</b>

Source: IE Field work 2019

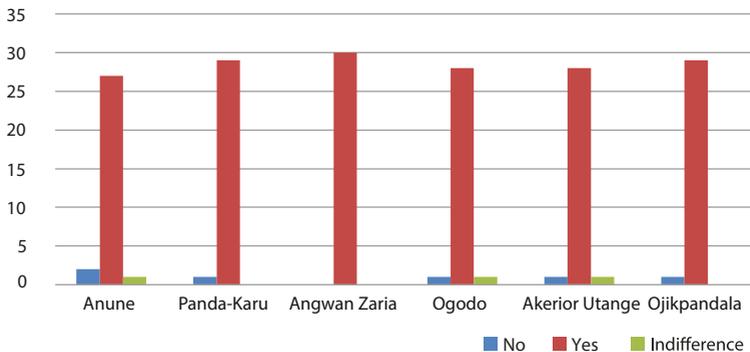


Table six above shows an affirmative high CSC score of 171 representing 95% of the total IE sample population for respondents that said, 'Yes'. A very low CSC score of 6 representing 3.3% indicates respondents that said, 'No'. An insignificant CSC score of 3 representing 1.6% is for respondents that were 'Indifferent'.

The foregoing statistics of the CSC findings in summation indicates an imbalance between Tfd projects that were carried in recipient communities in the Niger-Benue Valley between 1993 and 2013. However, the next section will determine in qualitative terms key corroborative opinions that were collated from the IE exercise.

## Discussion of Findings from the Impact Assessment

The FGD, SSI and CSC findings provide substantive information on the questions of: What were the external factors that brought about changes in the area? Did the TfD drama method impacted effectively in its immediate feasibility? Were recipient communities empowered through TfD method during workshops? The use of these tools for the IE goes further to corroborate the findings of CSC as quantified in the preceding statistical tables. A key opinion that was unanimously agreed upon FGD discussants drawn from the 6 sample communities during IE was in response to external factors that were influential to changes in communities within the area between 1993 and 2013. One of the FGD discussants sums up the popular viewpoint when says that:

We are in a democratic dispensation of governance with successive governments and politicians coming and going with various development policy blueprints and policy implementation programmes over the years. Besides, elected politicians in State House of Assemblies, Federal House of Representative and Senate are equally involved in constituency projects in their various constituencies. Corporate demonstrating their corporate social responsibilities (CSR), nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), Faith based organizations (FBOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), groups and individual volunteers have also influenced changes in terms of infrastructure, education, agriculture, health, sanitation and safe drinking water in rural communities. (Terkimbi Terna, FGD@Anune, Benue State)

This FGD finding corroborates the CSC finding on IE question one that says, “did changes take place in the area within 20 years?” however, the inference here is that such changes were not as a result of the TfD projects that were conducted in the domain within the span of twenty years, 1993–2013. Further probing during SSI with respondents provided significant answers to the IE questions of whether the TfD drama method impacted effectively in its immediate feasibility? And whether recipient TfD communities in the domain were empowered through TfD method

during workshops? In response one, a general opinion that was collated from the respondents during FGD shows that:

Even though changes take place in the domain within twenty years, and such changes were not as a result of the TfD projects that were conducted in the area, and for the fact that such changes take place through top-down approach by agents of development without the people participating fully and actively, the attitude of communities in the area towards development is emphatically apathetic (Danjuma Tanko, FGD@Panda-Karu, Nasarwa State)

Corroborating this finding from FGD, one of the SSI respondents at Ogodo in Kogi State attested to the fact that rural infrastructures are dilapidating, especially when it comes to maintenance culture. The respondent reiterates that:

Successive governments have executed laudable infrastructural projects in rural communities in 20 years. However, such laudable infrastructures such as roads, primary healthcare facilities and educational facilities are now dilapidating due to lack of maintenance culture. (Ojotule Ocholi, SSI@Ogodo, Kogi State)

However, there was an affirmative consensus of opinion by discussants during the FGD and SSI sessions on the effectiveness of the TfD drama-based projects in their immediate feasibilities. But they expressed disappointment as regards the issues of empowerment, given that the TfD projects were short-lived in their immediate feasibilities without established sustainable mechanisms that would have given base groups in communities the capacity to carry on such TfD projects after the exit of the academic catalyst groups. This observation has implication on TfD as an empowerment tool in the development process. The hypothesis is that, if community base groups are empowered with TfD skills during community workshops, they will have the capacity to continue with the drama making process in addressing development issues thereafter. This was what James Atu Alachi did with the *High-Level Kwagh-hir* group in Naka, Benue State, in 1996, when members of the group took

part in the planning, execution and monitoring of the health based TfD workshop in collaboration with UNICEF. The *High Kwagh-hir* group continued with the TfD project for about two years. However, the group later disbanded for lack of fund and other logistics to sustain the project. Furthermore, James Atu Alachi and the Department of Theatre Arts, BSU Makurdi could not continue with the Naka project for two reasons: (i) inability of UNICEF to sustain the sponsorship of the project; (ii) the BSU Department of Theatre Arts not able to source for alternative sponsor for the project. Just as James Atu Alachi puts it in a discussion with the evaluator, “sponsorship is a central issue in our quest for sustainable, viable and result oriented theatre for development projects”. TfD as an academic programme cannot be said to have long lasting impact on the people for lack of sustainability. The idea of sustainability here presupposes that TfD academic TfD projects should be designed within an enduring feasibility matrix that has long term rather than short term effect on participant communities. One effective way of achieving sustainability in academic TfD practice is through the establishment of community action plan (CAP) as part of the post-performance discussion for further action in making choices and finding alternatives to community development problems.

## Conclusion

Inferring from the preceding IE, it is observable that academic TfD projects are usually carried out with the set objectives of mobilizing communities, creating awareness and sensitizing participants on community self-help towards addressing developmental issues. In addition, TfD post-performance discussion session can be used to establish community action plan (CAP) for further community action on development issues. The establishment of CAP during post-performance discussion during TfD workshop is expected to be followed through by development stakeholders, which should bring about the realization of the desired community real needs in the long-term feasibility. This will not just provide sustainability of TfD projects vis-à-vis medium-term effects, but feasible long term indicators for follow-through exercises on TfD project outcome. The following suggestions below are made for

feasible and effective formative, summative and outcome evaluations of academic Tfd projects in tertiary institutions:

Tfd can lift community expectations for the purpose of feasible development action, therefore, facilitating team should make sure that realistic, issue-specific objectives for programme implementation are established as part of the intervention. This should be clarified during advocacy visits to target communities.

The facilitating team should make sure that at the end of a Tfd project, issues of community action plan and follow-up action are discussed, and a committee for the implementation of the action plan involving community members should be established. Thereafter, the committee members should take early action to ensure that needed implementation resources are in place for the execution of CAP.

Tfd scholars and practitioners should strive to organize conferences and training workshops that are focused on emerging Tfd trends. This will enhance professional skills and equally build capacities for community organizing and engagement activities in the development process. Tfd scholar and practitioners that are concerned with Tfd follow-through activities (monitoring and evaluation) should ensure that community members participate in the evaluation exercise during field work. This can be achieved by forming evaluation committees in sample communities. This should comprise community members who are willing and are committed to participate; and are connected to community-based organizations and individuals involved in community development projects.

The use of theatre, video and still camera for evaluation has the possibility of criticizing, confronting, and provoking negative emotions. Therefore, an evaluator must be careful with his tools in assessing or carrying out visual image survey (VIS) in sample communities. Assessors must have the community-based evaluation committee support and protection. In this regard, an evaluator using still camera and video technology for assessment exercise should allow community members to familiarize with the technology and the purpose for which it is meant. This will bring about trust and confidence during evaluation exercise.

Departments of Theatre, Performing and Creative Arts running Tfd as part of their curricular activities should organize training workshops

for organizations, groups and individuals who are interested in theatre-based approach to community development. This will enable such Department to be involved in training people that would go on to train others in using TfD for development purposes. It will go a long bringing about the desired empowerment in communities.

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# A Situational analysis of Theatre for Development in Tanzania

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## Setting the scene

The main argument of this paper is that Theatre for Development (TfD) in Tanzania since its inception in 1970s until the first half of 2000 was extremely vibrant. However, from the second half of 2000 to the present time, its practice dwindles. My research idea resulted from my own experience as a student at the University of Dar es Salaam in the Department of Creative Arts (then the Department of Fine and Performing arts) between 2002 and 2005 and later as an employee in the same University and the same department. When I arrived at the Department in 2002 as a student, TfD was incredibly vibrant subsequent to TfD activities which took place in the department which entailed rehearsals, workshops and live performances which were organized from time to time by staff together with progressive students in the department. Not only did the practices assist students to comprehend the TfD process but also it was an opportunity for them to know one another better, a familiarization that had positive effects on their studies. Moreover, TfD that burgeoned in the department assisted students to familiarize themselves with instructors earlier before classes began. A prior familiarization with instructors was necessary as it mitigated tension and fright that a vast majority of university students tended to develop when studies commenced.

If easing students' tension is trivial, TfD practice organized regularly in the department provided students with a chance to familiarize themselves with the university life swiftly and effortlessly before the situation became unredeemable. This is especially the case of students whose origin was countryside. TfD practices, which stemmed from research, exposed new students to the university culture earlier and left them with options to choose the lifestyle that suited them best. Indeed, as a

student in the department, I noted that TfD performances about university life which were performed during the arrival, aided students to familiarize with things that would probably take them a year or more to comprehend. The TfD performance, *Nyamwasi wa Mlimani* which literally means Nyamwasi of the main Campus is evident of this. The theme of the performance was built around a girl who arrived innocently at the University of Dar es Salaam from an anonymous village. Because of associating herself with ill-behaved students, she fell short to fulfil her academic ambitions. As a result, she engaged in unhealthy relationships, which subsequently led to her discontinuation from studies. *Nyamwasi wa Mlimani* taught new students including me a lot. It was an eye opener to any student who intended to use his education to succeed in life. This is just one instance that testifies the value of TfD. There are a lot to tell with regard to the benefits of TfD to the university students and Tanzania community at large. Surprisingly, despite all the past achievements, the current trend demonstrates evidently that TfD has outlived its usefulness. It is the intention of this study to do an in-depth examination of the dynamics attributing to this declining trend.

## Etymological view of TfD in Tanzania

Similar to other countries in Africa, TfD in Tanzania can be traced back to the 1970s during which it began as a travelling theatre (Mlama 1991). Penina Mlama and Amandina Lihamba are honoured for pioneering the travelling theatre in Tanzania in the late 1970s. The travelling theatre was conducted in a way that researchers identified the village facing the problem. Then, they travelled to the village to conduct research and went back to the University where the analysis of data was done and an unfinished play was prepared. Thereafter, the unfinished play was taken back to the village where it was staged. Villagers were invited to assume some roles and participate in the discussion (Kvam 2012, Kid 1980, Kram n.d). Travelling theatre did not last long for what Mda (1987) labels that it was a top-down approach which involved people from the grassroots during the last minutes. The drawbacks of the travelling theatre led to the establishment of TfD, which allowed, and still allows, people to be served to fully participate in the process. This means that

people from the grassroots were involved from identifying the problem, conducting research, analysing data, creating performance, doing rehearsals, taking part in the performance and post-performance discussion to the implementation stage and the evaluation. Until this far, the TfD approach is considered as the best approach ever that involves people from the grassroots in all stages of their development (Mlama 1991). Although TfD is highly rated as the best tool, as earlier cited, its practice appears to lessen. It is within this background that this study was conducted. In striving to precisely argue the case, the study was guided by two research questions as follows: Why does TfD practice decline dramatically? What is it that should be done to redeem TfD from falling apart?

## The theoretical consideration

This paper uses a people centred approach, which draws from the Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire (2000) who insists on the importance of communication between the learner and the teacher in the course of learning. Freire's ideas to learning inspired the Brazilian theatre and director, Augusto Boal. In his book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal raises the question of creating a space that would allow the oppressor and the oppressed to come together to discuss problems facing them towards searching for solutions. Bhabha (1994) calls a space a 'third space,' or space 'in-between,' characterized by tremendous openness and which offers freedom to the oppressor and the oppressed to compromise, contest and negotiate meaning (Egger 2013, Braidotti 1994).

The people-centred approach insists on the importance of placing at the centre the views of the people to be served (Daley and Angulo 1990). The approach is against the top-down technique of participation which relies on a higher authority to determine goals and the way forward toward achievement (Kate 2018). The people-centred approach puts emphasis on the people to be served to be systematically involved in every aspect of their development from planning to evaluation of interventions. Being involved in each stage develops in them a sense of dignity, empowerment and control of the project (Daley and Angulo 1990: 93). This study uses the people centred approach as a window

through which the level of involvement of beneficiaries in TfD-related activities is examined. Similarly, the approach is deployed to examine the level of involvement of people from grassroots and its impacts on the growth of TfD.

## Methodological issues

This study was conducted in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma. The two regions were chosen because it is where the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and the University of Dodoma (UDOM) are geographically located. Whereas at the University of Dodoma – Department of Theatre and Media, 2 members of staff were tapped, at the University of Dar es Salaam – Department of Creative Arts 5 members of staff and 12 students were recruited as respondents for this research. Dar es Salaam was selected because most of the stakeholders interviewed for this study reside in the city. The word stakeholder in this study stands for theatre lovers, progressive students, theatre majors' alumni and active theatre artists in the industry. Recruitment of staff and stakeholders was motivated by their availability and willingness to participate in the study and the nature of information the study intended to gather (Jupp 2006, Laws et al. 2003). The selection of respondents was purposive grounded on the unique qualities respondents have had in response to the subject matter under study.

As for the methods, this research used a documentary review and a series of interview methods involving focus group, telephonic and in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with theatre stakeholders and theatre professionals from the University of Dar es Salaam. Dawson (2002) believes that in-depth interviews are great when the researcher wants to gain a comprehensive view of the topic under study. Certainly, the method was viable based on the nature of this study which was to gain an overall view as regards to the TfD's dramatic decline. In-depth interviews were outstanding for they allowed flexibility between the researcher and the researched meaning that the researched were free to select a place and time they thought convenient for interviews. The method made it possible for the researcher to follow her interviewees in their offices, in public spaces and other venues

they deemed comfortable. Telephonic interviews were used to gather data with theatre professionals from the University of Dodoma because of distance. The method made it possible their views to be included in this study irrespective of location. Sincerely speaking, telephone interviews were indeed fiscal and timesaving because data were gathered without commuting.

Focus group interview was employed to collect data with 12 students from the University of Dar es Salaam, Department of Creative Arts. At the time during which they were involved in this study, students were in their third year pursuing a Bachelor degree in Theatre Arts. The reason for selecting 12 students was because the class had 12 students and all showed willingness to take part in the study. One focus group interview was conducted because 12 is allowable number for administering focus group according to Laws et al. (2003). Indeed, the focus group was outstanding because it enabled the researcher to gather a large amount of data in a fairly short period of time (Dawson 2002). The last method but not in importance was documentary review. The method was applied to identify the gap, search for theories and back up information gathered for this study.

## Data analysis and presentation

Whereas researchers who conducted studies on the state of Tfd associate the declining trend of Tfd with donors, their results do not tally with results from this study. Of the 24 respondents interviewed for this study, 17 saw that donors are not the dilemma hampering Tfd from taking its pace. Donors are still there and could still fund Tfd projects if they are convinced to do so. The causal factors that respondents underscored varied from lack of commitment of staff to write proposals, lack of ideology, self-centred behaviour, government appointments, relocation of experts, lack of commitment of the government to the growth of Tfd, limited convincing power by the stakeholders and reluctance to using Tfd to solve problems. The points are investigated at length below.

Responding to the question why Tfd is ceasing, of 5 professionals interviewed, 4 raised the question of lack of commitment of staff to write proposals for Tfd projects. Everyone waits for someone else

to write a proposal. Thereafter, to be called to join the project as performers or facilitators once the funds are on the table. Indeed, this was noted in TUSEME Tfd project. The funds were mobilized by two professors: Amandina Lihamba and Penina Mlama and others joined the project later in different capacities as organizers, facilitators, secretaries, treasures, judges, to name only a few. The habit of waiting for someone to write a proposal and others to join later has contributed to the decline of Tfd practice. This became even more serious when the professors who devoted to write proposals for Tfd and other related projects retired from work. After their retirement, the culture of writing proposal continued. However, most of the proposals which were written bear no resemblance to Tfd. Those few which resembled Tfd were written as individual projects. Shule (2010) compares individualistic attitude to the neo-liberalism ontology. She contends that it invaded Tanzania around the 1990s and its aim was to disintegrate communities instead of integrating.

A new custom of staff writing proposals as individuals was done not without a cost. Its impacts were not easily noticed until the owners of the projects repatriate to other institutions. When they repatriated, they went together with their projects and it was not easy to redeem the projects for none of the members knew anything about the projects. Neither did they participate in writing the proposals. Nor were they involved in earmarking the funder. It is on this account that Daley and Angulo (1990: 93) insist on Tfd project being people-centred which means that beneficiaries of the Tfd projects should be fully involved from the planning to the evaluation of the project. Not only will their full participation create awareness of what is happening but also develop in them a sense of ownership and control of the project in question.

Some of the respondents interviewed for this study associated the ceasing of Tfd practice with a manpower vacuum that happens when academicians retire but no recruitment is done to replace them. The vacuum was also associated with other members of staff who were groomed for Tfd issues but repatriated to other institutions for varied responsibilities. Professor Frowin Nyoni, for example, was well groomed for Tfd issues. In 2015 repatriated to Dodoma University

where he inaugurated a new department, the Department of Theatre and Media studies. He was fully dedicated not only to teaching Tfd related courses but also applied it to solve problems happened around the university. The *Nyamwasi wa Mlimani* I cited above is an example of a Tfd project facilitated by him. Except for *Nyamwasi wa Mlimani*, Frowin Nyoni facilitated *Karibuni Wananchi* (welcome citizens) and SONA Tfd projects (Koch 2008). Apart from other Tfd projects facilitated by the two professors, the Tfd projects facilitated by Professor Nyoni were among famous Tfd projects in Tanzania. SONA, for example, was the Tfd project whose purpose was to educate society on the devastating effects of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Although SONA was meant for Chamwino Community in Dodoma, His team toured with the play in diverse parts of the country including the University of Dar es Salaam. At the time SONA was staged in the Department, I was in my second year. Except for Frowin Nyoni, Godfley Mungereza is remembered for being among Tfd resource persons well trained in Tfd issues. He too, did not stay longer before he was appointed to a position as an Executive Director of Arts Council. Herbert Makoye was another well-groomed Tfd resource person but in 2016 was appointed to a position as a principal of the Bagamoyo College of Arts, the position which he assumes to date. Those remained who the department believes are capable of taking Tfd further, consider themselves as half-prepared seeing that as they endeavoured to keep in touch with experts, it was already too late. The experts had left.

Tfd is among practices which permit democratic participation of everyone regardless of his/her situation. Operating in conformity with government policies, the anticipation was that the government would have been in the frontline to promote this vital practice which gives the voiceless voice. Surprisingly, there are many uncertainties on the part of the government in regards to promotion of Tfd. This is palpable through the TUSEME Tfd project which the government adopted in 1999 (Mkumbo et al. 2015). TUSEME is a Theatre for development project which emerged for the purpose of creating awareness among girls on various issues that appeared to hamper their social and academic performances (Njewe 2018). TUSEME began in 1996 in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts and was established by Amandina

Lihamba and Penina Mloma. At the time during which TUSEME operated under the supervision of the department, it was very vibrant. Girls who experienced TUSEME first-hand appreciated it for changing not only their lives but also lives of hundreds of other girls. It has been observed that since the government adopted the programme, it is hard to note whether or not TUSEME still exists in schools. If it does, it is no longer vibrant as it was used to be before its adoption. Some people, however claim that TUSEME still exists but not at the same pace. A gradual decline of TUSEME is associated with government's failure to adopt the project effectively. Yet others associate TUSEME's declining trend with government for adapting a practice without taking into account the original vision and mission for which TUSEME was established. This is why its promotion is intricate. Thanks to international Organizations, at least, they have discovered the value of TUSEME and started to use it as a vehicle for promoting women's rights in Tanzania (Interview 2021).

What has been left as a memorable product of Tfd of which the department is proud of is Theatre for Development course. Since its inception, Tfd course was designed to be taught in the third year of study while in the first and the second year in some theatre courses, Tfd surfaces as a topic. The focus group interview I administered with third year students, however indicates that exposing students to Tfd as a course in the third year of study is rather too late. Based on its significance, they suggested Tfd to be taught to the first, second and third year students as an independent course. They proposed that in first year students should be introduced to the history of Tfd within Tanzania and beyond. When they are in second year, more advanced stuff should be taught and in third year the course should be practical oriented. It was suggested alternatively that if one course system is maintained, then it should be taught much earlier so that students get enough time for application of the knowledge under their instructors' mentorship. They weighted the course as the backbone of theatre studies, thus students require enough exposure to it for optimal proficiency.

Extending the discussion on the Tfd course and the manner it is conducted, students were also critical about the fashion the course is taught. Their opinion was that the teaching is too theoretical even in issues that need to be taught practically. Citing example of Tfd stages

as an example, they remarked that their presentation is much more theoretically than practical. They argued that the stages are key to understanding Tfd. Therefore, the pragmatic approach is necessary as it will consequently enable students to use it to solve problems facing communities. They argued that if the teaching approach would not change, the implementation of Tfd would continue to be unmet dream.

The course content was another concern raised by the students for it has crammed a lot of Tfd issues happening within the country, Africa and beyond. All these require being covered in fifteen weeks of the semester. The period was considered too short to adequately cover everything that appears in the course outline. Because of this, they find themselves rushed which in turn leads to poor understanding of the content. The overloaded course was associated with lack of involvement of students in the early period of designing the course. If they had, they would have raised all these issues. Thanks to review of courses going on at present. Students are systematically involved. If involvement of students continues, would render the department to come up with the course outlines that reflect students' demands and that of the society (Freire 2000).

Others associated silent death of Tfd with the lack of ideology because ideology guides action. If there is no ideology, there is no action. The ideology here signifies the plan. The plan has to be put in place to ensure the survival of Tfd. If the plan is not thought earlier, Tfd which is the department's own baby and its variant TUSEME will demise in front of department eyes. Indeed, Tfd is one of activities that mark the Department and the University in general. Thus, there is a great need to honour this achievement by all means.

## Final remarks

This paper intended to provide a general overview of the dynamics contributing to a gradual decline of Tfd in Tanzania, in particular, the Department of Creative Arts of the University of Dar es Salaam. The Department was chosen because it is where Tfd was born in Tanzania and spread in other places through performances and outreach programmes. Since Tfd began in the Department of creative Arts, the

objective was to examine how its practice is sustained at the University of Dar es Salaam and across Tanzania. UDOM was tapped because Tfd is taught as a course. This study has discovered that the Tfd practice is in decline. The study discloses several factors spearheading its downturn, namely lack of commitment of staff to write proposals, self-centredness, structure of Tfd course and lack of ideology to guide actions. The paper argues that Tfd is beneficial not only to the university but also to the Tanzanian society in general. This is because of its peculiar approach which involves people from grassroots in all stages of their development from searching for problems to evaluation of the project. To ensure maintenance of the practice at the university and elsewhere in Tanzania, the paper suggests the structure of Tfd course to be revisited. One of the ways to bring about changes is to introduce fieldwork item to the Tfd course so that students get a chance to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. To make students acquire this necessary practice at their fingertips, as they wait for fieldwork, the university can establish a Tfd learning hub around the University where students can go and put their theoretical knowledge into practice. To make Tfd steadfast, the government through the Ministry of Information, Sports and Culture may be approached to fund Tfd projects. It is suggested that the government should support Tfd because its goals are in conformity with those of the government. Tfd promotes democracy and development, so does the government. Lack of readiness to writing proposals can be resolved by each staff to develop a sense of responsibility to write proposals for the department. The move cannot begin from nowhere. One has to start others may follow later. Consulting previous Tfd experts is indispensable as the department searches for a starting point. This will bring back the longstanding culture of department having its own projects. TUSEME and SANAA KWA WATOTO are good examples of departmental projects. These projects, among other things, took the department where it is now. Lack of ideology can be resolved by the department setting its long term and short term missions and visions which will ensure growth of Tfd and other relevant activities in the Department.

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