

The Challenges of Theatre Workshop in Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education

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Abstract

This paper seeks to identify the challenges of theatre workshop at Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education in Benue State with a view of overcoming them. In doing this, the researchers adopted the primary and secondary methods of carrying out research with interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) and library materials as sources of collecting data for the research. The paper looks at the conventional approach to theatre workshop and the methodology adopted by the two Colleges of Education under study in carrying out theatre workshop. It identifies lack of funding, equipment/facilities, man power and interest from Lecturers, as well as time/disruption of academic calendar as the main challenges of theatre workshop in the two Colleges of Education. Furthermore, it identifies: high propensity of training quality teachers, source of revenue generation and tool for Conscientization and development as the cardinal prospects of theatre workshop. The paper recommends more funding by the College management for Theatre Arts Department, motivation of theatre Lecturers handling theatre

workshop and making Theatre Arts a double major course among others to avert these challenges.

Keywords: Theatre, theatre workshop, college of education, training and challenges.

Introduction

Drama and Theatre have remained one of the basic tools for exploring and expressing human feelings and predicaments. This is because, theatre is a collaborative art; rich in history and it speaks to our contemporary society since it mirrors human emotions, morality, and fantasy. As a result, all cultures have one form of theatre or the other. Being a fundamental human activity, it involves people working together in order to communicate ideas and also explore social issues to help people respond to various situations affecting them. Be that as it may, it demands discipline and dedication. These facets make it both a delight and a challenge thereby making it an academic discipline that must be studied.

The theatre teacher education sequence in Colleges of Education is dedicated to preparing highly qualified artists/teachers to meet the challenges of teaching in the primary and junior secondary school levels. As a theatre student teacher, you receive a solid foundation of basic skills in traditional theatre courses such as acting, directing, design, theatre history and dramatic literature, choreography and technical theatre. At the same time, you will follow a course of instruction specifically focused on teaching theatre at the secondary level. The Theatre Arts Department mounted in Colleges of Education enhances the teaching skills via professional studies taught to students. This is because, at that level of education, the teaching of theatre is done in addition to the general

preoccupation of teacher training in the college. This is why these categories of artists are also professional teachers.

Theatre workshop occupies a central position in the curriculum of Theatre Arts both in Colleges of Education and Universities. This is because, the workshop class provides an opportunity for students as well as teachers to translate in practical terms the things that are taught theoretically. The workshop class for Theatre Arts students can be likened to the laboratory class for science students. To a large extent, the knowledge of theatrical production is dependent on what is done during theatre workshop. As a result, the play or material to be acted or performed must be selected with maximum care. This is why Gordon Vallins in his essay titled; “Drama and Theatre in Education” observes that, “Any attempt to stage ‘the School Play’ as an exercise in itself has limited value. It should be regarded as part of a wider project so that the presentation is the result of exploration and research into theme, background, character and time” (177).

Unfortunately, theatre workshop has experienced different challenges in different tertiary institutions. These challenges have affected the effective teaching and learning of Theatre Arts thereby affecting the training of theatre teachers in Colleges of Education. Most of these challenges are administratively inclined; making teaching and learning intricate. According to Richard Courtney, “the aim of educational drama just like that of education is the total development of pupils’ intellectually, physically, socially, orally and imaginatively” (5). If therefore the training of theatre teachers who are expected to teach drama, music and creative art courses at the primary and post primary school level is faced with challenges, all hands must be on deck to surmount them in order to have an effective College educational system.

It is in view of this that this research work sets out to look at the remote and distant challenges of theatre workshop in Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education in Benue State with a view of suggesting appropriate measure towards overcoming these challenges. This is the thrust of the paper.

Methodology

In carrying out this research, the researcher used both the primary and secondary sources of data collection. In the primary sources, the researcher used focus group discussion (FGD), interviews and personal observation in gathering data for the research. In doing this, the researcher discussed with three (3) groups of seven (7) students from both Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education in other to find out how they carry out theatre workshop and what the challenges of theatre workshop are. To authenticate the information generated from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the researcher interviewed Lecturers of Theatre Arts in both Colleges of Education. Also, a few graduates and students of the Colleges were interviewed. On the other hand, the researcher adopted the personal observation method in balancing the data that was generated from the interviews and focus group discussions.

In the secondary method, the researcher used Library sources such as journals, books and internet materials. This method was used to assess already existing views on the challenges of theatre workshop and buttress assertions advanced in this paper. By and large, the methodology adopted for this research answers the research questions of the paper and facilitates the realization of its aim and objectives.

Conceptual Framework

For clarity and better understanding of this work, some of the key terms used in this research work are explained to give meaning within the context of this paper. These terms include: theatre, theatre workshop, and challenges.

Theatre

In his book, *Theatre: An Introduction*, Cassidy defines theatre as, “imagination...emotions and intellects... (Which) embraces all the world cultures and perspective, answers questions, predicts our tomorrows and mirrors our today” (2). Bernard Beckerman offered a broader definition when he said that “theatre occurs when one or more persons, isolated in time and or space, present themselves to another or others” (Wikipedia). For Shakespeare, “theatre is a mirror for highlighting man’s humanity and also a tool for understanding why man also finds it so easy to transgress that same humanity” (Yerima, 84). In his own view, Oduneye asserts that theatre is “the stepping stone through which anthropologist, sociologists, historian, ethnographer set al have given identity, meaning and interpretations to people, period/dates and societies” (4). Oduneye, a foremost theatre director and former Artistic Director of the National Troupe of Nigeria further posited that theatre could be seen as the index of every civilization and cultural identity.

Indeed, those who know the value of theatre will affirm that it constitutes the heartbeats of a people or a nation. Though definitions of theatre abound, practitioners seem to be in unison on what constitutes the nature and very essence of theatre. They also seem to be in agreement that theatre is a high endeavour which takes the form of drama, comedy or musical theatre. It is also widely held

that theatre, with its artistic content emanating from the dramatist to the producing artistes to the audience through an ever widening and deepening symbol, is essentially symbolic in nature. As an art form, theatre represents an experience of an event or experience which can be real or imagined and which is communicated to an audience through a medium. Theatre can also be dramatic and non-dramatic. When it is dramatic, it is imagined and representational whereas when it is non-dramatic, theatre is real and presentational in form and characters. Asomba asserts that, “in the dramatic form, the performer’s roles are always mimetic and that is what characterizes an actor’s role in a performance” (64).

So whether it is in a dramatic or non-dramatic form, what the artiste seeks, as Nasidi alludes is “to contact his audience through integrated manipulation of various forms of art such as music, mime, poetry, dance, painting and symbols which are directed either at our auditory or visual senses” (6). This makes diversity of appeal inevitable in theatre and it is on this premise that Theo Vincent stresses that, “the theatre has the capacity to engage and appeal to all the senses at the same time”(121-122). It is the power of the theatre to engage and appeal to all the human senses and its ability to influence and affect through the effective use of images; what Asomba calls “the photo-sensitive minds of the members of an audience during a performance” (64) that makes it an obvious pivot in the building of communities, and nations.

Theatre Workshop

In this study, theatre workshop means a professionally performing arts teaching course for students in the Colleges of Education. It strives at: teaching students and helping them to grow in the fields of drama, music and dance, creating an artistic atmosphere where talents and creativity is built in students, fostering

and encouraging growth both artistically and creatively from year to year. Theatre workshop offers a variety of programmes for students to explore, imagine, enjoy, dream and most importantly learn. It provides opportunities for emerging artists to be familiar with the form and content of theatre as well as acquire and develop skills of carrying out theatrical production. The emphasis is on teaching the arts of the theatre and helping students to expand their imagination and creativity as well as improving their coordination in a controlled environment.

Theatre workshop is characterised by planning, rehearsal and presentation of the work or material to the audience at a given place by live performers who either use themselves or inanimate figures such as puppets as the medium of presentation under a director. Every theatrical production is the product of a workshop experience where all the performers meet to acquire and improve on their skills by discussing their experiences and embarking on practical exercises in order to achieve a production. Theatre as a matter of fact is a conglomeration of all its arts such as: dramaturgy, acting, directing, choreography, costume, make-up, lighting and scene design among others and at theatre workshop, all these are brought together in order to realize a performance. This explains why theatre workshop is seen as a meeting point of all the arts of theatre since they are coordinated either as a single or unified entity to achieve a performance. At the workshop environment, all these art forms are laid bare for analysis and critical examination. This is why Koppett Kate asserts that to be able to carry out an effective theatre workshop, “you need to have a background in theatre, or a desire to perform...a wish to enhance learning and infuse your environment with creativity, teamwork and effective communication” (xvii).

Theatre workshop can therefore be described as a multi-disciplinary theatre education programme that supports students' creative development as artists and audience members by critically engaging them in the artistic process surrounding theatrical productions. Each unit is designed with a list of objectives pertinent to the development of the student. It is a performance-based programme with a multi-dimensional approach. The main objective is to encourage students to learn more about the world of theatre.

Challenges: In the context of this paper, challenges mean bottlenecks that militate against the success of a theatrical production. This implies, things that are imbued with a sense of difficulty thereby posing a threat for success or victory.

Goals of Theatre Workshop

Every theatre workshop process has its goals that it seeks to achieve. Basically, a conventional theatre workshop seeks to achieve a theatrical production be it drama, dance-drama, dance, etc. this is in fact the essence of a workshop experience. However, depending on the circumstances, environment and purpose of theatre workshop, it can have a variety of goals and objectives which it seeks to achieve in addition to the production of the theatre material in question. This research sees the following as cardinal goals of theatre workshop outside producing what is rehearsed in Colleges of Education. They include:

- To promote student's critical thinking through the medium of theatre. By introducing the students to provocative and challenging theatre experiences and fostering their understanding of discussion of performances, theatre workshop aims at enriching young people's visual, textual and critical literacy. This is achieved through viva during workshop where

productions are dissected for critical analysis and understanding.

- To increase participation in performing arts. By engaging students in the collaborative process of theatre production and offering them the opportunity to connect theatre to their own coursework and life, theatre workshop hopes to increase youth attendance at, involvement in and advocacy for performing arts.
- To promote the spirit of teamwork. By including students in meaningful conversations among themselves, theatre workshop hopes to grow meaningful relationships with each other and encourage them to think of each other as resourceful and creative persons to learn from and rely on when the need arises; thereby fostering team spirit.

Functionality of Theatre Workshop

Theatre workshop will lose its relevance and place in the curriculum and teaching of Theatre Arts if it is not functional. This is because, the workshop process is so demanding, involving and encompassing thereby making it the meeting point of all the arts of theatre. Fundamentally, theatre workshop is functional in the following ways:

- Enables students to develop interpersonal skills such as confidence, social interaction, responsibility sharing, planning, decision making, team spirit/work and problem sharing.
- Provides high quality professional training in the performing arts.

- Introduces young people to new and innovative elements of performing arts as well as embracing more traditional performances and practices.
- Serves local communities by remaining aware of local issues and community needs.
- Creates opportunities for social and educational development through participation in the arts.

Theatre Workshop: The Process

Most theatre workshop sessions begin with warm up games to get the students in the right frame of mind and to loosen up their body. These could be in form of juggling, stilt walking, unicycle, plate spinning, acrobatics etc. According to Leigh High bridge, beginning a workshop session with physical warm-up based on the Alexander Technique can yield good result. According to him, “It entails a series of stretches to elongate the spine, and move the body’s ball joints. Every movement based on the Alexander Technique requires that the actor maintains constant awareness of their spine, and what direction it is moving. Every stretch, even standing erect must be done in the context of widening and lengthening the spine” (1). It is usually better to conclude the physical warm-up with diaphragmatic breathing and vocal exercises. This is to bring about harmony between the body and the voice to meet the physical requirement of workshop classes. More importantly, these exercises play a major role in fostering concentration and keeping the body fit for any action.

In carrying out theatre workshop for students in tertiary institutions, there is every need to clearly identify the goals and objectives of the workshop to be able to work towards realizing them. This is because; theatre is an enormous discipline that houses different art forms. Carrying out a theatre workshop with students

without clearly identifying what to teach them will render the workshop fruitless even before it is kick started. According to Tanner Averett, conventionally, every theatre workshop should teach and achieve the following goals and objectives using the suggested activities as follows:

GOAL I: What everybody should know about drama

Objective: Students should be able to:
1. Comprehend the ingredients of drama a. Define drama b. Basic structure of drama c. Purpose of drama
2. Identify the type of drama
3. Judge a play.

GOAL II: Explore the inner resources actors use.

Objective: Students should be able to:	Suggested Activities:
1. Develop body control	Work together in groups of time to act out a machine
2. Create believable characters	Act out a well-known fairy tale
3. Emphasize believable action	Pantomime a familiar activity
4. Develop sources of observation	Choose an age group and create a mime
5. Develop concentration	Create a situation that you play yourself
6. Strengthen the imagination	Select three unrelated words and develop them into a scene

<p>7. Develop emotional response</p>	<p>Recall past emotional experiences. Transfer the recall to your character's part. Communicate to the audience.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Silence scream b. Anger c. Frustration <p>Each emotion has a corresponding action.</p>
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GOAL III: Making movement on stage appear to be natural

Objectives: students should be able to:	Suggested Activities:
<p>1. Define stage direction terms</p>	<p>1. Pilot stage crosses and body positions</p>
<p>2. Practice basic movement</p>	<p>2. Demonstrate counter-crosses with a partner</p>
<p>3. Infer motivation</p>	<p>3. Learn Basic principles of body movement.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pantomime a simple situation that utilizes three stage actions. b. View short film sequences involving movement including dance
<p>4. Handle special movement problems</p>	<p>4. Modify the game "statues"</p> <p>5. Memorize a short scene. Change the emotional</p>

	<p>responses for each performing pair.</p> <p>6. Select a set of four special stage problems and execute the action.</p>
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GOAL IV: Develop techniques for creating characterization.

Objective: Students should be able to:	Suggested Activities:
1. Analyze a character	1. Group improvisation
2. Create a character in a play	2. Select a picture of a famous painting that shows an interesting working person
3. Play humorous scenes	<p>3. Select a picture of a famous painting that shows an interesting working person.</p> <p>a. Analyze the person</p> <p>b. Report to the class</p>
4. Play serious scenes	<p>4. Select a 7-10 scene for performance</p> <p>a. Humorous</p> <p>b. Serious</p> <p>5. Write a biography of the character you are portraying in a scene</p>

GOAL V: Learn about play production through the study of make-up, technical theatre, lighting and costuming.

Objective: Students should be able to:	Suggested Activities:
1. Learn techniques of straight make-up	1. Perform step-by-set procedure for applying make-up a. Straight make-up b. Character make-up
2. Learn techniques of character make-up	2. Put together a make-up morgue by collecting magazine pictures of various faces
3. Learn basics of set design	3. Describe five basic requirements for stage costuming
4. Learn basics of costuming	4. Create a costume plot for a one-act play
5. Learn basics of lighting	5. Identify basic stage equipment 6. Review five requirements of stage scenery 7. Create a set for a one act play or for one act of a long play 8. Explain four basic requirements of stage lighting a. Compare fresnels and lekos b. Dimmers

	c. Spotlights 9. Create a lighting plot for one act of any play (2-9).
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Furthermore, in developing emotional response, Tanner asserts that, workshop activity should make the students:

- Feel the emotion
- Let your face and body respond
- Develop physical principles such as:
 - a. Positive emotions
 - b. Negative emotions
 - c. Facial expressions
 - d. Upper arms
 - e. Keep the audience in mind (8).

He also opined that workshop should take care of the special problems actors do have on stage such as:

- Eating and drinking
- Slapping
- Shooting
- Stabbing
- Dying (9).

From the analysis above, the conventional process of theatre workshop therefore is: selection of script or theatre material (dance, dance-drama, puppetry and mime etc.), budget for the workshop, assemblage of workshop/production team, auditioning/casting, production crew, technical elements, rehearsals, publicity, box office, house management, dress and technical rehearsal and

production. The arts of the theatre are therefore taught at every stage of the process.

Theatre Workshop in Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education

Having looked at how a conventional theatre workshop should be structured; it is pertinent to take an x-ray of how theatre workshop sessions look like in both Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education. It must be established from the onset that all the Colleges of Education under study carryout only drama in their workshop sessions with full length plays for the final year (NCE III) students. This is to ensure that all the elements of the theatre are found in the play and well-coordinated to ascertain what the students have learnt in the three years of their NCE training.

In College of Education Oju, the Theatre Arts Departmental board allocates all courses meant to be taught for the semester to the lectures. In an interview with the Head of Department Mrs. Annas Ashaver, she asserts that, “The Departmental Board allocates all the courses for the semester to lecturers based on their area of specialization. On the other hand, theatre workshop as a course is offered once in every session by all students of the department. As a result, it is given special attention and its allocation to lecturers is not just based on specialization but experience and interest”. After the allocation of courses, lecturers handling theatre workshop at various levels are expected to meet with their students, introduce the course to them; telling them its demands especially what they are expected to do.

Following this is the selection of script for the workshop. This is done in line with the provisions of the department which the HOD Mrs. Annas Ashaver asserts that, “The department insists that plays selected for theatre workshop must be on contemporary issues,

and address the problems of the college and host community”. This is in consonance with Gowon Doki’s assertion that: “Theatrical performance, for whatever function it is intended, is conceived within the ambience of human society and must reflect that society’s beliefs, norms, and value system” (3). This therefore implies that, for theatre to be functional even in training, it must reflect the people’s ideological and social structure. This way, it will be relevant and result oriented. A graphic example of this is given where the NCE II class of 20012/2013 produced Mnena Abuku’s *Scars of Yesterday* which addresses the problem of women circumcision. Given that the Igede people where the College of Education is located traditionally believe and practice women circumcision, the production of the play via workshop was very apt as it expresses the dangers that this could cause women. In this way, drama through the instrumentality of workshop is able to teach students the art of play production and depict the people’s negative traditional practice with a view to changing them.

After the play selection process, the lecturer in charge allows the students to go and study the script that is to be produced. This is done in order to enable them audition for roles in the play. Sequel to this, a call for auditioning is put up by the lecturer in charge and students come to audition for roles after which he casts the play. Depending on what he wants to achieve and the time available, the lecturer might type-cast the play where characters are immediately recognized by the audience when they see the actors or decide otherwise where the actors will be worked upon to play and look like the characters they are playing. It is pertinent to note that the process of casting a play is very crucial as it determines the success of the production as captured by Jonathan Dorf thus:

Actors are in a sense the face of your production. No matter how good the script or the set or the lighting,

without quality actors, the audience is unlikely to remember your show fondly. In fact, it's often been said that casting well is 90 percent of the work of production. That may not be entirely true but casting well is crucial to your success (1).

On the other hand, if the lecturer knows the abilities of the students, he can decide to cast the play without calling for auditioning. Whichever way, a cast list is arrived at, the lecturer who doubles as director publishes it after choosing the stage manager who stands in for him in his absence and takes note of everything that happens in the workshop and production process. Furthermore, the lecturer selects and publishes the names of all crew members especially those in costumes and make-up, lighting and stage design as well as props while the entire class works as stage hands. When all these are done, the lecturer commences into the rehearsal process.

In every theatre workshop, the rehearsal stage is the most intensive because, this is where all the arts of the theatre are taught practically on stage as students take up their roles either as actors/actresses, costumiers, make-up artists, lighting and scene designers, dancers, directors, and even playwrights. Beginning with reading rehearsal, the lecturer creates an atmosphere where all the characters in the play are analysed for the internalization and interpretation of the actors and actresses as well as all crew members. This is very important as it facilitates effective learning of what the play stands for. After the reading rehearsal, the process of blocking is kick started where movement is designed and redesigned for all the actors on stage. When the play is ripe for production, a dress and technical rehearsal is held where the actors rehearse in full costumes, make-up, sets and props. At this stage, all the lecturers in the department are expected to be in attendance for viva where the students are further taught especially on things they

did not get right. However, the HOD Mrs. Annas Ashaver posits that: “lecturers in the department do not attend the viva due to lack of motivation from the College management”. As a result, the department in conjunction with the class carrying out the workshop liaises with lecturers to attend but a few usually attend. The dress and technical rehearsal is the peak of every workshop production as the lecturer in charge of the workshop submits the students for viva voce and examination. This process is followed by the production which is open to outsiders and at times attracts a fee.

In a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with select students of Theatre Arts Department, College of Education Oju, they admit that, “Lecturers who teach theatre workshop most of the times do not attend rehearsals and they are left to themselves.” This as a matter of fact and most unfortunately too, is the disposition of Lecturers towards theatre workshop in many institutions. The outcome of this neglect is that, students are not exposed to the rudiments of the arts of theatre as they should by their lecturers.

In College of Education Katsina-Ala, the department of Theatre Arts shares similar characteristics of carrying out theatre workshop but with slight differences. For instance, it is the Head of Department that allocates courses unlike in COE Oju and once theatre workshop as a course is allocated to a lecturer, he sets out to see to its execution. Allocation is however based on area of specialization, experience and interest as the demands of the course are much.

After courses are allocated, the lecturer in charge of theatre workshop selects a play for the workshop. According to Christopher Idah the Examinations Officer of the department, “The Choice of a play is based on the nature of expected audience and intended message”. This is because, the department invites people outside the College community to grace her productions so workshop

productions are dependent on the kind of audience that are to be invited and the message the department wants to pass across. This is to say that, the College theatre is serving people within and outside the College community.

Closely following the process of play selection is auditioning where the play is cast and all those involved know their roles. This process is completed with a cast/production list where all the actors/actresses are cast and other production elements such as costumes, make-up, lighting, scene design and props receive attention with people in charge of the respective areas. When this is done, rehearsal commences. Actors/actresses are however cast at times without auditioning.

The rehearsal is divided into five basic segments. The first segment concerns with reading/play analysis rehearsal which takes at most one week. This is followed by blocking rehearsal which takes two weeks depending on the type of play. Thirdly, it is general rehearsal where the actors rehearse with their scripts. This might take up to three weeks depending on the type of play, the quality of students and the time available. The fourth stage is polishing rehearsal where the actors drop their scripts; polish their blockings, stage business and use of props. This takes two weeks and lastly the dress and technical rehearsal where the production team is harmonized and actors rehearse first with their costumes, sets and props and secondly with lights. This is the point where all the Lecturers in the Department are invited to watch, give their critique and assess the students. It is the peak of the exercise as students are exposed to their flaws and strengths. This is to enable them open up channels for improvement in their subsequent productions. Besides, in the course of the rehearsal, the lecturer in charge of the workshop is usually present and teaches the students what they need to know concerning the arts of the theatre. The viva voce which comes at the

dress and technical rehearsal crowns the teaching process. This is closely followed by the production which is open to outsiders and at times attracts a fee for the upkeep of the department.

In summary, theatre workshop in Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education is multifaceted and aimed at achieving three different purposes. First is to teach students the art of play production with acting as the main pre-occupation. This is however just an aspect of the demands of the curriculum of Theatre Arts. Secondly, it serves as a method of awareness creation in the immediate College community and beyond on the fundamental norms and values of the society. In doing this, the department lives up to its expectation of holding up the mirror for people to see themselves thereby fulfilling its cooperative social responsibility to the community. Lastly, it is at times used as a source of revenue generation as workshop productions are box office productions where people pay a fee before they watch. This can be narrowed to the acronym TAR where T means Teaching, A means Awareness creation and R meaning Revenue generation. This is the hallmark of theatre workshop in both Colleges of Education.

Challenges of Theatre Workshop in Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education

The teaching and learning of theatre and drama at all levels of education is confronted with a lot of challenges. On a general note, apart from its non-inclusion in the curriculum of secondary school system, it has suffered relegation and lack of adequate attention by management of tertiary institutions and universities thereby making teaching and learning difficult. This explains why Adedeji asserts that:

Drama in Education appears not to be a popular subject in the curriculum of the Nigerian

secondary school and teacher training colleges. Lack of manpower and materials for the subject are part of the problems (77).

At the tertiary level, the teaching and learning of theatre as an art form cannot operate without the instrumentality of workshop. This is because; it is at workshop that all the arts of the theatre are dissected for adequate comprehension. This is why many scholars see theatre workshop as indispensable to the study of Theatre Arts. As a result, the effective teaching and learning of Theatre Arts is Dependent on the effectiveness of theatre workshop as all the arts of the theatre ranging from drama to Acting, costume and make-up, lighting, scene design, choreography etc. are taught practically on the stage.

Unfortunately, theatre workshop is confronted with different challenges in different places thereby hampering its efficacy. According to Leigh Highbridge, “The biggest challenges include: working together cooperatively, and expressing themselves in writing. The curriculum unit addresses this by turning the theatre classroom into a theatre production office. The students will first identify their own unique talent and experiences and then bring it to the group” (1). He believes that, integrating production and curriculum, as the students work together on one imaginary and one real production will use democratic education to forge an appreciation of multi-cultural diversity.

At College of Education Katsina-Ala, Christopher Idah, the Examinations Officer of the Department of Theatre Arts assert in an interview that, “Theatre workshop in the Department is confronted with many challenges which include: lack of finance, lack of students’ interest, lack of staff motivation, lack of facilities, lack of exploration of the arts of the theatre”. In the same vein, in an interview with Joshua Jijingi, an outstanding student of Theatre Arts

Department and Faculty of Arts, College of Education Katsina-Ala in 2011 identifies: “poor funding, disruption of academic calendar, lack of facilities, lack of skilled manpower and lack of interest from students “as the cardinal challenges of theatre workshop in the college. According to him, Lecturers in the Department who usually man workshop sessions are usually present at rehearsals thereby making it different for students to misbehave. Besides, he observed that, though focal point of workshop in the College is drama; it is usually embracive as all the elements of theatre are captured in the drama. From this revelation, one would see this as a challenge in itself hence the department has singled out drama as the sole apparatus for workshop sessions. Though in drama, most of the arts of the theatre can be explored and taught, it is not apt for it to become the only variable for theatre workshop hence all the arts of the theatre can be single individually taught under workshop.

In a focus group discussion (FGD) with students of Theatre Arts Department in College of Education Katsina-Ala, they assert that, “lack of money, lack of time, lack of equipment, disruption of academic calendar and lack of commitment from Lecturers constitute the major challenges of theatre workshop in the college”. When asked further, they asserted that, because theatre workshop is not under any sponsorship, they have to contribute money to fund their productions and given the poor background of many of them, it becomes a challenge. On the other hand, they assert that, because Theatre Arts is not a double major course, so they have to combine it with another course alongside with the other courses they offer collectively in the Faculty of Education. As a result, it is difficult for them to give adequate attention to workshop sessions which require extra time. When asked on the challenge of Lecturers commitment, they assert that, many of them have poor secondary education background and they were not introduced to drama and theatre. As

a result, they are having their first contact with theatre in the College which makes them to perform badly on stage especially during their first workshop and instead of their lecturers to teach them with this understanding, they lambast them thereby making learning intractable. However, in spite of all these challenges, the students asserted that they are making the best efforts in their study of Theatre Arts.

Personal Observation

The researcher's personal observation on the challenges of theatre workshop in the College is, though the College management has built a befitting theatre house for the Department of Theatre Arts where all workshop sessions and theatrical productions are carried out, there is no ancillary support by the College to facilitate workshop productions which occupy a central position in the study of theatre in the College. This indeed has militated against the effective teaching and learning of theatre arts in the College thereby making it in dire need of facilities and staff as the Department has only eleven (11) Lecturers with a student population of three hundred and ninety-four (394).

Similarly, in an interview with Mrs. Annas Ashaver, the Head of Department of Theatre Arts, College of Education Oju, she asserted that the challenges of theatre workshop in the College include: "Lack of theatre house, lack of facilities, insecurity, truancy, lack of interest from staff and lack of funds". She elucidated that, the department does not have a theatre house which makes it difficult to hold workshop sessions hence non availability of space. Besides, the hall the Department uses does not have a proscenium stage which militates against the successful realization of modern performances. On insecurity, she asserted that the College has witnessed serious security challenges which have claimed the lives

of many students and it was dangerous having performances in the late hours of the night. As a result, it was difficult to produce full length plays at night. Also, since Lecturers are not motivated by the College management, they on the other hand show no visible interest in theatre workshop since it takes extra hours from their normal work schedule. This has also affected their participation in viva voce since many of them do not attend productions. Worse still, since workshop productions are not sponsored, students take the responsibility of funding their productions. Given that there are no facilities, it becomes difficult for students to put enough resources together in effectively realizing productions. This goes a step further to affect the interest of some of the students especially those who cannot afford the money. All these affect in one way or the other the quality of workshop production and by inference, the quality of teaching and learning.

Also, in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with students of Theatre Arts Department, College of Education Oju, they assert that, “lack of befitting theatre house, lack of funding, lack of lecturers’ commitment and lack of facilities are the major challenges in the College”. According to them, they do not have a definite space for workshop sessions/rehearsals which makes it difficult for them to carry out their practical effectively. In addition, they admitted that Lecturers hardly have time to attend their workshop sessions which makes it difficult for them to learn many things that they do not know. Furthermore, the students complained of been over taxed in procuring costumes, make-up, props and building of sets for their productions. Since this is capital intensive, the burden is much on them thereby becoming an intractable problem.

In an interview with Terfa Adamgbe, an NCE III student of the Theatre Arts Department of the College, he admitted that, “lack of finance, students’ truancy and lack of commitment from lecturers

has been the major challenge of successful theatre workshop” while Abuur Godwin, a Lecturer in the Department asserts that, “lack of motivation of Lecturers is the main challenge of theatre workshop”. According to him, there are few Lecturers in the Department with theatre workshop experience and since they are not motivated to work extra hours, they are not interested in providing the necessary drive that theatre workshop needs. This has affected the quality of teaching and learning of the practical aspects of theatre arts in the College. This is a truism because the Department has eleven (11) lectures with a student population of three hundred and fifty-two (352). By implication, the man power is not sufficient for the work that is required. This will no doubt affect the productivity of the Department.

Summarily, it is clear from the foregoing that, lack of funding/facilities, lack of man power and Lecturers’ motivation, lack of adequate coordination of theatrical materials for workshop (what is to be performed), lack of interest and adequate time constitute the main challenges of theatre workshop in Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education in Benue State. These as a matter of fact have greatly affected the quality of theatrical productions and by inference, the quality of theatre graduates from the Colleges.

Prospects of Theatre Workshop

Given the centrality of Theatre workshop in the curriculum of Theatre Arts in tertiary institutions, it holds a lot of prospects if properly harnessed and explored. Some of these prospects are as follows.

High Quality of Theatre Teachers: Theatre workshop has the prospect of facilitating high quality of prospective theatre

teachers in Colleges of Education. This is because, if details of the arts of theatre are exhaustively and demonstratively taught at workshop, it will facilitate the graduation of theatre teachers who can adequately take up their responsibilities of teaching drama, music and creative arts in the primary and post-primary school system without hitches. One of the biggest challenges of the educational system today is the question of quality and standard in the system. In most cases, graduates are just not able to take up their respective assignments on graduation. This is why theatre workshop is very central in the teaching and learning of Theatre Arts as it fosters high academic standard in the system.

Source of Revenue Generation: The end product of theatre workshop is a theatrical production. This could be drama, dance-drama, dance, costume and make-up, mime etc. Any of the aforementioned can be presented to any audience for generating money. Workshop productions at Colleges of Education can be properly packaged and presented to the audience in order to generate funds for the Department or College as a whole. If the tenets of theatre administration and management are employed and productions are properly advertised, the proceeds from the productions will be much, capable of providing ancillary financial support to the Department and College at large.

Peace Brokers: Theatre workshop productions can be harnessed to bring about peace and tranquillity within the College community and beyond. This can be done by carefully selecting the theatrical material and creatively promoting peace and tranquillity in the community. This workshop session can even involve members of the community as it is the case in community theatre. This will help proffer solutions to issues in the community that foster crisis and war.

Conscientization Tool in the College: Theatre workshop has the potential of exploring the instrumentality of theatre in creating awareness on socio-cultural issues bothering the College. Most importantly, it can serve as an eye opener to the College Community made up of the college management, academic and non-academic staff and students. In doing this, workshop productions can be packaged in other to create awareness on issues that are contextual and conflicting, capable of bringing discord in the college. Conscientization is an imperative tool for effective education and self-actualization capable of chanting a course for unity and progress in the college community.

Tool for Development: The concept of development can be viewed from two perspectives: human and infrastructure and theatre workshop has the capacity of facilitating both. Through theatre workshop productions, the perception of human beings on issues can take a better dimension. If this happens, it therefore means human development has taken place. Also, theatre workshop can bring about theatrical productions that can be used to sensitized and stir up the course for development in Colleges of Education. This can be done by collectively coming into an agreement on the need to pursue a particular project arising from a theatrical production for the development of the college.

Conclusion

On a general note, theatre plays a major role in modelling the society and securing its future in a dynamic way. In the educational sector, theatre enhances learning and interaction among youths and school children as well as facilitating their self-expression. This is why the teaching of Theatre Arts in Colleges of

Education is imperative since the graduates are expected to take up the training of school children at pre-primary, primary and post primary school level in arts and craft, as well as drama and music.

In conclusion, theatre workshop takes a central position in the teaching and learning of Theatre Arts. This is in view of the fact that, it is the only method through which the arts of the theatre can be taught and learnt practically. Since theatre is practical oriented, the knowledge of what it takes to carry out a theatrically production conventionally acceptable by everybody is paramount and important. This is why this paper submits that, Theatre Arts departments in Colleges of Education should liaise with management of their institutions to ensure that the challenges of theatre workshop are averted especially those concerning man power, motivation of lectures and facilities/equipment. The Theatre Department should most importantly ensure that even if there are challenges in carrying theatre workshop, those challenges are infinitesimal and cannot negatively affect the teaching and or learning of theatre arts. If this is not the case, there will be no point mounting a Theatre Arts Department in the institution as the aim and objective of establishing the department will never be met.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- a. The management of Colleges of Education in conjunction with the Department of Theatre Arts should understand that theatre workshop goes beyond teaching the arts of the theatre but can be explored in dispensing the corporate social responsibility of the College to the community. Workshop productions should therefore be seen along the lines of

teaching morals to secondary school students in the community where these Colleges are situated and plays that are in the literature syllabus of WAEC and NECO examinations should be produced to ease their understanding as well.

- b. Given the indispensable nature of theatre workshop in the curriculum of Theatre Arts in Colleges of Education, the management of Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education should make budgetary allocation to the Department of Theatre Arts to accommodate the demands of theatre workshop and overcome the challenges of infrastructure and equipment for theatre workshop sessions. Furthermore, the College management should employ more hands for effective teaching and learning.
- c. Lecturers in the Department of Theatre Arts in Colleges of Education teaching Theatre Workshop courses should be paid an extra allowance for such courses since they require extra time with students. This will motivate them and further enhance high productivity.
- d. The Department of Theatre Arts at Katsina-Ala and Oju Colleges of Education should concentrate on teaching students more using theatre workshop sessions as this will accentuate faster assimilation of knowledge and theatre culture of production.
- e. The students of Theatre Arts in Colleges of Education should see theatre workshop sessions as the most effective method of learning the arts of the Theatre. They should therefore avail themselves and make the best use of such opportunities.
- f. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should make Theatre Arts a double major course.

This will enable the expansion of the curriculum and further enhance adequate time for theatre workshop sessions.

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