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THESPIAN IDEATION IN NIGERIAN THEATRE AS IMPEDIMENT TO ECONOMIC SURVIVAL THROUGH DANCE PRACTICE

Arnold B. UDOKA, PhD

Department of Theatre, Film & Carnival Studies
University of Calabar, Calabar
Cross River State, Nigeria
E-mail: arnoldudoka2000@gmail.com

Abstract

*The paper sets out to interrogate the fixation with the Attic name, **Thespis**, an actor, as the imperial nomenclature for theatre practice, which has confused, supplanted and claimed to represent all performative art forms of the theatre in Nigeria; thus, becoming a burden to both practice and scholarship of dance as a legitimate art form with potentials for job creation in the nation's modern economy. Specifically, the paper examines the absence of the knowledge of **Terpsichore**, as the muse of dance, with the analysis of the origin of literary drama, its influence on the practice of theatre in Nigeria and the configurations of educational curriculums. To this end, the survey method of research design was adopted to extract information from both undergraduates and graduates of theatre studies to achieve a verifiable result based on a dichotomous format. The result shows that while undergraduates and graduates of theatre studies are quite familiar with Thespis, only a negligible percentage ever heard of Terpsichore and this has impeded dance practice in Nigeria. The paper concludes that Thespian ideation is the burden of a skewed pedagogy, which must be reversed in order for the dance as a distinguishable and isolatable philosophical construct in theatre practice to unleash its potentials for economic survival in an ailing economy.*

Introduction

The philosophy of socialisation in modern Nigeria is everything, but inclusive. This is glaring in the area of theatre arts training and practice; and the metalanguage deployed in describing or connoting theatre practice as expressed in the term, Thespian, as the indicator of a theatre practitioner. The ambiguity of what Thespis or Thespian refers to requires that it be subjected to interrogation for the discomfiture it has generated in theatre arts pedagogy in Nigeria. The fixation created by this ambiguous term has truncated the full realisation of the potentials of theatre arts generally and especially in the area of dance practice in a nation grappling with the idea of re-envisioning her post-independence theatre ideology. In fact, the erroneous belief held among the general public is that everyone who studies theatre arts in the university would end up a dancer. This, of course, is a wrong assumption. The reality is that the actor has in a covet

manner claimed the Nigerian theatre and names every practitioner after him/herself without due regards to differences in genres and presentational formats.

Heterogeneity in the performing arts is common knowledge and cannot be legislated into a monolithic concept due the overemphasis (by error) on one genre or deliberate oversight of skewed history backed by an equally skewed curriculum. The term, Thespian, constitutes an intellectual impersonation of all forms of the performative arts in Nigeria. It does not recognise the presence and place of dance in the curriculum, syllabus and scheme of work in tertiary institutions in Nigeria; and might be seen as the reason why dance is not given the pride of place, as an independent subject in both primary and secondary schools curricula beyond the omnibus rubric of psychomotor activities. The fixation with drama has affected the development and harnessing of skilled labour force into intellectual and economic game-changers to what could by now have become a full blown dance industry contributing to the national economy. Thespian ideation, therefore, is axiomatic of self-inflicted economic recession, which can at this point in the national history, be arrested in the interest of national ethos, knowledge production and economic growth. Thespian ideation is a metaphor for limitations in theatre practice generally.

In the light of the foregoing, this paper posits that colonial and postcolonial educational policies are percolations for the advancement of Western drama curriculum in Nigeria and its vaunted Thespian ideation, as an alienating and osmotic metaphor to reconfigure the perception of the art of the theatre as purely drama; thus, denying and unjustly limiting the knowledge of the dance phenomenon – whose raw materials are in supra abundance in Nigeria – and economic survival through its practice. It is safe then to argue that Thespian ideation poses an existential threat to the survival of dance artistes in theatre practice in Nigeria. The paper interrogates this Thespian fixation and its pedagogy birthed by the origin of literary drama in Nigeria and aims at a purposeful reversal of this costly misperception in theatre practice to contend for economic survival in the performative aspect of dance.

Definition of Terms

Every scholarly work must serve its readers the meanings of significant terms deployed in the work. It is with this understanding that the following definitions are offered. The adjective, Thespian, is defined as, “an actor or actress” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>). Ideation, on the other hand, borders on the psychological. It is the preoccupation with the Thespian concept to turn the dance into a significant *victim* in the Nigerian theatre space. In this paper, ideation is used to mean the belief that all aspects of theatre are subsumed under drama. Nigerian theatre refers to the totality of both the pedagogic and experiential spheres of theatre as a product of the modern Nigerian society; while impediment can be defined as, the “baggage or other things that retard one's progress” (<http://www.dictionary.com>). Furthermore, economic survival means how dance can contribute to livelihood of dance artists within the context of the contemporary economic conditions and realities. Dance practice in the context of this paper may be defined as the vocation or profession in the dance industry. Lastly, educational curriculum is “the set of courses that a school, university, or other

educational institution offers” (<https://www.rand.org>); while Terpsichore is defined in Greek mythology as, “muse of dancing and choral song” (<https://www.merriamwebster.com>).

The Origin of Literary Drama in Nigeria

Most often, literary drama in Nigeria is considered a product of the University College, Ibadan in the late 1950s and also associated with the School of Drama, Ibadan, of the early 1960s. But if by literary drama it is meant written drama, then the contrary is the case. Going by the notion that literary drama is a product of the West, its origin in Nigeria is in the 1880s when “... excerpts from plays, novels and comic sketches” copied from especially London, were already aspects of the concert and theatre practices in colonial Lagos (Ogunbiyi 18). While all this may be described as mere flash in the pan, some sixty years later, James Ene Henshaw’s *This is Our Chance*, produced in 1948 in Dublin (Adedeji 718), and published in 1956, officially inaugurated literary drama in Nigeria.

The University College, Ibadan, it must be noted, initially offered “English Literature, Greek and Western History” under what it termed, Classics. Thus, a foundational knowledge of Thespis, the actor, the man of drama (and not theatre) was established among the students of classics. This was before the arrival in the mid-1950s “... of Martin Banham and Geoffrey Axworthy...” who in 1962, “... with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, the School of Drama began, the first of its kind in Africa (<http://arts.ui.edu.ng/historythea>).

With Kenneth Post and Geoffrey Axworthy’s 1959 productions of Wole Soyinka’s *The Swamp Dwellers* and *Lion and the Jewel*; the Ibadan audiences who “...were thrilled to a wide range of plays, from Greek classics, through Shakespeare, Sheridan to old long-forgotten sensations of London Westend (Ogunbiyi 28), and Wole Soyinka’s 1960 production of *A Dance of the Forest*, literary drama had made a foothold on the performative landscape of Nigeria. The attention and interest of the elite, a rising small, but influential middle class armed with Western education, identified with this type of drama which substituted as entertainment and filled the vacuum created by the colonial emancipation of indigenous performative arts by the destabilisation of the cultural institutions that once sustained them. Added to this was the emergence of cosmopolitan centres, new and Western-type jobs in colonial administrative centres. Whether such performances were tragic or comedic, the hero always cut the image of Thespis, the new standard to drive the dramatic plot.

The Ulli Beier-Founded Mbari as Home-grown Strategy against Dance

The strategy upon which literary drama rode to prominence in Nigeria was multifaceted. This included theatre workshops in the English department, Extra-Mural Studies of the Institute of Education of the University College, Ibadan, “The 1960 Masks”, the founding of Mbari Club in 1961 (<http://www.britannica.com>), and the establishment of the School of Drama in 1962. But Mbari Club, founded by Ulli Beier, was the turning point of the new theatre that was to emerge viewed from the quality of intellectual and cultural actors in its membership which included, but not limited to,

...Wole Soyinka, D. O. Fagunwa, J. P. Clark, Christopher Okigbo, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Ulli Beier, Uche Okeke, Demas Nwoko, Segun Olusola, Dapo Adelugba, Michael Crowder, Kola Ogunmola, Ralph Opara, Gerald Moore, Geoffrey Axworthy, Martin Banham, John Ferguson, Joel Adedeji, Peggy Harper, Frank Speed... (Oti 30).

From the foregoing, it can be argued that the rapid development of literary drama in Nigeria was guided by extra-continental and international forces of intellectual and cultural minders both professionally and financially. Upon analysis, “this was an assemblage of Nigeria’s best artistic minds teaming up with South Africans, English and German intellectuals. From this time onward, English literary drama raised the bar ...” (Udoka 60).

The analysis of the origin of literary drama in Nigeria establishes the fact that it was first, a passive engagement and second, the University College, Ibadan, as a State institution, installed and sanctioned an intellectual ideology that cultivated a taste for and altered behaviour in favour of drama. Traditionally, the study of literary drama honours its Greek origins, history and schematisation that legislate that Thespis is the first known actor. The University College drama lectures in the English department and later the School of Drama would not have excluded Thespis in their curriculum, syllabus and scheme of work for any reason.

Among the Ibadan drama provocateurs was a dance scholar, Peggy Harper, a white South African migrant. In spite of her presence and scholarly training as well as excellent grounding in ballet and Graham techniques, there is no record that dance, even by Greek standards, was acknowledged as part of the curriculum of the School of Drama. In fact, Peggy Harper endured the suffocation of the lopsided curriculum by serving as, “... Movement Director” (Adebanjo 276). As it could be imagined, this is more of a production credit than academic and merely to enhance the movement skills in the training of prospective “Thespians”. This, despite the fact that the planners of the curriculum were well aware that as Nigerians, a bi-lingual dance curriculum could have served the purpose of exposure of the students to a foreign dance form and inculcate a sense of love for the canons of indigenous Nigerian dance forms as well. In its place, emphasis was on submersion and denial of the benefits of research to indigenous forms because the chief performer, Thespis, the secular drama hero of colonial culture was already on duty to eclipse any local and ‘inferior’ counterpart.

It is obvious from the foregoing that dance was not a subject matter of English Literature in University College, Ibadan. It is in order, therefore, to conjecture that in the studies of that subject then (still subsisting), dance was mentioned in passing and associated with *maenadic* frenzy alongside dithyrambic ‘incoherence’, which Western literature and philosophy disapproved while adopting the Aristotelian schema for drama. If it had been considered as a needful element of the subjects of English Literature and Greek, Hellenist history would have introduced Terpsichore, as the muse of dance and song and justify the subject as a human and social activity in a university founded in a colony. On the contrary, not even a millisecond had been allocated to it as the fixation of

Western literary drama gave no space for such luxury. As such, the capacity of dance to convey ideas, thoughts, truths, beliefs, formulate ideas and by and by as an economic source of survival had been curtailed and arrested by circumstance by an inhumane, imperialistic, subjugating, Euro-jingoistic and lopsided drama and theatre pedagogy. Naturally and logically, in the absence of a pedagogical framework with even a miniscule consideration of Terpsichore in Hellenist literature and civilisation, the products of University College, Ibadan, down-graded and suppressed norms and values of the dances of their cultures, only to poach and exploit them as artifices to the drama superintended by the iconic character of Thespis.

From the onset, formalised literary drama had publicised its mission and intentions for the future as “Greek gift” to the development of Nigerian drama; not theatre. However, literary drama supplied the texts for the theatre that emerged and along with it, Thespis as the image of the theatre. The Thespian badge of honour from the beginning foreboded the impediment to the economics of dance; but unfortunately, this fad caught on with the vulnerable and aping aspirants to the performing professions and support services providers were at home with the sobriquet. This clearly illustrates that the curriculum for literary drama did not fully comprehend, consider or was responsive to the developmental needs of Nigeria except to produce actors and promote the Western drama order. Consequently, it is safe to hold the view that thespian ideation in Nigeria was birthed by a deliberate intellectual politics sanctioned by the institution for knowledge production through its theoretical postulations of literary drama to the detriment of dance as the casualty. Historically, dance is acknowledged as the precursor to drama and not the other way round.

The Influence of Literary Drama on Dance Practice in Nigeria

The seed that has influenced theatre practice was sown when drama was misconstrued as theatre. In the theatre, drama is known as play. As a play, it is just one of the three performing art forms of the theatre and not all of theatre it claims; the others being dance and music. It is imperative here, to explain the segregation in the performing arts in the West from where Nigeria borrowed its prevalent theatre ideology to date. The concept of theatre is strictly about plays, while ballet (a dance that tells a story) is about dance and opera is all about music. All this share the narrative mode. But the Nigerian experience is that literary drama, even as a play has subsumed the other two art forms and also condescendingly vacated inherited indigenous performing arts capital founded on myths and historical facts and introduced cultural and intellectual relativism thus denying objective truth in favour of political correctness.

It is worth reiterating that, literary drama is not organic to Nigerian cultures or derived from her cultural values – beliefs, taboos, rituals, habits, norms, history, and communication. As a new entrant into a cultural space with existing dominant forms of distinguishable performative arts styles of story drama, mask drama, festival drama, ritual drama not to talk of the genres of dance and music based on shared histories and identities, literary drama could have served its purpose without seeking to replace these non-Western models or exerting undue strain on indigenous performative infrastructure. But in the exercise of its colonial, imperial and magisterial authority, it countered

indigenous modes of cognition and altered behaviour; suppressed and contained the dance and music genres and installed Thespis as the dominant image of the theatre.

From available literature, there is evidence of cautious intention from the early 1960s for literary drama to influence dance practice in Nigeria by insisting that elements and characteristics of Western drama be given prominence in the other two art forms of dance and music. To this end, these two arts forms were tinkered to adjust to the dictates and canons of construction as pioneered and handed down by the Ibadan drama think-tank. It is, therefore, incontrovertible that literary drama's Western writing traditions were introduced to influence the development of dance practice in Nigeria. This guided evolution was stage-managed to precipitate concepts and forms that were hybrids and which continue to distance themselves with dialogue and conflicts from the formats and aesthetics domiciled in indigenous practices. As early as 1969, Akin Euba had noted that,

...there have also been experiments in the development of modern dance-drama,.... These experiments have taken place principally at the School of Drama, University of Ibadan, which has in the last four years produced some two or three full-length dance-dramas, with choreography by Peggy Harper (480).

While the idea here is to illustrate the intrusion into dance in Nigeria, it was actually not a direct experiment by the School of Drama because it had no dance in its curriculum. The experiments were, "...under the auspices of the Students' Dramatic Society..." (Amosu 73), where Peggy Harper produced the dance drama *Owuama*. This implicitly demonstrates two things namely, what the School of Drama stood for and the bias against dance leading to its exclusion and mutual suspicion from mainstream academics.

Meanwhile, there was no Nigerian with cognate training commensurate to Peggy Harper's background in ballet and Graham's modern dance technique, to attempt such experiments in the development of "Nigerian" modern dance-drama nor was there any attempt at research to obtain data for such purpose. That was an opportunity lost. Now, the question is: what were the models informing such experiments in dance? The answer is simple: literary drama. It was to promote the image of the actor personified in Thespis, by the adoption of the canon for literary drama and 'pretend' with dance as a pastime and not as a reality or valued aspect of human behaviour as it obtained within the framework of indigenous praxes. Such improvisations and experiments were not within the parameters of Nigerian traditions either and the hybrid did not guarantee the development of existing forms and styles since their settings were within Western typological frameworks of drama.

Beyond founding the Mbari-Mbayo Club, Ulli Beier serves as a good example of how some of the cultural minders overreached themselves in the attempt to create a theatre of their dreams, in a colonial sense, for Nigeria. The significance of Ulli Beier's experiment above that of Peggy Harper rests on the fact that his experiment was given international prominence of representing what the Nigerian theatre was, albeit, erroneously. This was another effort at extending the sphere of influence of Western

literary drama and an attempt at substituting the popular theatre idiom that had morphed into recognisable theatre events courtesy of indigenous geniuses. According to Demas Nwoko,

Ogunmola and Ogunde vernacular troupes. He suggested a historical theme from the legends, a subject that gave ample opportunity for the exhibition of “traditional African culture”. Through further suggestions during production, original indigenous music and appropriate dances along with (poetry) were used. Added to this for decor were black-cloths of typical modern art school colours which were the results of the art workshops he had organised. The result was an exhibition of slices of African customs and traditional art forms, loosely linked by improvised dramatic movement and speech. *Oba Koso*, as the play was called, was a very exotic presentation and it was sent around Europe as a demonstration of our fine culture (470).

Here, traditional dance is exploited, deconstructed to advance a dramatic plot and not dance with its dialogic integrity. Ulli Beier’s postmodernist mindset concocted a potpourri of a theatre in which the dance served the drama contrary to indigenous performance principles and practice. Such undermining efforts, hidden from the view of ordinary theatre goers, expose the true intent of the minders at the infancy of modern Nigeria’s theatre development. Beier exploited Ladipo’s innocence to his advantage. In Ibadan, Ladipo “...became one of the founding members of an artist society or club called Mbari-Mbayo and became influenced by Beier” (National, N.pag). Ulli Beier’s intent was no more than affirming that Nigerian art is nothing more than exotic mindless behaviour in its primitive state that had to be ‘civilized’ through the literary drama schema mirroring the West, a continuation of the theses of James G. Frazer, Ruth Finnegan, Richard Welleschek, and the content-argument school of Nigerian drama and theatre. But did Ulli Beier’s experiment create a theatre of a truly Yoruba identity even with the enigmatic Duro Ladipo or alienated it? Of course not; but it structured a new format of dance as a function of drama and set a precedence with Duro Ladipo as sentinel for Thespis.

The element of music in the traditional form which indigenous dances most often depend on for corporate communication was not spared the threat of ignominy and extinction in the emerging Nigerian theatre as it was gradually being replaced.

The idea that has been expressed in recent years that the musical cultures of Africa are fast dying out and that efforts must be made to preserve them for posterity. It is true of course that many changes have occurred in African music which have resulted in new musical forms from abroad replacing some of the traditional forms (Euba 476).

If traditional music had to survive at all, it must go through the mill of makeover in order to acquire modern vocal and aural values through the method of hybridisation.

This did not sit well with music enthusiasts. The challenges of the hybridisation in the music genre included incongruity and tilted towards alienation. It was observed that, "...in the main, the reference to traditional culture in these hybrid forms is seldom effective enough to establish an identity with Nigerian culture and these compositions must be classified primarily as belonging to the European musical culture" (Euba 480). Besides such bastardisation and compared to literary drama, there were no equitable opportunities for the dance and music indigenous to Nigerian cultures to develop and thrive as products of the academe while the art of Thespis was beatified.

Talking about playwrights produced by the University College, Ibadan, and elsewhere, they may not be completely liable of the felony of cultural destabilisation for the simple reason that they had four fundamental problems. First, the curriculum had no considerations for local cultural traditions. Second, the personal aspiration to develop oneself within the context of a culturally-biased curriculum without the literary map of the indigenous cultures fundamentally beclouded the notion of the preservation and application of time-tested indigenous forms of creative expressions. Third, the sumptuous influx of cultural and intellectual relativism through colonial curriculum deconstructed and evicted archetypical notions of creative expressions steeped in mystical and social values and encouraged eclecticism. Fourth, the indigenous ideas of the performing arts were pitched against an unknown quantity. However, and with all due respect to the contributions of that generation of literary dramatists, evidences show that they were accomplices to the deconstruction of not only dance, but also music for services in their dramatic works. This jettisoned the mystical, social and artistic value of music and dance in indigenous cultures through conditioning and loss of identity. For example, their actions led to the presentation of traditional music style as a function of drama and denied it the authenticity of an art form.

Nigerian playwrights working in the English language have also been including in their plays

an increasing amount of traditional music. Of great interest in this respect are John Pepper Clark's *The Masquerade* and *Ozidi*, and Wole Soyinka's *Lion and the Jewel* and *Kongi's Harvest*. In devising music for *Kongi's Harvest*, Soyinka went to the real sources of traditional music and has created some very effective moments in his use of music as a function of drama. These then represent the beginnings of a modern tradition of music-drama (479-480).

It is important to take cognisance of Euba's emphasis on playwrights writing in the English language and note that it points us to the Wittgenstienian theory of experiencing another life form by engaging in the language game of a culture. So, the deployment of traditional music and dance in plays by such Nigerian playwrights in their works were, in the opinion of this writer, mere irrelevant nostalgia deodorised and appended on productions to which they generated nothing more than lingual incoherence and the expected native exoticism.

The Configuration of Curriculums in the Primary and Secondary schools Systems

If any educational project is to make sense in society, it must necessarily be a part of the society. It must concern itself with the process of developing the society to bring about civilization. Education can only achieve this if it is responsive to the aspirations and goals of the society which it serves. The evidence of that response is reflected in the set of courses to be offered at all levels of education in the society. This set of courses constitutes the curriculum; a document with the objectives affirming the needs of the society desiring sustainability. Sadly, all such documents in Nigeria in both colonial and postcolonial editions have consistently maintained the negative colonial attitude towards dance.

From the first educational ordinance of 1882 (Fafunwa 36) until 1969, when it was directed that “the schools should start developing and projecting the Nigerian, African culture, arts and language as well the world cultural heritage” (45); and despite the several reviews of the *National Policy on Education*, the curriculum framework for Nigerian primary and secondary schools does not consider dance as a subject area in spite of the obviously changing society. In this regard, what will shape the “... knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours...” (Process of..., 3) are yet to be articulated and considered in the development of curriculum in Nigeria. That dance to this day is still not a scoring subject at both primary and secondary school levels speak volumes about the pedagogical limitations of Nigerian curricula and a continuation of the projection of literary drama and the beatification of Thespis. This is a fixation.

Terpsichore in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria – A Pilot Study

Since the introduction of literary drama into the Nigerian university system, dance pedagogy has not received attention comparable to drama which has become an important aspect of training in theatre, dramatic, creative or performing arts departments. This pilot study is to monitor the orientation that the emphasis on the Thespian concept has precipitated against dance in theatre practice in Nigeria. It is the case that a student receives instructions in dance at least in one semester in the course of studies in such departments. The objectives of this pilot study are: to determine from the initial data whether a major study in thespian ideation could be developed; to verify if actually Thespian ideation exists among undergraduates and graduates of theatre arts in Nigerian universities.

This pilot study was designed to assess the comprehension of Terpsichore among theatre artistes. A questionnaire was drawn up and given to a Psychometrician for face/expert validation from which the Nigerian Thespian Ideation Scale (NTIS) was developed comprising nineteen items with twelve of them in a dichotomous format. The procedure for administering the questionnaire was by requesting the participants to be part of the pilot study. Participants were recruited through convenient sampling methods in Calabar, Lagos and Abuja in August 2017. A total of 60 copies of questionnaire were distributed to three undergraduates to contact their classmates and lecturers and another 10 copies were administered by the researcher on theatre arts lecturers. 20 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to professional dance practitioners at a dance seminar in Lagos. Also, to allow broader participation, 10 copies of the questionnaire were

administered on professional theatre practitioners at the National Theatre, Lagos. This pilot study was conducted on a sample of 100 Nigerian theatre artistes in theatre practice and those undergoing theatre studies.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	40	62.5
Female	23	35.9
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
<i>Age</i>		
16-25	20	31.3
26-35	21	32.8
36 above	20	31.3
Missing	3	4.7
Total	64	100
<i>Education</i>		
Undergraduate	13	20.3
BA	26	40.6
MA	10	15.6
PHD	8	12.5
Missing	7	10.9
Total	64	100
<i>Occupation</i>		
Private Sector	11	17.2
Public Theatre	14	21.9
Lecturing/Teaching	17	26.6
Student	13	20.3
Missing	9	14.1
Total	64	100
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	32	50
Married	28	43.8
Divorced	1	1.6
Missing	3	4.7
Total	64	100
<i>Religion</i>		

Christianity	52	81.3
Islam	4	6.3
Others	1	1.6
Missing	7	10.7
Total	64	100

Presentation of Results

The results presented in this section were based on the total number of 64 participants sampled for the pilot study of Thespian ideation in Nigeria. The results are presented below:

Analysis of Table 1

The result in Table 1 is based on the 64 copies of questionnaire duly completed and returned out of the total 100 distributed. This represents 64% response rate; while 36% were either not returned or incomplete. Out of this number, 40 (62.5%) were males, 23 (35.9%) were females, while 1 (1.6%) did not indicate their gender. Participants' age showed that 20 (31.3%) were in the age range from 16-25 years, 32.8% (21) were within 26-35 years, 20 (31.3%) were within the age of 36 years and above; while 3 (4.7%) did not mention their ages. Educational qualification of participants revealed that 13 (20.3%) were undergraduates, 26 (40.6%) had first degree, 10 (15.6%) had master's degree; only 8 (12.5%) had PhD, while 7 (10.9%) did not indicate their levels of education. The result further indicated that 11 (17.2%) were private sector theatre practitioners, 14 (21.9%) were public sector theatre practitioners, 17 (26.6%) were lecturers/teachers, 13 (20.3%) were students and 9 (14.1%) were silent on their occupation. On the marital status of participants, the indication is that, 32 (50%) were singles, 28 (43.8%) were married, 1 (1.6%) was divorced, and 3 (4.7%) did not mention their marital status. Religious affiliation showed that more than 80% of the participants were Christians (52-81.3%); while Muslims were made up of only 6.3% and 1% indicated as other religion while 10.7% were silent on this.

Table 2: Responses on the Thespian Ideation in Nigerian Theatre

Reponses	Frequency(n)	Percent (%)
I have received lectures in drama		
Yes	55	85.9
No	9	14.1
Total	64	100
I have received lectures in dance		
Yes	63	98.4
No	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I have received lectures about Thespis		

Yes	52	81.3
No	11	17.2
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I have received lectures about Terpsichore		
Yes	9	14.1
No	51	79.7
Missing	4	6.3
Total	64	100
I prefer an acting class to a dance class		
Yes	28	43.8
No	36	56.3
Total	64	100
I prefer a dance class to an acting class		
Yes	34	53.1
No	29	45.3
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I know the theories of drama and acting		
Yes	51	79.7
No	12	18.8
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I know the theories of dance and dancing		
Yes	43	67.2
No	21	32.8
Total	64	100
I prefer to be known as a Thespian		
Yes	43	67.2
No	20	31.3
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I prefer to be known as a Terpsichorean		
Yes	11	17.2
No	46	71.9
Missing	7	10.9

Total	64	100
There is a better employment opportunity as an actor		
Yes	47	73.4
No	12	18.8
Missing	5	7.8
Total	64	100
There is a better employment opportunity as a dancer		
Yes	36	56.3
No	27	42.2
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100

Analysis of Table 2

Table 2 presents the responses of participants on the Thespian theatre ideation. The result reveals that the greater percentage (85.9%) representing 55 respondents said they had received lectures in drama; while only 9 (14.1%) said they had not. Also, 98.4% said that they had received lectures in dance; while only 1.6% said, No. Out of the total sample, 52 respondents representing 81.3% reported that they had received lectures about Thespis; while 17.2% representing 11 respondents said they had not and only one respondent did not respond to that statement. On the other hand, a smaller percentage of participants (14.1%) reported that they had received lectures about Terpsichore; while greater number (79.7%) said they had not received such lectures; and 6.3% did not respond. Also, 43.8% of the respondents reported that they preferred an acting class to a dance class while 56.3% said, No, to that statement. However, 53.1% respondents said they preferred a dance class to an acting class, while 45.3% said they do not and 1.6% (1) respondent did not respond. Further, the majority of the respondents (79.7%) said they know the theories of drama and acting, only 12 respondents (18.8%) said they do not know such theories; and only 1.6% (1) was silent. On the knowledge of dance and dancing theories, 43 (67.2%) respondents said, Yes; while 21(32.8%) said no. Also, 43 (67.2%) preferred to be known as a Thespian, 20 (31.3%) respondents do not want to be known as, Thespian. However, only 1.6% (1) of the respondents did not respond. On the other hand, only 11 (17.2%) preferred to be known as, Terpsichorean; 46 (71.9%) do not want to be identified as such and only 7 (10.9%) respondents were silent on this statement.

Finally, 47 (73.4%) respondents believed that there is a better employment opportunity for actors; but 12 (18.8%) said there is no such employment opportunity for actors while 5 (7.8%) did not respond. Also, 36 (56.3%) respondents believed that there is a better employment opportunity for dancers while 27 (42.2%) reported that there is no such employment opportunity with only 1 (1.6%) did not respond to the statement.

Discussion of Findings

For this pilot study a survey instrument based on nineteen items was developed. Seven variables were contained in the questionnaire. The first variable that had to do with the

name of the respondent was optional. The other items were made up of six distinct components namely, lectures in dance and drama, lectures about Thespis and Terpsichore, preference between drama and dance classes, knowledge of the theories of drama and dance, choice of professional titling and employment opportunities for actors and dancers.

Of the 100 copies of questionnaire administered only 64 were completed and returned. Using the sample of 64 theatre graduates and undergraduates, this pilot study confirms that Thespian ideation constitutes impedimenta to the economic survival through dance practice in Nigerian theatre as confirmed from the findings using the NTIS. There are two dimensions in contemporary theatre practice in Nigeria namely, the instructional dimension and the praxis dimension. The instructional dimension is indicated and can be measured by lectures in dance and drama, lectures about Thespis and Terpsichore, preference between drama and dance classes, knowledge of the theories of drama and dance while the praxis dimension is indicated and can be measured by choice of professional nomenclature and employment opportunities for actors and dancers.

Under the instructional dimension, 85.9% received lectures on drama, while 14.1% did not and 98.4% received instruction in dance while 1.6% did not, showing that both subjects are almost at par in terms of lectures received and with negligible percentages of participants who did not. While 81.3% received lectures about Thespis, 17.2% did not. On the other hand, 14.1% received lectures about Terpsichore, while 79.7% did not. This demonstrates a bias in instructional data. Regarding preference for acting and dance classes, 43.8% and 53.1% preferred acting and dance classes respectively whereas 56.3% and 45.3% respectively did not prefer acting and dance classes. Here, there is a greater preference for dance classes than acting classes by both graduates and undergraduates, but the reason for such preference is at the moment blur. In terms of the knowledge of the theories of drama and acting, 79.7% accented to knowing them while 18.8% respondents did not know them whereas on the knowledge of the theories of dance and dancing only 67.7% respondents accented to knowing them; while 32.8% had no knowledge. The indication here is that more theatre practitioners and students have a better grasp of the theories of drama and acting than the theories of dance and dancing.

In considering the praxis dimension, 67.2% prefer to be known as Thespian and 17.2% as Terpsichorean while 31.3% and 71.9% respectively do not prefer either of the nomenclatures. The drift towards Thespian nomenclature indicates the preference of acting to dancing in Nigerian theatre practice. 73.4% of the respondents affirmed that there is a better employment opportunity for the actor while only 56.3% affirmed that there is a better employment opportunity for a dancer. 18.8% and 42.2% respectively are not in agreement that there are better employment opportunities for the actor or the dancer.

This NTIS as conceptualised for use in this pilot study, had undergone face/expert validation, but there is still room for further reliability and validity tests so as to standardise it for international use. Despite the NTIS not being standardised, the findings from this research show that there is significant emphasis on drama and acting

in respect of instructions and practice in Nigerian universities and less of such when it comes to dance. Such preponderance over the years tends to subtly legislate preference for drama and acting and beatify the term Thespian. This pilot data show clearly a marginal knowledge of Terpsichore by only 9 out of 64 respondents. This insignificance reflects the content of theatre arts curriculum as lacking in the theory of dance that touches on its origin even in Greek history, from which Thespis derives significance. Is this philosophical or historical flaw? Is theatre arts curriculum basically derived from Aristotelian schematisations without recognition of other aspects of the theatre? These questions are beyond this paper and the NTIS so developed, but the point is made that Thespian ideation impedes economic survival through dance and therefore there exists an internal and self-imposed economic recession within the theatre in Nigeria.

Recommendations

This paper has argued that Thespian ideation in Nigerian Theatre is part of the institutionalised condescending attitude towards dance which constitutes impedimenta to economic survival through dance. The Nigerian dance practitioner's employability will depend a great deal on capacity informed by a sound knowledge of the history, philosophies, theories, forms, styles, techniques, criticisms and the dynamics that have shaped dance practices in societies. It is, therefore, recommended that:

- The dominance of the canons of literary drama and instructions must be such that dance is not presented as a function of drama, an independent intellectual creative discipline.
- A goal-oriented, holistic and responsive curriculum, sensitive to the developmental needs of the Nigerian society and theatre is recommended against the baseless Thespian fixation.
- An urgent review of the curriculums of basic education and teacher training institutions in Nigeria is also strongly recommended to include dance and train the personnel to teach the subject.
- Although Thespis is recognised as the first actor in the world within the contexts of Greek and modern drama, the notion, mis-education and delusion that all theatre practitioners are Thespians must be vehemently resisted and debunked for the obvious reason that not every theatre practitioner is an actor.
- Finally, the newly developed NTIS questionnaire has not been standardised. It is essentially exploratory. Aware that this pilot study is the first of its kind in developing a Thespian ideation questionnaire in Nigeria, it is recommended that it should be adopted and further standardised by those with interest in measuring the status of dance instruction and practice in Nigeria and elsewhere against the notion of Thespian ideation to redeem the populace from ignorance.

Conclusion

As surmised in this paper, the foetal stirring of what is theatre in contemporary Nigeria was the emergence of literary drama as a colonial consequence. External influences, the institutionalisation of Western drama prototype and the participation of the Nigerian

intelligentsia advanced the course of literary drama and projected the Thespian model against the grain of theatre training and practice in both international and domestic settings. The effort here has been to interrogate the nomenclature of Thespian for the confusion, limitations and delusory claim to represent the totality of the arts of the theatre including dance whose potentials it has limited.

To argue the condescending attitude towards dance due the preponderance of the Thespian fixation in Nigeria, a pilot study with a questionnaire, namely, Nigerian Thespian Ideation Scale (NTIS) was developed and used. The results indicate discrimination in favour of drama and the Thespis while dance and Terpsichore (the Greek muse of dance and song) are little known by students, practitioners and scholars of the theatre in Nigeria. In the final analysis, a review of the curriculum from primary to tertiary levels of education is recommended as the only solution to guarantee balance needs, goals and instructions to include dance in order to save its practitioners the agony of intellectual and psychological road blocks posed by Thespian ideation. Indeed, Thespian ideation is the burden of a skewed theatre pedagogy which must be reversed by a drastic and complete curriculum review in order for the dance as a distinguishable and isolatable philosophical construct in society, to unleash its potentials for the economic survival of its practitioners even in an ailing economy.

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PROSPECTS AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN NIGERIAN STAND-UP COMEDY

Edward Egbo IMO, PhD

Department of Theatre & Film Studies
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Email: eddygoron@yahoo.com

Abstract

Stand-up comedy is basically an art form that is devoted to getting immediate laughs from an audience. It aims at achieving laughter as well as satirise deviant behaviours all with the intent to sustain social order. In Nigeria, it has become a very huge industry. This paper discusses the various career opportunities associated with stand-up comedy as an art form. It undertakes a survivalist appreciation of the career options which stand-up comedy can offer against the backdrop of the alarming rate of unemployment in Nigeria. The need for Nigerian stand-up comics to be exposed cannot be overemphasised as it would aid them to discover themselves as well as the career opportunities in the art of stand-up comedy. The study establishes the fact that the stand-up comedian can as well double as a writer, a psychotherapist, a politician, a brand ambassador, an event manager and a content developer, amongst others. Consequently, the paper advocates the need to develop stand-up comedy courses in relation to entrepreneurship in Nigerian universities.

Introduction

The global economic downturn has thrown most developing countries including Nigeria into economic recession in the 21st century. There has been the scramble amongst the citizens for the limited economic space in a bid to guarantee their livelihood. As the pangs of the economic recession intensified in Nigeria, foreign exchange rates skyrocketed dramatically, and security challenges in some parts of the country, most foreign and even indigenous investors collapsed their businesses in Nigeria thereby laying off the indigenous workforce. The consequences of the layoff was severe and biting, especially as the number of unemployed Nigerian youths (graduates and non-graduates) increased dangerously; thus, creating liberal pathways for socio-economic crimes borne out of the desperation for survival. The proliferation of the economic crimes culminated in serious security challenges that led to the decline in the production of consumables goods by local farmers. In the Niger Delta region for instance, the laying off of the indigenous work force in multi-national corporations rendered most youths jobless and therefore vulnerable to criminal activities, such as, kidnapping, armed robbery, molestation and intimidation of helpless natives. The upsurge of these criminal activities made it impossible for local farmers to access their farmlands and so domestic food products, such as, garri, vegetables, okro, and so on, became scarce even

within the rural markets. It cannot be over emphasised that the inflation in the price of locally produced food stuffs has heightened the gravity of the recession till date.

Understandably, the economic recession in Nigeria was viewed from different perspectives by the citizens, who are the primary victims. Whereas majority of the Nigerian citizenry resorted to the blame game of attributing the economic recession to the poor economic vision of the government, some political bigots see it as a ploy by the opposition parties to discredit the incumbent government in view of their political ambitions. Some optimistic Nigerians conceive it as a global experience that would soon be a thing of the past. Interestingly, entrepreneurial-oriented minds in Nigeria see the recession as a veritable platform to expand their horizons by being economically prudent, creative and enterprising. Paradoxically, the on-going recession has instilled in some Nigerians a new economic vision – a vision driven by creativity, talent and discipline. Today, Nigeria boasts of a handful of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are interested in harnessing young talents, especially in the entertainment industry. This, in turn, has rekindled the spirit of self-reliance and entrepreneurship amongst the teeming population of Nigerian youths.

Entrepreneurship: A Definitional Statement

The term, entrepreneurship, has been subjected to series of definitions since its entrance into the pedagogy of management and social sciences. In their article, entitled, “Entrepreneurship”, Yetisen, Volpatti, Cosku, Cho, Kamrani, Butt, Khademhosseini and Yun define entrepreneurship, as the process of conceiving, designing, showcasing and running a new business which often begins as a small business and involves offering a product, process or service for sale (1). Interestingly, *The Business Dictionary* takes the definition further to include the capacity and willingness to develop, organise, and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit.

History has it that since the early twenty first century, the definition of entrepreneurship has been expanded to unravel how and why some individuals (or teams) identify opportunities, evaluate them as viable, and then decide to exploit them, whereas others do not (Scott and Venkatraman 217). The period also ushered in the business consciousness of the entrepreneurs as they capitalised on these opportunities to develop new products or services, launch new firms or even new industries and in the process, create wealth. It is against this backdrop of the definition of entrepreneurship, as the ability to make profit from small scale businesses through risk bearing that the entrepreneur is commonly seen as a business leader and innovator of new ideas and business processes. Zhang and Cueto admonish that:

Entrepreneurs tend to be good at perceiving new business opportunities and they often exhibit positive biases in the perception (i.e., a bias towards finding new possibilities and seeing unmet market needs) and a pro-risk-taking attitude makes them more likely to exploit the opportunity (7).

The deduction from Zhang and Cueto's statement above is that the entrepreneurial spirit is characterised by innovation and risk-taking. An entrepreneur is typically in control of a commercial undertaking, directing the factors of production, i.e., the human, financial and material resources that are required to exploit a business opportunity. They often act as managers, who oversee the launch and growth of an enterprise. For Robert *Hisrich*, entrepreneurship is the process by which an individual (or team) identifies a business opportunity and acquires and deploys the necessary resources required for its exploitation (6). He adds that, the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities may include actions, such as, developing a business plan, hiring the human resources, acquiring financial and material resources, providing leadership, and being responsible for the venture's success or failure (7).

Importantly also, entrepreneurial activities differ substantially depending on the type of organisation and creativity involved. Entrepreneurship ranges in scale from solo, part-time projects to large-scale undertakings that involve a team and which may create many jobs. According to Scott and Venkatraman, entrepreneurship comprises both "enterprising individuals" and "entrepreneurial opportunities" (21); hence, researchers should study the nature of the individuals, who respond to these opportunities when others do not, the opportunities themselves and the nexus between individuals and opportunities. On the other hand, Reynolds, Hay and Bygrave argue that individuals are motivated to engage in entrepreneurial endeavours driven mainly by necessity or opportunity; that is, individuals pursue entrepreneurship primarily owing to survival needs, or because, they identify business opportunities that satisfy their need for achievement (17).

The views expressed so far in this review, especially the opinion put forward by Reynolds et al. authenticate the thrust of the paper that entrepreneurship is fundamentally an offshoot of man's enthusiasm and quest to survive in a mono-economy, that is, one that is solely dependent on crude oil. Another salient point that we can deduce from the review is that entrepreneurship fosters human capacity drive and development since it insists on breaking new grounds, taking unusual risks and venturing into expanded and sometimes, strange business fields. It is against this backdrop that we shall be examining the entrepreneurial potentials in stand-up comedy, especially as it is practiced in Nigeria in the face of the economic depression.

Stand-up Comedy as a Social Art

The position that laughter and, by extension, comedy are social phenomena, has been expressed by notable comic theorists, such as, William Hazlitt, George Meredith, Susan Langer, Arthur Schopenhauer, Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson, among others. The main concern of stand-up comedy is to achieve laughter as well as satirise deviant behaviours all with the intent to sustain social order. Similarly, it is the business of laughter to repress any tendency on the part of the individual to separate himself from society. Stand-up comedy is basically an art form that is devoted to getting immediate laughs from an audience. However, Judy Carter argues that, "unless the audience is clear about *what* you are joking about, they're not going to laugh" (71). For her, good jokes

are drawn from a creative blend of clarity in the topic and consistency in attitude to the topic. She admonishes further that:

To connect with an audience, comics and comedy writers need to find those topics that they are truly and deeply passionate about and that other people can relate to. These become their authentic topics. For stand-up comics, these topics form the core of their act and shape their *persona* (103).

In stand-up comedy, feedback of the audience is instant and crucial for the comedian's act. Audiences expect a stand-up comic to provide a steady stream of laughs, and a performer is always under great pressure to deliver. Sophie Quirk notes that stand-up comedy is a battle between audience and performer; and that from a comedian's point of view, an audience can be an intimidating and frightening beast (219). In Quirk's analogy, when an audience does not laugh, the act fails and the experience becomes thoroughly unpleasant for the audience as well as the performer. Audiences are threatening because they are powerful. The stand-up act may appear a solo, but the input of the audience is necessary to its success. Carr and Greeves corroborate this position above when they state that:

The audience's laughter is essential to the rhythm of the comic's set; although they aren't talking to him (except for the red-faced drunk in the front row), for the set to be successful it must still function with the to-and-fro rhythm of a conversation, albeit a rather one-sided one (qtd. in Quirk 220).

Thus, the social essence of stand-up comedy lies in the fact that it draws its raw material from the incongruities and eccentricities that arise from man's inability to adapt to the living codes of an ever changing society. Irrespective of any form the theatre takes, the audience remains the most vital element. In the process of performance, the artist conceives the audience not as a group of men and women seated in an auditorium in anticipation of a performance but as members of a corporate society who have come to share their social experiences and common humanity. As a theatrical enterprise, stand-up comedy draws largely from issues of social concern – issues that ignite the risible not on account of tribe, religion or social status but because of our identity as members of the same human community. Lesley Harbidge recognises the sense of bonding and social interaction which stand-up comedy occasions when he posits that:

...the live and informal nature of the comedian's performance, as well as the venue itself, can facilitate a performer/audience relationship unlike that found in most conventional theatre: in stand-up, personalised address and candid geniality intended to strike up rapport with the audience combines with a relaxed, social environment to generate distinctly free-wheeling, organic art form (129).

As part of the creative process, the stand-up audience's consolidated presence, their vital responses and actions are seen to help feed a performance which is as reactive as it is active. Philip Auslander avers that the stand-up comedy audiences are more crucial in shaping the performance more than rock and pop music audiences. According to him:

Music audiences may sing along, even take over temporarily as the singer extends the microphone toward them. Yet stand-up may be even more dialogic: audience and comedian sharing both a physical and a diegetic space, the performance is more than that which unfolds onstage: it is that which unravels at the intersection of audience and comedian (qtd. in Harbidge 129).

The conviction behind labelling stand-up comedy a social art lies in its characteristic tendency to draw from the anomalies, inversions, deviations and repetitions of human actions. It lies in its ability to occasion a gathering of men who have come to ease off the tensions of life through intermittent outbursts of boisterous laughter as well as enjoy some form of social interaction.

Stand-up Comedy in Nigeria

One popular entertainment genre in Nigeria that has harnessed raw talents and transformed them into wealth creation is stand-up comedy. Only a few years ago, stand-up comedy in Nigeria was never associated with wealth, social status and pedigree. Before the commercial successes of Ali Baba as a stand-up comic and Opa William's *Night of a Thousand Laughs* comedy show towards the end of the 20th century, stand-up comedy was never considered a lucrative art form neither was it given a special place within the Nigerian entertainment space. Between the late 1970s and early 1980s, there emerged a special brand of comedians, who were largely television personalities. Taking advantage of their face value either on screen or air, this crop of comedians took up the part-time job of anchoring social events, such as, weddings, children dedications, coronations, beauty pageants and end of year dinner parties and banquets by multinationals and corporate organisations. Sola Fosudo notes that during this period, the names of such veteran artistes and media faces, such as, John Chukwu, Mohammed Danjuma, Sunny Irabor, Bisi Olatilo, Tony St Iyke, came into prominence (See also Ayakoroma 474-486). Interestingly, in spite of the fame and unique comic artistry exerted by comedians of television drama, one did not envisage the birth of stand-up comedy in Nigeria. This crop of comedians became highly patronised largely "because people enjoyed them more when they made them laugh, the comedy side of their business gradually became more explicit" (Nwankwo 55). Like Ayakoroma and Fosudo, Nwankwo further identifies the practitioners of this brand of comedy to include Patrick Doyle, Bisi Olatilo, Femi Segun, Femi Jarrett, Leo Onmudi and Smart Otemu (55).

Since the emergence of Ali Baba into the stand-up comedy scene in Nigeria, there has been several doors that are open to Nigerian stand-up comics, especially the

hardworking, creative and innovative ones. Today, it is no longer exaggerative to state that stand-up comedy in Nigeria holds huge economic prospects for the youths, as they are consistently and meaningful engaged in series of highly subscribed comedy concerts and variety programmes where their creative ingenuities are brought to the fore. In recent times, some top flight stand-up comics in Nigeria have stepped up their game by creating their own brand of comedy entertainment. Some have gone the extra mile of infusing entrepreneurship into stand-up comedy by initiating talent hunt programmes, where budding talents are harnessed and set up with the aim of aiding them to get to get to the peak of their career (*AY's Open Mic* is a ready example).

Ironically, even with the aforementioned innovations in the present day stand-up comedy industry in Nigeria, one cannot claim that the economic potentials as well as the career opportunities in stand-up comedy have been fully explored. A deeper insight into the nature and dynamics of stand-up comedy would reveal the numerous career opportunities at the disposal of stand-up comedians, apart from the routine of standing before an audience to reel out jokes. Coincidentally, Nigeria is grappling with the pangs of a recessed economy as evident in the high cost of local and foreign products, high rate of unemployed youths roaming the streets and constituting a nuisance in extreme cases and inconsistencies in the pay packets of most government workers. Against this backdrop, the patronage of live performances including comedy shows dwindle to the dangerous extent of rubbing off on the supposed economic benefits of the Nigerian stand-up comic. Consequently, this paper is a prescriptive advocacy for Nigerian stand-up comics to surmount the economic recession by exploring available job opportunities that are associated with stand-up comedy.

Career Opportunities in Nigerian Stand-up Comedy

For purposes of clarity, the paper has identified some possible job options for a stand-up comic. It is pertinent to mention at this juncture that the options identified in this paper are by no means definitive since, like other theatre forms, stand-up comedy is a unique and dynamic art form that finds its bearing virtually in all human experiences. The career opportunities include: being a performing artist, an entrepreneur, a content developer, a brand ambassador, a creative writer, a proprietor, a grassroots mobiliser, a politician, an advertising agent/consultant, a motivational speaker, an event manager and a psychotherapist.

- a) ***As a Performing Artist:*** The most prominent career attached to stand-up comedy is the artistry of performing before an audience. Within the confines of this career specification, the stand-up comic is exposed to different performance modes including holding microphone and thrilling his audience with all kinds of jokes. In a bid to make their jokes more graphic, some comics infuse body movements, gesticulations, facial expressions, mannerisms and mime into their performances. Judy Carter observes that,

...the hardest part of performing is engaging the audience. It implies that for a stand-up comic to actualise the goal of currying the audience's

attention, he or she must be able to blend the attitude of his performance with the thematic thrust of his joke. In a typical stand-up comic performance, attitude is often expressed through ...the comic's puzzled expression or in his tone of voice (73).

In this sense, the stand-up comic stands out as a performing artist whose main purpose is to entertain his audience while they get educated and enlightened in the process. The performance space of stand-up comics also stretches to the comic sub-genres of skits, television/radio comedies, sitcoms and full length comedy movies. In this sub-genres, stand-up comedians feature prominently as actors even as they bring in their stand-up comic nuances to the fore. In Nigeria for example, comedians, such as, Ali Baba, Julius Agwu, Yibo Koko, Basorge Tariah Jr., Okey Bakassi and AY (Ayo Makun), among others, have distinguished themselves as not just stand-up comics but as seasoned comic screen actors.

- b) ***As an Entrepreneur:*** It has been established earlier in the study that entrepreneurship entails the mobilisation and utilisation of creative human potentials in order to maximise resources. Stand-up comedy is one art form that opens up to entrepreneurial potentials as it fits in into a wide range of social events and performances. In Nigeria, Bunmi Davis' *Stand Up Naija*, Opa William's *National Comedy Challenge* and *AY's Open Mic* are breeding grounds for budding stand-up comics. Present day independent and sensational Nigerian stand-up comics, such as, MC Acapella, MC Ajebo, Seyi Law, Emeka Smith and Akpororo are products of the entrepreneurial acumen of AY. His entrepreneurial style transcends discovering raw talents and starting the winners with the donations of brand new cars aimed at enhancing their social status as well as creating veritable platforms for them to perform alongside top-flight stand-up comics and other music and screen stars. The winners of the *AY Open Mic* also perform on the big stage of the *AY Live* comedy show, which is adjudged as one of the most subscribed comedy shows in Nigeria.
- c) ***As a Content Developer:*** The business of stand-up comedy involves creating stories taking into cognizance the elements of logic, chronology and coherence. Good jokes are usually woven around topical and trending issues. Similarly, the business of developing content for either a brand or curriculum entails effective market survey so as to determine the demands of the market forces. Today, most companies and institutions develop their brands or curricula against the backdrop of prevailing market forces. Stand-up comedy stands out as an emerging trend in Nigeria that is finding its way into the educational sector. Apart from comedy clubs, some institutions have embarked on the review of their curricula in an attempt to integrate short courses in new trends in comedy. Only recently, Ali Baba was mandated to design special courses on comedy for

the Lagos State University. Like Ali Baba, other comedians can make a living from designing and developing contents for brands and institutions.

- d) **As a Brand Ambassador:** The making of stand-up comics brand ambassadors, especially by international bodies and high class companies in Nigeria translate to huge economic gains for them. It is stating the obvious that a handful of seasoned Nigerian comics such as Ali Baba, Basket Mouth, AY, Gordons, Bovi, Funny Bone, Buchi, Akpororo, Francis Odega and Dan D' Humorous, among others, have landed millions of naira brand ambassadorial contracts with notable communication companies, such as, Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), Globacom and Airtel. At the moment, comedians such as Gordons, Buchi, Basket Mouth, Bovi, Senator and Dan D' Humorous among others have a running contract with Globacom in the latter's *GLO Laffta Fest*, where they tour major cities in Nigeria, as brand ambassadors. Also, Akpororo's endorsement as a brand ambassador of Airtel still subsists. It is believed that their endorsements run into huge amounts compared to their artist fees in normal comedy shows and other social events.
- e) **As a Creative Writer:** Creative writing is one lucrative career at the disposal of the stand-up comic. The business of cracking jokes begins with the conception of ideas. These ideas are then documented creatively through the creative ingenuity of a writer who may not necessarily be a stand-up comic. Mel Helitzer observes that the biggest challenge confronting the humour industry is the dire need for professional writers (2). He further argues that, since there is no official humour organisation, there is no such thing as a certified professional humour writer. According to him, "if you can sell your material or get paid for performing it, you're a professional" (2). Like the playwright, the writer of comedy and jokes whether for stage, radio or television is driven mainly by inspiration and power of imaginative thought. Unfortunately, these two creative virtues are lacking in most stand-up comics especially in Nigeria where a reasonable number of the comics are creatively lazy and so rely on the jokes created by the few hardworking ones.

While we boast of a generous number of stand-up comics in Nigeria since the inception of the sub-genre in the mid-1990s, the number of stand-up comedy, sit-com and skits writers has been insignificant. In her study of the stand-up comedy industry in the United States of America, Carter informs that:

Some stand-up comics who perform supplement their income by writing for other comics. And then there are those funny people who have never done stand-up themselves but who write it for others, such as funnyman Bruce Vilanch, who writes for Bette Midler and the Academy Award Show till date (28).

The implication of Carter's revelation above for the Nigerian stand-up comedy business is that writing of jokes and comedy in general is a lucrative area that has not been explored by Nigerian comics. Often times, most Nigerian comics feel complacent having acquired some level of fame in delivery of jokes forgetting that they could also get more money if they are able to create jokes and sell them off to their fellow stand-up comics. Given that comedy writing is an uncommon venture in Nigeria, there is no doubt that a prospective comedy writer would be meaningfully engaged to the reasonable extent of finding in it a lucrative career outside the routine of performing before an audience. As a point of fact, Ali Baba's outstanding fame and consequently, economic fortune in the stand-up comedy business stem from his authorship of some compilations of jokes and the craft of comedy which are selling very well outside the shores of Nigeria.

The business of comedy writing includes adapting stand-up acts into sitcoms (the example of *Mark Angel's Comedy* skits, translating funny stories into books, magazine articles and newspaper columns, animation writing and speech writing generally (since CEOs and politicians turn to comedy writers to provide sound bites aimed at winning their audiences)

- f) ***As a Proprietor:*** Our reference to proprietorship here would mean the initiator, director or coordinator of a comedy establishment, especially a comedy club. The aggressive emergence of stand-up comedy entertainment in Europe, United States of America and recently, Nigeria has given rise to the setting up of a good number of comedy clubs by stand-up comics and stand-up comedy entrepreneurs. Carter identifies a number of vibrant comedy clubs in the United States of America to include: The Comedy Club at the Stardome (Alabama), Laff's Comedy Cafey (Tucson), Comedy Store (West Hollywood), The Comedy and Magic Club (California), Cobbs Comedy Club (San Francisco), and a host of others (340). In Nigeria, there exist some striving comedy clubs that are managed by stand-up comics.

Apart from the routine of performing jokes before a live audience, the activities of these clubs include engaging the audience in some kind of comic aptitude test with the aim of putting them in comic situations, running satirical commentaries on topical social events, playing host to celebrities by putting them on hot seats and engaging the audience on round table discussions on trending issues. Some notable comedy club variety shows in Nigeria include *Time Out* with Tee A, Bunmi Davis' *Stand Up Naija*, *AY Open Mic*, *Teju Babyface Show*, Angel D Laff's *Port Harcourt Comedy Club* and Geebonz's *Bayelsa Comedy Club*. These comedy clubs double as comedy studios where budding comics are given platforms to improve on their art before introducing them to bigger comedy shows. The enrolment into the comedy clubs requires the payment of statutory membership dues depending on the class and duration of such membership. The proprietor of the comedy club stands out more as a moderator and director rather than a performer.

- g) **As a Mobiliser:** The business of stand-up comedy involves the stand-up comic's mastery of the dispositions of the various kinds of audiences (cultured and uncultured). It implies therefore that an ideal stand-up comic should be imbued with the techniques of holding both cultured and uncultured audiences spell bound with the gift of the gab. The grassroots make up the bulk of uncultured audiences and so it takes a profound sense of humour to reach and mobilise them. Humour is the stock in trade of the stand-up comic; so, it becomes pertinent to engage the services of stand-up comic in the mobilisation of the grassroots whether for political, health, religious or social awareness purposes. Stand-up comics especially in Nigeria have a stable market in the business of mass mobilisation since the country is grappling with myriads of social, political, religious and economic problems that call for consistent mobilisation of the masses through public awareness campaigns and rallies. Notable Nigerian comics, such as, Ali Baba, Julius Agwu, Gbenga Adeyinka, I Go Dye and Basket Mouth, among others, run NGOs dedicated for the mobilisation of Nigerian youths towards self-reliance and empowerment. Similarly, other agencies engage the services of stand-up comics as facilitators in awareness campaigns and rallies.
- h) **As a Politician:** Researches have shown that there complementarity between stand-up comedy and politics with humour being their unifying element. In his study of the political stand-up comedy in America, Robinson attributes the political success of the George Bush family to their dexterity in generating humour through stand-up comedy. Robinson acknowledges the impressive role which Will Rogers played as a comic icon in bringing presidential humour into the mainstream thereby initiating a popular dynamic that brought common Americans and their president into closer and more equitable proximity. According to him:

Rogers encouraged his fellow citizens to understand the performance and reception of humour as a site of cultural exploitation, creativity, and even political resistance, however tame by modern standards. Presidents and their supporters, along with their critics and even their wives, have responded by getting in on the act, perceiving the power of such humour to define, reinforce, and otherwise affect popular opinion (3).

The experience in Nigeria is not different when viewed against the backdrop of the humour-infused leadership style of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo with Ali Baba as the resident comedian of Aso Rock. Ali Baba's profound sense of humour took him to the Nigerian seat of power where he mingled with the political class to the extent that he became associated with the leadership train of Olusegun Obasanjo. Within the same period and much later, Okey Bakassi,

Michael Ogbolosingha, Uche Ogbuagu and Gbenga Adeyinka, among others comedians gained political appointments as Special Advisers on Culture, Tourism and Entertainment, respectively, mainly on account of their professional leanings as stand-up comics. The emphasis here is that the craft of stand-up comedy is in line with the oratorical prowess and fantasies necessary for political engagements. Interestingly, the fame and popularity of stand-up comics are politically advantageous in terms of eliciting public attention and consequently, followership.

- i) ***As an Actor/Agent/Consultant in Advertising:*** By advertising, we mean any conscious effort made towards a product or service to stimulate its favourable demand. The goal of every advertisement is to curry public attention and consequently, patronage. Stand-up comics stand a great chance in terms of designing highly subscribed adverts. Most stand-up comics are often used as actors in radio and television adverts. Carter informs that, “funny people who can add sizzle to an advert copy are cast in high-paying TV commercials” (28). Similarly, a stand-up comic can conveniently double as a voice over performer since the voice over business often requires that comics add funny character voices to cartoons, TV commercials and feature animation. Also, the art of designing an advert piece is synonymous with crafting a joke on a particular theme. Both exercises require high dose of creativity and imagination since they are targeted mainly at audience and consumer excitement and favourable disposition towards the joke and product respectively.
- j) ***As a Motivational Speaker:*** It is stating the obvious that the business of motivational speech delivery entails the infusion of humour regardless of the seriousness of the theme that is being spoken about. Great and motivational speakers such as T. D. Jakes, Myles Munroe, Patrice Mulumba and Pat Utomi, among others, command huge sense of humour in their respective deliveries. It can be argued that the aforementioned names can conveniently engage the audience of Opa William’s *A Night of Thousand Laughs* or *AY Live* in interesting comic moments, while they discuss thorny socio-political and socio-economic issues. Carter corroborates our position above when she states that:

If you have a talent for making people laugh, there are a lot of opportunities for fun and profit just waiting for you. And a person can make it in the funny business without ever getting on stage. Comics express themselves in many different ways... everyone has got something to sell, and comedy sells it best... (20).

Outstanding Nigerian comics, such as, Ali Baba, Gbenga Adeyinka, Julius Agwu, Yibo Koko, Basket Mouth, Owen Gee, MC Abbey and Teju Babyface, among others, are highly subscribed and remunerated by corporate bodies and governmental agencies as motivational speakers. However, it must be stressed

that being a stand-up comic does not make one a motivational speaker automatically being that the latter requires extra, painstaking and sustained research into a wide range of topical issues. Literacy is a key ingredient in the business of motivational speaking. So, any comedian wishing to delve into motivational speaking should be friendly with the books and then the innate creative spirit would accomplish the rest.

- k) ***As a Psychotherapist:*** By psychotherapy we refer to the treatment of people diagnosed with mental and emotional disorders using dialogue and a variety of psychological techniques. In his book, entitled, *Jokes and their Relations*, Elliot Orring notes that humour is dependent upon the social and cultural conventions and understandings that a group shares (x). It implies therefore that humour is a veritable tool which can be used to confront man's social, cultural and psychological experiences. It can be used as a means of coping mechanism for depressed minds and individuals undergoing psychic tension. The psychological basis of humour and consequently, laughter would always find robust expression in a country like Nigeria where untold economic hardship and myriads of security challenges have put the citizens in consistent depressed living conditions which in turn, have resulted in mental and emotional disorders.

Against this background, the stand-up comic, especially in Nigeria, has at his disposal a lucrative career in psychotherapy with psychological jokes as his major tool. Notable Nigerian stand-up comics, such as, Ali Baba, Gandoki, Gbenga Adeyinka, Teju Baby Face, MC Acapella, Akpororo and Dr. Virus are exceptional in the fabrication of jokes that explore the various manifestations of mental disorder and stress among Nigerians as well as the psychological basis for such manifestations. Stand-up comics in this brand can conveniently go in to the business of psychotherapeutic guidance and counselling using their jokes as curative pills. Their services could be extended to Psychiatric hospitals and mental homes.

- l) ***As a Radio /Television Presenter:*** Stand-up comics also have career opportunities as either radio or television presenters. Most radio stations rely on stand-up comics to sustain their listeners' base through comic programmes that are hosted by comics. Carter observes that, "as more talk shows fill the AM and FM airwaves, radio producers are turning to comics to keep their listeners laughing and listening" (28). In Nigeria, there is a handful of television and radio programmes that are hosted by comics. Though, most of these programmes harp on topical social events, their thrust is to elicit laughter from their listeners, as a way of guaranteeing their listenership and consequently, patronage. Iyowuna Obomanu's *Tori for Town* aired on Rivers State Television (RSTV) Channel 22UHF, Port Harcourt is a news programme laced with comic innuendos so as to sustain the viewer's interest. Recently, Okey Bakassi runs *The Other News*, a comic current affairs programme on Channels Television, which lampoons and makes caricature of current political and economic

happenings in Nigeria. In terms of radio, programmes, such as, *Funky 4 Plus 1* on Rhythm 93.7 FM and *Laff and Jamz* on RayPower 106.5 FM, *Laff as You Go* on Love FM, all in Port Harcourt. Prospective stand-up comedians can settle completely for radio or television comedy without recourse to live performances since these two media command mass audiences more than the former.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have established the fact that, the career options of the stand-up comedian transcend the usual pastime of standing before an audience to deliver jokes with the sole aim of eliciting laughter. It posits that a variety of career opportunities are at the disposal of a stand-up comedian, especially in the face of globalisation. However, what is expected of present day Nigerian stand-up comedian is for them to avoid complacency by just reeling out jokes in comedy shows. The comedians must respond positively to the effects of the economic recession in Nigeria through robust encouragement in the spirit of entrepreneurship.

The need for stand-up comedians to extend their research scope beyond crafting and delivering jokes cannot be overemphasised. They must take the business of human capacity building seriously so as to be versatile enough to run the gamut of career opportunities associated with the art of stand-up comedy. They are also encouraged to embrace the idea of diversification so as not to be stuck as stand-up comics. Furthermore, the paper argues that, comedians can also function effectively as business tycoons, politicians, pastors, entrepreneurs and social activists among others. This will go a long way in taking them away from poverty zone as well as boosting the economic viability of the business of stand-up comedy. In this sense, stand-up comedy and consequently, theatre has the potentials as one of the major mechanisms for survival in the face of the economic recession we are experiencing in Nigeria.

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NIGERIAN'S RECESSION: THE DYNAMICS OF NOLLYWOOD'S INTERNET FILMS AND SOLOWOOD PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

Charles OKWUOWULU, PhD

Department of Theatre and Film Studies

University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Email: charles.okwuowulu@uniport.edu.ng

Abstract

*The Nigerian video film industry is greatly influenced by Nigerian society. Nollywood films similarly influence the Nigerian society. The complementary role of Nollywood and its inherent Nigerian society is the thrust of this paper which interrogates the influence of Nigerian recession period on Nollywood's narrativity, production quality and exhibition medium. This will be achieved through interview sessions with selected industry practitioners as well as the review of selected literature in the subject area. The paper argues that Nigerian's recession period occasioned a boom in the internet exhibition method in Nollywood and later reinvigorated the **Solowood** production technique: a technique of multiple film shoot involving the same production apparatus. It calls for a restructuring of Nollywood through enactment of favourable government policies that will entrench best global practices and enable its products to serve as Nigeria's alternative source of major revenue.*

Introduction

Since its pivotal inception in 1992, Nollywood industry has so far grown to an enviable height with relatively meagre support from the Nigerian government. Being propelled by business men, who source production fund, embark on production, as well as, distribution of films, the economic situation of its host country Nigeria naturally affects its framework. Suffice to posit that the fate of the industry to a great extent is determined by the economic situation in Nigeria. Since the production of *Living in Bondage*, Nollywood has reacted in diverse ways to the Nigerian's economic situation. The influence of Nigerian's economic and socio political situations are not only seen in the transformation of production and distribution modes but also in the emergence of different film genres which reflects these situations. Thus, the industry has (un)consciously developed a number of genres, which reflect peculiar circumstances in Nigerian society. To understand the implications and nature of these genres, a concise geopolitical account of the Nigerian nation suffices.

Nigeria, a political construct of the 1914 Lord Lugard's amalgamation of the Northern, Western and Southern protectorates is repeatedly given to misunderstanding presumably occasioned by religious and ideological variance amongst the three major geopolitical zones. This has continually generated conflicts and threatens the existence

of the Nigerian society. These ideological variances in Nigeria are always captured in Nollywood films. Thus, through films like *Suicide Bombers*, *Subsidy Cabal*, *Tribal War*, *Ebola Virus*, *Missing School Girl*, one perceives the socio-political situation in the Nigerian society.

Citing Turner, Barclays Ayakoroma asserts that the emergence of film genre is a function of the synergy between the audience, filmmakers and film producers. He believes that, “genres constitute an integral part of a film movement in a given industry” (83). Making reference to David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Ayakoroma supposes that films produced within a particular period and/nation as well as filmmakers who operate within a common production structure entrench a film movement (89). Tracing the generic developments in Nollywood, he recalls that the commercial success of Kenneth Nnebue’s *Living in Bondage* opened the flood gate to generic penchant to ritual, witchcraft and occult themes in both *Living in Bondage* and other successive films within that period (90). This ritual theme, according Femi to Shaka, replicated the heartbeat of the Nigerian nation at that time. Making a case for the socio-cultural interplay between the Nigerian society and Nollywood, Shaka recalls that the Nigerian society under the military regime at the inception period of video film met its dark ages. According to him, following the tribulation in the society, ritual killings became the order of the day in Nigeria (243). This justifies the development of the ritual genre at the inception of Nollywood.

Along with the ritual and witchcraft generic themes evolved the epic or historical generic. These types of films which attempt to reconstruct our historical past as well as our myths and legends are exemplified in films, such as, the *Battle of Musanga* (Ayakoroma 90). Sequel to the epic genre and in consonance with the societal structure, films that are replete with themes of prostitution trickled into the Nollywood screens from 1995. This genre was championed by *Glamour Girls* (Ayakoroma 90). Shaka recalls that prostitution themes found in early Nigeria films reflected the Nigerian society bedevilled with hardship where girls find prostitutions as a lee way. He observes that, the General Sani Abacha regime was marked by excessive looting of national treasure as well as mass poverty. Human rights abuses are seen in the killing of various journalists, who criticised his government. Following these, mass starvations, ritual killings, as reported in *Otokoto* in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, and other such criminal vices, were the order of the day. Consequently, many young girls migrated to Italy for prostitution. It is in the heat of this scenario that Nollywood was born (241-242).

From the generic themes of prostitution, producers veered into films that dealt with traditional beliefs. Championed by films like *Blood of the Orphan*, these productions gave way to family situation dramas, which seemingly examined particular marital and family relationships from the contemporary perspective. Chico Ejiro’s *Just a Mission* is one of such examples (Ayakoroma 91-92). Thus, in the quest to satisfy public taste, particularly the youths, the romance genre championed by films like *Romantic Attraction* emanated. Nevertheless, with filmic examples of Lancelot Imasuen’s *Issakaba*, which captures the insecurity situation in Aba in Abia State, Nigeria, between the year 1998 and 2002, and the introduction of the community vigilante group, the crime/gangsters genre evolved (Ayakoroma 92-94). It is worth noting that, the film,

Issakaba, drew its title from Bakassi, a vigilante group formed to combat criminals in Aba. In addition, Christian genres equally emerged as a generic form in Nollywood in 1999 following the presumed gullibility of Africans. Heralded by films, such as, Teco Benson's *The Price*, movies in this category succinctly treated religious themes (Ayakoroma 94). Nonetheless, genres that are replete with feminist themes as seen in Zeb Ejiro's *Mortal Inheritance* and most prolifically comedy genres as seen in Amayo Uzo Philips' *Akinokwa* equally emerged. Finally, adventure films that exhibit high energy, physical stunts, chases, battle, fights, escapes and spectacles, emerged. This genre was championed by Teco Benson's *Executive Crime* (Ayakoroma 95).

However, many genres have supposedly emerged after Ayakoroma's detailed generic studies. Since this study is not a generic study on Nollywood, it may not delve into the structure of the emergent genres. However, it is worth noting that films have always responded to circumstances and situations in Nigeria, both in generic development and the attempt to reflect the Nigerian society. For instance, the insecurity in Northern Nigeria orchestrated by Boko Haram has been mirrored in films, such as, Zack Orji's *Suicide Bombers*, a farcical film which ridicules the activities of Boko Haram Islamic terrorist sect in Nigeria. While the insecurity of Boko Haram bedevils Northern Nigeria, the activities of Niger Delta Militants, who rampage Southern Nigeria are captured in films, such as, Nwankwo Agbo's *Subsidy Cabal* and Ikenna Eniekwe's *Liquid Black Gold*. Besides, the multi-ethnic nature and tribal sentiments in Nigerian society is captured in Mac-Collins Chidebe's *Tribal War*. Furthermore, films, such as, *Missing School Girls* and *Dia ris God ooo*, though had not much related content to their titles, examine the topical issue of the kidnap of Chibok School girls, as well as, the aftermath of the kidnap, when the then first Lady of Nigeria, Dame Patience Goodluck Jonathan lamented: "There is God oh", attributing the Chibok kidnap saga as phony; while *Ebola Virus* recaps the Ebola disease saga in Nigeria. These examples have gradually become leading films to various emergent film genres.

Economic Recession in Nigeria

Nigeria was declared to be technically in recession by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. In an attempt to underscore the concept of recession and its effects on the Nollywood industry, Farayibi's definition of recession suffices. Economic recession, according to him, is the decline in the economy, often characterised by rising prices in goods and services, government's inability to meet its financial obligations, poor performance of macroeconomic variables and high exchange rate (1). Barisa Nwinee conceptualises recession as,

...being characterised by a period of negative economic growth for no more than two consecutive quarters. Rise in unemployment, fall in individual production, adjustment in real GDP for inflation decreases, stagnation or fall in incomes or fall, especially with regard to their purchasing power in wholesale and retail sale and increase in government borrowing are considered to be characteristic feature of recession (17).

Over the years, many countries have notably suffered from one form of recession or the other. Farayibi observes that the United States of America suffered economic depression in the 1930s. He equally observes that recently, there was a global financial and economic meltdown attributable to the collapse of the US sub-prime mortgage institutions (2). It is in this line that he outlines many factors that were responsible for the economic meltdown which was seemingly faced in Nigeria between 2015 and 2017. Among such factors was the eleven months delay of President Muhammadu Buhari to form a cabinet when he assumed office on 29th May, 2015. This in-action by the president apparently crippled the economy of the Nigerian nation, as politicians who were not necessarily economic experts took economic decisions, which ordinarily would have been made by the Federal Executive Council (FEC). Sequel to that is the introduction of Treasury Single Account (TSA), which though achieved its aim in curbing corrupt practices, nonetheless stifled credit creation and economic activities in the country. Furthermore, the effect of partial subsidy removal though equally achieved its intention of destroying the cabal in the petroleum industry but caused serious inflation in the prices of goods and services. Besides these factors, the delay in signing the 2016 Appropriation Bill into law is believed to have played a role in crippling the economic activities in the country. In addition, the fall in the global oil prices contributed immensely in the Nigerian's recession. Being a mono-product and dependent economy, the fall in the global oil prices caused dwindling budgetary allocation to the state from the federal government. Consequently, many states were unable to pay workers' salaries (3-7).

In view of Nigerian's recession, Nwinee categorises recession into four spectrum based on its logarithmic scale of magnitude. Thus there are minor, major, severe and ultra-types of recessions. According to him, minor recession is a mild recession, which often encapsulates the period of two or three quarters with a mean quarterly GDP decline of up to 1.5%. There is an immediate recovery of such economy and the macroeconomic indicators return to prerecession level within one or two years. On the other hand, major recession as its name portends is a key economic downturn which lasts between two to four quarters with a mean quarterly decline of between 1% and 3% in GDP growth rates. This type of recession often triggers uproar by the citizenry who often face the negative effects of this type of recession (18).

Furthermore, severe recession refers to a large-scale economic set back which typically lasts for 1-2 years with mean quarterly decline of 3% to 5% GDP growth rates. This is characterised by a fall in the living standard of the citizenry. The country's currency here is often devalued; strikes and protest are often seen in the countries with severe recession. In addition, ultra recession lasts from four to several years. The GDP growth rates decline as much as 20-25% annually. Recovery from ultra-recession lasts upwards of one decade. This type of recession is characterised by institutional crake down. Thus, industrial production and agriculture mostly fold up. There is general hunger by the population who are often faced with deprivation of educational and health services. There is high crime, and inflation rates, and most people emigrate from the country (Nwinee 19). Continuing, Nwinee gives examples of countries that have

suffered minor recession, such as, Sweden (2008), USA (1969-1970), and Japan (2001); all of which lasted for two quarters. Examples of countries with major recession experiences are France (2008-2009), Germany (2008-2009), South Korea (1998), and Japan (2008-2009). These recession periods in the countries lasted for four quarters, except for South Korea, which lasted for three quarters. In addition, recessions that occurred in Thailand (1997-1998), Argentina (2001-2002), USA (2008-2009) and Latvia (2008-2009) are examples of severe recessions that have occurred in history. However, there are no notable examples of ultra-recession (Nwinee 18-19).

Nigeria has oil as its major source of revenue; and such mono-products could either be a blessing or curse to its citizens. According to Nwinee, it is perceived as a curse, citing “resource curse theory”, which states that:

Economics with an excessive exposure to a commodity, such as oil, may become imbalanced. Just as the money from drilling for oils seen as easy and may make an economy slow to develop alternative business sectors, the simple money from trading in assets, and lending against property, may distort a developed economy (7).

Nevertheless, to assume that, the “resource curse theory” is the reason for Nigeria’s economic recession is arguable. Some scholars, such as, Farayibi have attributed many factors outlined above in this paper as responsible for the economic drain which Nigeria faced between 2015 and 2017. Nonetheless, in September 2017, Nigeria presumably moved out of recession. Citing the National Bureau of Statistics, Kieron Monks observes that,

Nigeria’s GDP expanded by 0.55% in the second quarter of 2017 year-on-year, according to National bureau of statistics, ending five consecutive quarters of contraction. Quarter-on-quarter growth for the same period was 3.23% (1).

The (in)accuracy in the National Bureau of Statistics’ supposition that Nigeria has moved out of recession is not subject of debate in this paper; rather, the paper focuses on the effects of Nigeria’s recession period on the Nollywood industry.

The Development of Nollywood’s Internet Exhibition Method

The word, ‘internet film’, is seemingly prevalent among Nollywood stakeholders (producers and its consumers). The transition story of celluloid film to video film format in Nollywood has been adequately documented by scholars, such as, Jonathan Haynes, Onookome Okome, Femi Shaka and a host of others, such that its repetition here would seem a cliché. However, by 2000, the film industry in Nigeria had faced serious marketing challenges because it was threatened by cable television networks championed by Multichoice Television Network whose activities superficially reduced Nollywood DVD patronage. It is believed that the DVD market has been further threatened with the outburst of cinema culture, championed by radical producers, who

ensured that production investments are recouped from the cinema houses before circulating the contents through the DVD markets. Thus, in desperate quest to remain in motion picture business and in conformity with the innovative spur that engineered experimentation which gave birth to the video format from celluloid film, internet film distribution channels emerged. This, of course, was novel as technological novelty via the modernisation in telecom companies enabled motion pictures to be viewed via android phones.

The proliferations of internet distribution networks was made possible by the digitisation of data based information networks and the innovation of Android phones through which viewers can screen visual images in the comfort of their homes. Thus viewers easily watch motion pictures with the aid of Global System for Mobile (GSM) communication networks, which provide platforms through which they employ the use of data to access the internet. This was made easy with the introduction of different platforms where these films are domiciled. This presupposes that the film contents are being domiciled in various internet sites, such as, *YouTube*, a general site which hosts both professional films and armature motion picture contents. Specifically, sites like Netflix, which are paid platforms showing professional Hollywood films, are accessible to teeming viewers on subscription bases. Thus, YouTube has free and unrestricted viewing channels. Since YouTube is a free channel, most amateurs and hobbyists freely watch and upload their videos; while restricted channels, such as, Netflix require subscription before one can preview any content therein. Similarly, there are other restricted YouTube platforms, such as, Amazon, Hulu, iTunes and others, which show Hollywood films.

This internet technology became prominent in Nollywood with the introduction of IrokoTv by Jason Njoku, the company's Managing Director. IrokoTv, a restricted film channe hosted by YouTube, features prominent Nollywood films online to viewers through subscription. Seeing the success made through internet sources, many marketers floated similar channels. One of such Nollywood internet channel is RealNolly, a YouTube channel flouted by a group of 10 prominent marketers. In a personal interview, the Managing Director of RealNolly, George Edmond, noted that he and his fellow marketers, such as, Chinedu Ezenwa (P. Collins), Onyeka Chukwu Okeke (Ossy Affason), Okechukwu Okonkwo (Ogeby Innovation), Uchenna Nwankwo (CWorld Movies), Amos Onwe (Danga Movies), Emeka Onwumeze (Ice Productions), Onyeka Chukwu Oraziaka (Immortal Films), Arinze Onuchukwu (Hallmark Films), Elochukwu Anigwogu (Elonel Int'l), among others, came together to form an online Nigerian film streaming platform, known as, RealNolly. Edmond observed that the company started in 2010 by uploading cluster of various films by the ten marketers (EPs), who formed the company. Somehow, IrokoTV started before RealNolly. But in acknowledging the fact that the world is technologically driven, Edmond asserted that the directors of RealNolly believe that adapting with the trends determines one's survival in the technologically driven industry. Nevertheless, he believed that with the introduction of the online platform, Nigerian film viewers in the Diaspora could now easily access their favourite films (Interview with Edmond).

From the above interview, the researchers deduce that though the DVD and VCD markets were on decline before the advent of different on-line platform, the proliferation of these platforms has so far further impoverished Nigerian DVD and VCDs markets both in Nigeria and abroad.

Nigerian's Economic Recession and its Influence in Nollywood

The effect of the economic recession on the financial returns in Nigeria's film industry is seemingly difficult to determine. This is because an average executive producer, who in Nollywood's production context is popularly known as, a marketer (*film financier*), often claims that there is no money in film production. Beyond these claims, most of them are seen to have invested in hotels and other businesses with the proceeds accrued from film production. This idea of diverting rather than investing back to the Nollywood industry is a subject that requires serious academic interrogation.

In a personal interview with Obi Okoli, a renowned film actor/director, he believes that the Nigerian recession period affected film budgets with a drastic downward review by the executive producers. Thus, artists and crew fees were drastically slashed by executive producers. He asserts that notable producers, such as, Andy Best, P. Collins, Amaco, Trust in God, B.D, and Arisco, who are known for high budget films in Nollywood, produced sparingly within the recession years. In addition, Amaco and Arisco are believed to have been shooting sparingly within this period while Trust in God and B.D. went into low budget internet film productions. While most of them are still yet to produce within these years, others went into soft pornographic internet films with incredibly low production budgets. He recalled that Andy Best who normally shoots an average of four high budget films every year, shot only one and shot about thirty internet film in the year 2016. He equally observes that before Nigerian went into recession, a group of ten marketers had floated an internet film channel known as RealNolly in the year 2010. Thus, during the recession period, many producers who could no longer afford high budget films went into low budget internet film productions, since they found ready distribution channel through the RealNolly platform (Interview with Okolo).

On his part, Larry Ebere, a budding Nollywood actor, asserts that at the inception of the recession period in Nigeria, VCD/DVD markets had seemingly crashed. Thus, following the desperate instinct of some film marketers for survival, Prime World Movies opened his personal YouTube channel, where he uploaded all his films for global viewership. With an online account, he would make money from viewers, who subscribed to his channel and watched his films. He is believed to have made a good sum of money from this arrangement. The general thinking in the industry is that, P. Collins Movies collaborated with the other marketers to establish RealNolly TV channel because they saw this huge financial returns Prime World Movies got. RealNolly channel features sub-channels, such as, Best of Patience Ozokwor, Tonto Dike, John Okafor, Peter Edochie, and Mercy Johnson movies among others (Interview with Ebere).

As earlier pointed out, the effect of recession had affected the cash flow in the film industry and many marketers resulted to internet films with the emergent soft

pornographic genre. Thus, through this channel, these soft pornographic films were uploaded onto the internet. Though the soft pornographic films were not acted by the aforementioned star actors whose names and images were used to promote these channels, the pornographic postures of the actors that featured in such films generated serious traffic in these channel as fans of these notable actors are seemingly misled to believe that the soft pornographic films were acted by the star actors. However, as the fan base of these channels expanded through the pornographic postures of the emergent soft pornographic of artists who are often used as their selling points/strategies, YouTube channel took serious frowned at it. It is believed that these pornographic channels are greatly patronised by Arab countries as a result of restrictions placed on such liberal sexual lives by their religion. Thus, such pornographic contents provided a window of sensual satisfaction of their animalistic instincts (Interview with Ebere).

As earlier stated, the multiple traffic generated by these soft pornographic channels meant so much money for both the channel managing directors as well as the content providers. While the independent producers who flooded these internet channels made deluge returns through these pornographic contents, YouTube, the host server issued serious warnings to the host channels to eschew from displaying these bizarre contents. These warnings were scarcely adhered to by most of the channel operators. Subsequently, most of these channels were shut down by YouTube. The promoters of RealNolly TV were affected a bit as some of their channels were shut down by YouTube. So, they embarked on a serious campaign to content providers to eschew pornographic scenes in the films they shoot. Subsequently, RealNolly TV started censoring film contents before uploading on their channels. Thus, RealNolly has come up with policies to curb the production of soft pornographic films and this has taken producers back to the drawing board (Interview with Ebere).

This action appears to have revamped the quality of productions as most marketers have gradually returned to shooting what is superficially seen as semi-high budget films. However, the seemingly semi-high budget films are being greatly controlled by what we refer to as, the *Solowood* technique. This technique is being championed by Solomon Apata, whose production technique is fuelled by the Nigerian recession's survival strategy vis-à-vis the collapse of soft porn channels. To firmly underscore the effects of recession on Nollywood, *Solowood* production technique suffices.

The Development of *Solowood* Production Techniques

As earlier observed, with the seeming crash of soft pornographic channels on YouTube, producers embraced relative semi-high budget film productions albeit through Solomon Apata, popularly known as Solo Amaco herein referred to as, *Solowood*. With the apparent crash of the low budget film production, Solomon Apata, the current chairman of the Association of Movie Producers (AMP), South East zone is superficially thriving in his production techniques known as, “package film production for marketers” (Interview with Okoli). Obi Okoli affirms that, Solo Apata achieves this by meeting marketers who perhaps have a budget of about three million naira for the production of a particular film. These marketers would have enlisted particular star artists they intend to

use for the film. Solo Apata would convince them (marketers) for him to produce such a film for them with the same stars at half the budgeted amount. This drastic budget reduction attracts many marketers to him and as such affords him the opportunity to handle many films (an average of six film productions from different marketers) at every point in time. In producing this number of films, which he regularly does simultaneously and in a concurrent location, he uses the same production indexes, such as, cast and crew, welfare, equipment, costumes, sets and props to achieve them. He equally achieves great price reduction through bulk negotiations with actors and crew members for this number of film productions (Interview with Okoli).

Larry Ebere, who relocated from Lagos to Asaba for the purpose of film acting, said he had done 23 films for Solomon Apata in this *solowood* marathon arrangement. He recalled that Solomon Apata was instrumental to the relocation of Nollywood production base from Enugu to Asaba. He equally observed that star actors, such as, Mercy Johnson, Mike Ezuruonye, and so many others emerged from this *Solowood* concept before the economic recession (Interview with Ebere).

It is important to note that, *Solowood's* production technique did not start as a result of the economic recession in Nigeria. Rather, the recession, which left most movie marketers nearly going bankrupt found the *Solowood* arrangement as a safe haven. Larry Ebere recalls that shortly before the economic recession, the *Solowood* arrangement with executive producers (Marketers) crashed as a result of its overbearing nature of duplication of sets, props, costumes and narrative style. However, he attributes its re-emergence to the economic recession in Nigeria, because it is the reason why some financially helpless marketers resorted to the arrangement (Interview with Ebere).

Conclusion

It is a common knowledge that Nollywood has grown through the undaunted efforts of private sector investors. However, the industry is still very fragile and flexible to the Nigerian socio-culture and economic dynamism. This flexible and unpredictable nature of the industry requires stability through strong policy formulation and implementation by the government. This is because the industry is still left in the hands of the business moguls whose major concern is profit making. Being a popular culture, the industry may always reinvent several strategies to remain afloat in business amidst troubling economic situations. However, Nollywood needs to be taken away from its one-man structure business to a corporate business nature. That way, a national film commission can be established with the focus of ensuring that the image of the country is laundered through Nollywood films.

The polarisation of the different internet distribution networks will impact negatively on Nollywood if the situation is not adequately handled. Beyond misrepresenting the Nigerian society to the outside world, its low budget nature had left most professional artistes and crew members bankrupt. This is because some of the internet film budgets fluctuated between one hundred thousand naira (₦100,000.00) and two hundred thousand naira (₦200,000.00), an amount barely enough to pay a “C” rated artist in Nollywood. However, the producers of this genre of films made millions of money while it lasted. It is therefore recommended, following Farayibi’s advice, that

there is a great need for diversification of the structural base of the nation's economy away from oil (3-7). Farayibi's suggestion of diversification in Nigeria's mono-economy structure is apt as the Nollywood industry should be adopted as an alternative avenue for revenue generation in Nigeria.

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MARKETING BEYOND ECONOMIC DEPRESSION: AN EXPOSÉ OF NOLLYWOOD'S 5PS MARKETING FRAMEWORK

Femi Okiremuette SHAKA, PhD

Professor of Film Studies
Department of Theatre & Film studies
University of Port Harcourt
Port Harcourt, Rivers State
Email: femishaka@yahoo.com

&

Chisimdi Udoka IHENTUGE, PhD

Theatre Arts Department
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education
Owerri, Imo State
Email: ihentugechisimdi@yahoo.com

Abstract

Nollywood is a cultural child of circumstances, benefitting from the collapse of the cinema industry. Several factors led to the collapse of cinema in Nigeria among which is the economic crisis that rocked Nigeria during the General Babangida-led Administration. Since the inception of Nollywood in the early 1990s, the marketers have continued to experiment to sustain the industry with varying degrees of successes and failures. The reality on ground is that Nigeria has a thriving video film industry which has become a model of some sort to other countries. What exactly is/are the factor(s) sustaining the Nigerian video film industry, popularly referred to as, Nollywood? This study set out to examine the sustaining force in Nollywood through a testing of the McCarthy's 4Ps marketing framework on the industry. The work is a part of a larger research work that employed both primary and secondary research methods and covered the film markets in Idumota and Alaba both in Lagos State, and Electro-Mart Onitsha in Anambra State. It is discovered that the 4Ps marketing mix does not strictly apply in Nollywood. But there is in existence in Nollywood a framework termed, the Nollywood's 5Ps marketing framework, which employs McCarthy's 4Ps marketing framework and an additional 'P', termed, 'Personalisation'. The paper recommends, among other things that, there is need for proper situation of Nollywood and the other creative industries under a government ministry; and that Nollywood marketers should endeavour to make available verifiable statistics about their production costs and film earnings at every point in time for research and documentation purposes in line with international best practices.

Introduction

The creative industries have been at the forefront of entrepreneurial, cultural, social, economic and innovative developments in the 21st century and the film industry is a major player here. In the global economy, it is an undisputed fact that the film industry is a noteworthy player – a significant contributor to world economy. The film industry, according to Akpovi-Esade, contributes to world economy first as a weighty driver of employment and personal income: “Economically, the industry turns over billions of dollars and generates millions of jobs annually worldwide” (cited in Omowale 312). Citing the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), Pangarker and Smit re-echo this situation thus:

Worldwide box office revenue for all films released during 2010 was estimated at \$31.8 billion. In the United States of America (USA) alone, the industry is a major employer, supporting over 2.2 million jobs, and paying over \$137 billion in total wages in 2009. Direct jobs in the film industry in the USA generated \$40.5 billion in wages, with an average salary 26% higher than the national average. Jobs in the core business of production, marketing, manufacturing and distribution of films were estimated at 272000 in 2009 (247).

In the case of Bollywood, the film industry in India, Bouka, Merkouri and Metaxas posit thus: “The Indian film industry produces more movies and sells more tickets than any other film industry. Her incomes are only surpassed by the incomes of U.S.A movies” (11). Many developing countries have also evolved local film industries that have contributed to their local economies. Rosnan and Abdul Aziz affirm this view saying:

Outside the U.S., the film industry has contributed significantly to the economy of countries like South Korea, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. This development is a result of the economic potential of this industry that could contribute to income generation and employment creation and the realisation that the film industry could be developed as a means of economic diversification (198).

Economically, developing countries, like Nigeria, have recognised the opportunities brought about by the globalisation of the film business and have strived to take advantage of it. Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, is a multi-billion dollar industry that contributes immensely to the Nigerian economy. In the words of Akpovi-Esade, “the Nigerian film industry, known as Nollywood... has a market potential, relative to the size of the economy, of over N522billion” (cited in Omowale 313). Nollywood has attracted a new wave of international interest since after the May 2009 UNESCO report analysis from which two issues were raised thus: “that Nollywood was now the second largest film industry in the world, and that it had achieved this feat from the bottom up, without the benefit of state assistance” (Bud 91). Hence, Bud cites

Jedlowski as asserting that, on reflection, UNESCO's allusions of "both Nollywood's lofty position in the international rankings and the lack of state involvement in this 'success story' are dubious", as they are "not based on any primary data collection by UNESCO" (91). The implication is that there is need for research to ascertain how the industry has really fared under its present distribution/marketing framework. Also, there is need to interrogate the existence or non-existence of a marketing framework in Nollywood. Thus, this study aims at answering three questions: What are the business strategies and/or marketing framework(s) sustaining the Nollywood industry? How far can such business strategies and/or marketing framework(s) sustain the industry? Can the strategies give the Nollywood industry a competitive edge in the global film market?

Conceptual Framework

McCarthy's 4Ps Marketing Framework/Mix

Marketing framework (is used to. *cancel*) refer to the logical flow of a firm's marketing plan which contains some components that jointly work to bring to reality the marketing vision of the firm. It is also believed that marketing framework refers to "the elements an organisation controls that can be used to satisfy or communicate with the customers" (Zeithaml and Bitner 23). Marketing framework is a critical factor in deciding the performance/success of a firm or an industry. The 4Ps of marketing is a framework used by firms to (make/take) marketing decisions. The Canadian author, Jerome E. McCarthy, called the 4Ps the marketing mix. With this, he classified marketing activities into four broad headings: *Product, Price, Place* and *Promotion*. To Smith and Taylor, the marketing mix "is essentially a conceptual framework that helps to structure the approach to each marketing challenge" (6). The 4Ps marketing framework has been vigorously criticised as oversimplified and out-dated. Yet, Smith and Taylor strongly uphold the view that, "the 4Ps nevertheless do provide a basic framework" for firms (27).

Marketing scholars are agreed on the view that the term "marketing mix" was developed by Neil Borden, the President of the American Marketing Association, who first started using the phrase in 1949 (Baalbaki para. 1; Kasabov para. 1). Gandolfo Dominici supports this view by positing that, "the business environment faced many changes since when, in 1953, Neil Borden for the first time introduced the term *marketing mix* in his speech at the American Marketing Association" (17). Yet, there are other accounts of its origin. In one account, Goi states thus: "Borden ... claims to be the first to have used the term marketing mix and that it was suggested to him by Culliton's ..." (2). Baalbaki supports this by quoting Culliton, as stating that, "An executive is a mixer of ingredients, who sometimes follows a recipe as he goes along, sometimes adapts a recipe to the ingredients immediately available, and sometimes experiments with or invents ingredients no one else has tried" (para. 1). The controversy about the origin of 'marketing mix' could be resolved. In the 1940s, James Culliton used the word, "mixer of ingredients", to describe the position of the marketing manager. After over a decade, Neil H. Borden adopted Culliton's original idea in an article, entitled, "The Concept of the Marketing Mix". Summarily, Kerrigan states thus:

Culliton ... is credited with the original concept of the marketing mix when he proposed the formulation of a recipe for marketing activities. Following this, Borden ... developed the term 'marketing mix' which has remained a fundamental concept within marketing management since that time (Kerrigan 81).

At that time, the marketing mix had over ten (10) components. These were to be later grouped into four (4) distinct categories notably by Jerome Edmund McCarthy (1920-2015). Chong believes that the marketing mix originated from the single P (price) of microeconomic theory (cited in Goi 2).

Product, price, place and promotion are the constituents of the marketing mix, as proposed by Jerome Edmund McCarthy. Each of these Ps is said to comprise of various other managerial policies, which entail the annexation of other sub-mixes within each. Gandolfo Dominici cites Kalyanam and McIntyre as stating that, McCarthy's marketing mix is

...a collection of thousands of micro-elements clustered together in order to simplify managerial activity. The validity or the exclusion of the traditional mix in the digital context is a matter of if and how it is possible and convenient to extend the number of elements it includes or to dismiss it and create a new one (17).

In the exact words of Dominici, "Jerome McCarthy ... defined the 4Ps marketing mix as a combination of all the factors which managers may leverage to satisfy market needs" (17). As it were, Chai Lee Goi gives a detailed exposé of McCarthy's 4Ps marketing mix thus:

Marketing mix is not a scientific theory, but merely a conceptual framework that identifies thee (*sic*) principal decision making managers make in configuring their offerings to suit consumers' needs. The tools can be used to develop both long-term strategies and short-term tactical programmes.... The idea of the marketing mix is the same idea as when mixing a cake. A baker will alter the proportions of ingredients in a cake depending on the type of cake we wishes to bake. The proportions in the marketing mix can be altered in the same way and differ from the product to product... (2).

The 4Ps marketing mix paradigm has been a major topic of critical discussion between marketing both managers and academics since its evolution. Many point to the weak aspect of the concept that has rendered it obsolete, while many others point to its strongholds that have sustained it as a key element in marketing theory and practice. Chai Lee Goi explains some of the strengths attributed to the McCarthy 4Ps marketing mix in these words:

The main reasons the marketing mix is a powerful concept are (*sic*) It makes marketing seem easy to handle, allows the separation of marketing from other activities of the firm and the delegation of marketing tasks to specialists.... The components of the marketing mix can change a firm's competitive position.... The marketing mix concept also has two important benefits. First, it is an important tool used to enable one to see that the marketing manager's job is, in a large part, a matter of trading off the benefits of one's competitive strengths in the marketing mix against the benefits of others. The second benefit of the marketing mix is that it helps to reveal another dimension of the marketing manager's job. All managers have to allocate available resources among various demands, and the marketing manager will in turn allocate these available resources among the various competitive devices of the marketing mix. In doing so, this will help to instil the marketing philosophy in the organisation... (2).

Also, there are two schools of thoughts tagged, 'the conservatives' and 'the revisionists' among those who have dealt on the concept's limitations. Again, Dominici's analysis of the two schools of thought will suffice here, as it is aptly surmised thus:

There are two different approaches among researchers regards (*sic*) the way to change the traditional marketing mix. Part of the researchers (which we call "*conservatives*") assert that the 4 Ps may continue to be the dominant paradigm of marketing mix in digital contexts, since it is sufficient to change the sub-mixes within each P adding and/or deleting some factors in order to adapt to the new scenario. Other authors (which we call them "*revisionists*") suggest that the 4Ps' framework is now obsolete and propose to add other elements and/or to change the elements of the mix. Both approaches give significant motivations to support their conclusions. This paper aims to clarify these motivations through a review of the main literature on the subject (18).

By the 1990s, the notion of 4Cs was introduced which the exponents project as a more customer-driven replacement of 4Ps arguing that it represents more the interest of the manufacturer. This study opines that rather than take the place of the 4Ps marketing mix, the 4Cs, most especially Robert F. Lauterborn's, have come to sharpen the dimensions of McCarthy 4Ps. Hence, McCarthy's 4Ps marketing framework is adopted as a conceptual framework for this study.

Applying McCarthy's 4Ps Marketing Framework on Nollywood

The individual components of the McCarty's 4P's marketing framework (the marketing mix) exist in the industry but not at the proper awareness level of the marketers. It is imperative to highlight the existence of these individual components of the marketing mix in Nollywood.

Product: The sole product of Nollywood is the video film. The marketing of any product starts with its conception, production and packaging. It is here that the market value of such a product is enhanced. The video films produced in Nollywood can be rightly said to satisfy the viewing taste of many Nigerians, produce some good sales volume and profitability by the standard of the industry. The production of films in Nollywood incorporate certain strategies aimed at enhancing the sale of such a film after production. In a work titled, “Marketing Processes in Nollywood: Re-Assessing Prominent Marketing Considerations in the Making of Nollywood Films”, Shaka, Kalu, and Ihentuge had discussed in details, some of such considerations and strategies to include: storylines and narrative techniques, language use, casting/endorsement including the use of transnational stars, parts syndrome, reigning genre followership trend, reigning genre followership trend (3-15).

Price: From the data collected from survey and the various oral interviews, it is observed that, the various marketers’ unions/guilds/associations determine the pricing of Nollywood films. They usually fix the range of the wholesale/distribution price of the films. The retail prices are not usually under their control but left to the market forces as well as the haggling power of both the retailer and the buyer. Also, issues such as discounts, allowances, credit facilities and payment period are at the discretion of the individual marketer. Once a film is released, the filmmaker usually the marketer, does all he can to recoup his money within the first two weeks referred to as the mating season. Usually, the pirated copies of the new releases flood the market latest two weeks after the release. After the mating season, some form of differential pricing (price tiering) is usually adopted to sell the films. At the release of the film, the high value customers are able and willing to pay the high price of the newly released film. The lower value customers buy such films later at prices that have been reduced. Yet, there are customers who are willing to wait long enough to see such a film much later almost at no cost. Hence, once after the mating season, the price of the films can be “determined by the ‘haggling’ skills of the buyer” (McCall, as cited in Barnard and Toumi 659). Ngozi Emedolibe cites one video vendor on Broad Street, Lagos, as saying of the video films:

If it is new, in the market, it goes for ₦150, but after two or three weeks, it goes for less. You can buy a three pat movie for ₦200 or less. The reason is because whatever we fail to sell is our loss, so we reduce the price to sell it off (“Poor Sales...” 1).

Also, when a marketer observes that his film commands little or no demands, such a marketer can go slightly below the recommended wholesale price so as to at least recoup the production cost.

Place: In McCarthy’s 4P’s framework, Place is made up of some components. They include channels, coverage, assortment, location, inventory, and transport. In

Nollywood, the physical markets are topmost on the list of distribution channels. Even at that, emphasis of the leader marketers is on the major film markets in Onitsha Anambra State, Idumota and Alba International both in Lagos, Pound Road Aba Abia State, and a little of Kano in Kano State. Yet, there are film markets scattered all over the country. Niche marketing and market followership strategies serve these markets. The industry produces a single product, the video films, using generic classification as a form of assortment. Most of the marketers interviewed do not have inventories.

Promotion: The promotional strategies are non-personal selling methods adopted by Nollywood marketers to get their products across to the customers. The marketers surveyed are agreed on the assertion that promotion is not a major factor in ensuring customer satisfaction, or ensuring a high level of sales volume or boosting profitability. Those interviewed are of the view that interpersonal communication (verbal exchange) between the marketers/distributors and the retailers, between the retailers and the buyers, as well as between the consumers themselves create the needed publicity. Yet, the use of posters, flex banners, film jackets and trailers are more rampant in the industry.

The use of posters is aggressively employed in Nollywood to create awareness on new film releases and consequently engender improved sells. This unique and apt promotional technique is used to reach out to the customers. A poster is seen as, “the art gallery of the street.” It is a form that has appealed and will continue to appeal to many. This appeal dates back to around 1870s with the perfection of techniques in colour. Lithography could be said to have made mass production possible. Since then:

Posters have served every mode of PROPAGANDA, social, political, religious, commercial. The arresting clarity of their images, combined with words used dramatically, emotionally, humorously have often continued to impress long after the ideas, events or products they relate to have faded from attention.

So immediate and memorable are posters, and so widely recognised, that they have formed a regular inspiration for image-makers: initiated, reproduced, turned into cult objects, transmitted into other meanings (*original emphasis*) (Waston and Hill 221).

The poster is a promotional technique that is greatly used in Nollywood. The markets, fences of buildings in towns, strategic surfaces, bodies of transportation buses, abandoned vehicles and the likes are all adorned and most times made a mess of with posters as new ones are used to replace old ones. At times, some companies use their posters to cover those of other rival companies, not minding that some of the ones being replaced are still very current. Thus, there is no gainsaying the fact that, the rules guiding the use of posters are greatly abused in Nigeria. Posters are pasted with reckless abandon on surfaces including restricted places. This has necessitated the inscription on walls of such tags as POST NO BILL. This inscription has become a common sight in the country. Film posters are no exceptions here. Major marketers supply their retail agents with a large quantity of posters, which they in turn pass on to others who sell in

smaller units or rental outlets. Film posters surprisingly are pasted on such places and sites, such as, building walls, abandoned vehicles, walls and pillars of bridges, flyovers and pedestal bridges.

A typical Nollywood poster measures 2 x 3 feet. The pictures of the stars and/or celebrities in the film are usually used in the posters. Okunlola Bayo is of the view that since “not all members of the society are literate, therefore, a poster should consist of symbols that could express the message to the illiterate members of the society” (45). Poster designers and filmmakers in Nollywood pay serious attention to certain considerations in the design of the posters. These include layout, wordings, captions, size, legibility, simplicity, attractiveness, colour and pictures/images. However, there have been various cases of deceptive use of posters in the industry, where the images and inscriptions on a poster have nothing whatsoever to do with the film being advertised. This is rampant with the use of pictures suggesting pornography to sell the films. Such descriptive pictures are transferred to the film jackets/packages.

The use of film jackets/packages also compliment the use of posters. Okunlola Bayo gives a detailed description of what a good package should bear thus:

Package is a small-size poster that tells the prospective purchaser. What is inside...a package is three dimensional and therefore must tell its story from all angles and sides. The basic work... is to express a product in such a manner that the observers are directed towards effective selling. Many products are sold on packages because for consumers, well designed packages are readily identifiable, increase the delight of purchasers and add some visual attractiveness to shelves and cupboards where they are displayed for sale (46).

This description perfectly suites the use of film jackets in Nollywood. There are also issues with the use of film jackets/packages in Nollywood. These include wrong colour combination, grammatical errors, typographical errors, and shoddy synopsis on the film jackets among others. The film jackets provide some sense of aesthetics in the markets particularly when the film CDs are slotted into the film jackets and displayed in the stalls.

To Gross and Ward, a trailer is “an advertisement for a film that shows some of the scenes from the film” (260). Trailers are employed in all film industries to stir the interest of viewers in films. This is effective as scenes of the film are shown in all its audio-visual components unlike fliers and posters that are only visual representations. The trailers are usually shown on television stations. But in Nollywood, the use of trailers titles towards self-promotion. Here, a marketer includes in his films trailers of his old films or films in the making. Such films contain trailers of about four other films or more. In Nollywood trailers, “tantalising snippets from the film are...offered to encourage prospective audience as ‘teaser’...” (Ogunleye 88). These, Ogunleye says, “appeal to the listener’s curiosity” and serve as “montage of attraction”, as they offer salient pieces of information, such as, “a run-down of the stars of the film, an insight into the story of the film, but not much, just enough to whet the listener’s appetite for

more” (89). A typical Nollywood trailer is about 120 seconds long though there are some other variations. In many instances, the trailers are used to merely fill the screen time of a film part/season. Hameed Lawal sums up the Nollywood trailer this way: “At present, promotion of films is done through the video films of producers cum marketers and precedes the release of new films. Some of these promos, which are fast becoming a ploy to fill time and space, can sometimes be boring to the audience” (238-239).

Nollywood is different from most other film industries in many aspects. For the purpose of this paper, the area of marketing/distribution is considered here. “Traditional distribution for a film begins with a theatre premiere, followed by a release to retail markets (rental or sale of DVDs), display on premium satellite or cable channels, and, eventually, television” (Hennig-Thurau et al. 63). With this chain, a major part of a film’s revenue is made through the theatre premiere. In this above arrangement, two things are important facts to note. Firstly, there are other money making avenues for film other than the release and sale on video. But this does not apply to Nollywood in strict terms. Secondly, there is a distributor in the strict film sense of it.

The distributor is not a filmmaker or producer but an entrepreneur, a businessman trading in films as an entertainment product. The distributor options or acquires the Theatrical Release Rights of a film with market potential and puts into circulation (that is the market) via rental outlets (that is the cinema halls) of exhibitor(s) who is/are affiliated to his company. Alternatively, the distributor owns his own chain of cinema halls; he is totally responsible for the wholesale and retail marketing of the film (Adesanya 104).

The distributor is completely in charge of the wholesale and retail marketing of the film through exhibitions in cinema halls. Yet the point has to be made that the distributor here is usually “not a one-man affair as it sounds. A distributor is usually a company, duly registered as a corporate body with its full complement of staff” (Adesanya 105). In Nollywood, the release pattern of films favours straight-to-VCDs/DVDs that are immediately pushed into the markets. Here, wholesalers and various shades of retailers are needed to make the films released to reach potential consumers (the film audience). Hence, the term distributor is used in Nollywood to refer to wholesalers of the video films who acquire the films in bulk from the Executive Producer Marketers at relatively low prices and then sale to retailers.

However, it has been established in this paper that all the components of the marketing mix (the 4Ps marketing framework) exist in the Nigerian video film industry, Nollywood, all under the fame grip of the marketers. The marketer is in total control right from pre-production down to retailing of the video films. This is very limited in scope and usually ethnically based. This work proposes a decentralisation of the components of the marketing mix. The production of the video films should be vested in the hands of the creative artists led by the producer. The choice of script/storyline, director, actors/actresses, cinematographer, editor, location, and other pre-production, production and post-production crew members should be made by the producer. The

producers should attempt expounding the market through appropriate market research and prospecting – “the process of locating potential customers” (Peter and Donnelly 171).

Presently, the pricing of Nollywood products is purely at the discretion of the marketers through their unions/associations/guilds. The unions/associations/guilds set the going-rates – the range of prices charged that is the common in the marketplace. Even though the pricing is still customer friendly, it may be right to include the government and representatives of the audience group in determining price. This is with a view to seeing how some form of consumerism can be engendered for Nollywood. The manufacturer price, wholesale price, and recommended retail price of Nollywood films should be justifiably determined. The production costs of films should be made open secrets and factored into the pricing. The promotion aspect should be handled by the marketers and included in the pricing. Ogunleye believes that without appropriate promotion, “the best work of art will remain on the shelf, undisseminated” for long (92).

As regards place, the marketers should be made to be in total control of the marketing of their films via cinema theatres, physical wholesale markets, content delivery platforms, international markets, archival holdings, film fair/festivals and other synergy/ancillary markets. This means a diversification of the sources of revenue for the marketers to ease the over dependence on the sale of the only via VCDs and DVDs. The wholesalers (the distributors) should deal with retailers. A situation where the marketer/distributor sells directly to the retailers and even the consumers directly is not healthy for the industry. Retailers should be in charge of the retailing markets. Video rental clubs and piracy should be phased out in the marketing chain. The proliferation of unions/associations/guilds in the industry should be addressed and the several Unions/Associations/Guilds harmonised.

It should be stated that the McCarthy 4Ps marketing framework does not religiously apply to Nollywood. What obtains is that the individual components of the marketing framework (the marketing mix) exist in the industry but not to the level where the marketers are fully aware of the full detects of each of the components. McCarthy and Perreault had highlighted conditions for proper application of the 4Ps marketing framework, saying:

A good marketing mix needs all four Ps. In fact, they should all be tied together. But is any one more important than the others? Generally speaking, the answer is *no*. *When a manager develops a marketing mix, all decisions about the Ps should be made at the same time*. That’s why the four Ps are arranged around a consumer (c) in a circle – to show that *they are all equally important* (added emphasis) (36).

Some other marketing scholars and theorists have attempted to re-echo the above views to further buttress it. Smith and Taylor state thus:

...is dependent on a balanced marketing mix. A great advertisement may succeed in getting people to go out and ask for a particular product, but

the overall plan fails if, say, the place is wrong. Too much ‘pull’ and not enough ‘push’.... If the goods are not there when they are needed, the ‘success of advertising’ fails. Similarly, the promotion and the place might work to bring a potential customer close to buying a particular product but the price might just put the product out of reach. Finally, the product (or service) must match the promise made through the communications mix if long success (repeat sales) is to be achieved. A customer buys a bad product once (21).

Also writing on the application of the 4Ps framework on business ventures, Ehmke, Fulton and Lusk, admonish thus:

The four P’s – product, price, place, and promotion – should work together in your marketing mix. Often, decisions on one element will influence the choices available in others. Selecting an effective mix for your market will take time and effort, but these will pay off as you satisfy customers and create a profitable business....

Once you have a good marketing mix – the right product at the right price, offered in the right place and promoted in the right way – you will need to continue to stay on top of market changes and adopt your marketing mix as necessary. Marketing is a part of your venture that will never end (5).

The authors go further to discuss the importance of applying a functional framework in any business. In their words: “Your marketing mix should be something you pay careful attention to because the success of your business depends on it.... Customer research is a key element in building an effective marketing mix” (1).

The 5Ps Marketing Framework Nollywood

In the course of this study, it has been noted that the individual components of McCarthy’s 4Ps marketing framework exist in Nollywood. The peculiarity of the industry engenders a situation whereby the marketers manipulate these components of the 4Ps marketing framework at will to achieve desired aim. Yet the industry is unique in exploring the socio-cultural and economic environment of Nigeria to tell the Nigerian (and indeed African) story in a way no other media had hitherto do. Hence, it has an audience, both at home and in Diaspora, so thirsty for this local entertainment almost to the point of fanaticism.

It will be fallacious to argue that Nollywood has no framework simply because it does not strictly fit into the 4Ps marketing framework or any other such. The peculiarities of Nollywood make it difficult for the industry to religiously fit into the jackets of the existing marketing mixes. Worthy of note is the fact that since after the introduction of the traditional 4Ps framework (the marketing mix), the business environment has faced many changes. There has been wide range of studies and researches surpassing the 4Ps. These stem from the need to find a new paradigm for

operative marketing that more specifically define the marketing levers in specific times and circumstances. These have led to the emergence of other marketing frameworks. These new frameworks tend to derive from or are induced by the traditional 4Ps framework, or are modifications of it, or, better still, are reactions to it. They include: Booms and Bitner's 7Ps, Robert Lauterbon's 4Cs, Koichi Shimizus' 4Cs, Peter Bowman's 4Cs of services marketing, and the 7Cs compass model among others. There is also the 8Ps framework, four of which are the traditional 4Ps and the additional 4Ps of Precision, Payment systems, Personalisation and Push and Pull. The 8Ps model was proposed by Chinese researchers of National Taiwan University in 1999. The model sought to highlight the importance accorded to the environment and interaction. Gandolfo Dominici explains the added 4Ps thus:

- a) Precision refers to the increased accuracy of the selection process of the target segment and to market positioning in digital contexts, thanks principally to database management systems;
- b) Payment systems must be secure and easy for customers to use;
- c) Personalisation concerns the possibility to create a flexible interface, which is able to adapt to customers' needs and wills;
- d) Push and Pull regards the choice of trade-off among active communication policies (push) and communication on users' demand (pull) (18-19).

The interest of this study in the additional 4Ps is personalisation. According to Graham, "all marketing tactics are temporary while the marketing itself is essentially experimental. Consequently, marketing mix is fluid and most probably requires a quiver of tactics rather than a standard set of procedures" (cited in Ergen 12). This explains the interest of this study in personalisation as a P in the 8Ps framework. As stated above, "personalisation concerns the possibility to create a flexible interface, which is able to adapt to customers' needs and wills". This is the exact context in which Nollywood marketers have applied the 4Ps marketing framework. They have been able to personalise it – using them to create a flexible interface, which is able to adapt to customers' needs and wills. Hence, this study makes bold to say that the 4Ps of *Product*, *Price*, *Place* and *Promotion* is applied in Nollywood in a personalised fashion thereby creating the *Nollywood's 5Ps Marketing Framework* as the (marketing framework. *Redundant*) that has sustained the industry. This model applies an experimental marketing plan based on marketing mix elements corresponding with the 4Ps of marketing in addition to the 'P' of personalisation as advocated by Chinese researchers of National Taiwan University in 1999. This framework can be diagrammatically represented thus:

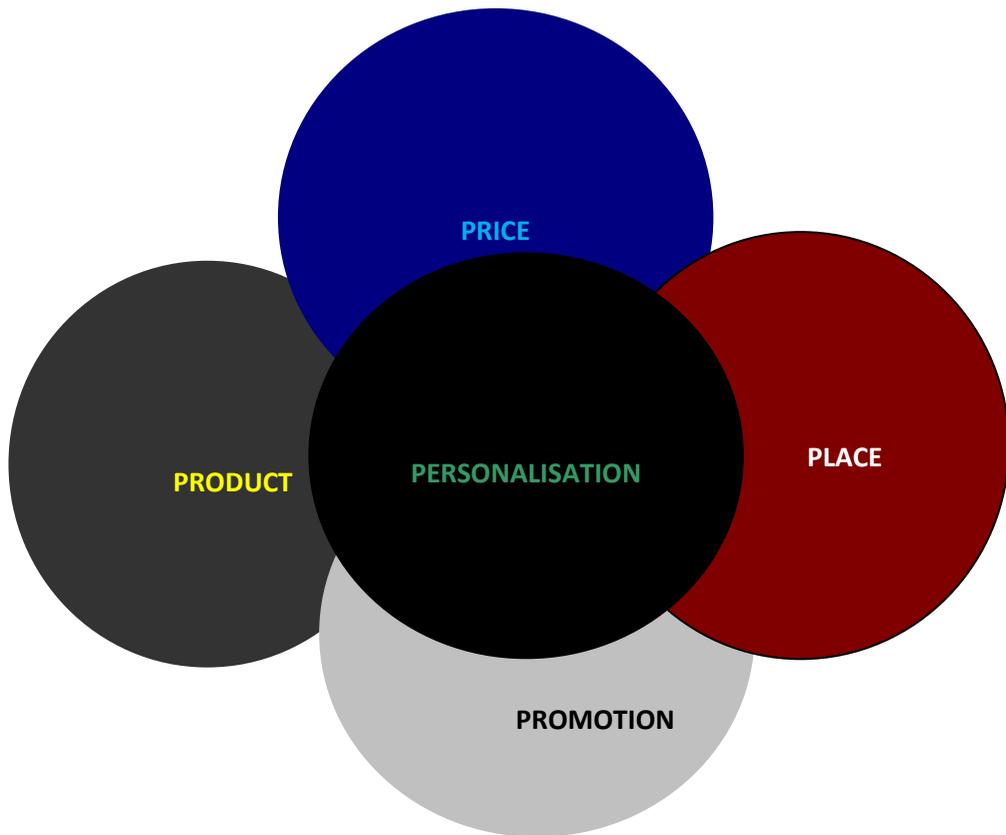


Fig. 1: *Diagrammatic Representation of Nollywood's 5Ps Marketing Framework*

Conclusion

Apart from being a major source of entertainment for Nigerians and indeed Africans both at home and in diaspora, the Nigerian video film industry, Nollywood, is a source of mass employment to Nigerians, and a huge revenue contributor to national economy. However, in spite of its size, the industry has continued to suffer severe revenue bleed. This is obvious as it is a statement of fact that the commercial side of Nollywood dictates the pace of its growth and development, as well as its sociological thrust. The study has interrogated the existence of McCarthy's 4Ps marketing framework in Nollywood. Its finding is that McCarthy's 4Ps marketing framework does not religiously apply in Nollywood. What obtains is that the individual components of the framework (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) exist in the industry in a personalised and flexible manner. Hence, the conclusion that there exists in Nollywood a framework herein referred to as *Nollywood's 5Ps Marketing Framework*. This has been the marketing framework that has sustained the industry this long despite the economic topsy-turvy situations in the country. This model applies an experimental marketing plan based on marketing mix elements corresponding with the traditional 4Ps of marketing in

addition to the 'P' of personalisation as advocated by Chinese researchers of National Taiwan University in 1999. With this marketing framework, the marketers have continued to keep the industry alive surviving various economic hardships. They have also continued to maintain their teeming fan base. Hence, as the Film Makers Cooperative of Nigeria put it, "every film in Nigeria has a potential audience of 15 million people within the country and about 5 million outside" (cited in Evuleocha 411).

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POWER DYNAMICS, SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND REACTIONARY RESPONSES IN BARCLAYS AYAKOROMA'S *A CHANCE TO SURVIVE*

Nonyelum Chibuzo MBA, PhD

Department of English
University of Abuja, Abuja
Email: nakins.pr@hotmail.co.uk

&

Olympus G. EJUE, PhD

Department of Theatre Arts,
University of Abuja, Abuja
Email: olympusflex@gmail.com

Abstract

*The quest for high-quality leadership structure is the greatest desire of any nation. Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed problematic and undesirable leadership capabilities within its workforce and people due to capacity to lead and style. Not only do Nigerians encounter socio-economic challenges but the cognitive disposition of leadership quality has become a worrisome issue as presented by Barclays Ayakoroma in **A Chance to Survive**. This paper examines the patterns of dynamism and change of power in terms of utilisation of power as it ought to be, abuse/absurd use of power, activism as reactionary response to the situational contexts and the causative factors. Development, knowledge of environment and good human resource management are the attributes of good leadership. This is achievable only in people-centred leadership where the welfare of the masses is of utmost importance to the leaders. This demands selfless leadership in order to usher in the growth of the society through creating an enabling environment for survival, people's empowerment and needs satisfaction amongst others. Economic issues and effects of bad administration are usually gender based. As such, the social action theory is used as theoretical frameworks to guide our discussion on the subject matter. The contribution of this paper lies in the bilateral complementarities of the people in leadership cadre and the subjects that are most often ignored by the former.*

Introduction

The crisis associated with leadership in Africa nay Nigeria would continue to persist as long as the strategies for mobilisation towards political power and economic empowerment of the leaders continue to remain the same. Johari defines power in this manner: "power behaves in much the same way as the word 'ability' or 'capability'...'power' derives from certain Latin and French words which mean 'to be able'" (457). Power wields influence and gives one the enablement to do whatever he/she intends to do and even order people and expect obeisance. It is this supremacy

and/or clout that impel the empowered with a lot of access to desire additional and even engage in the mundane concerns of day-to-day life.

There are levels of leadership just as the exhibition of power differs. One does not need to be in the leadership cadre to possess power. Mary Isabella Ezeh describes leadership as “a crucial issue in human civilisation” (157). She goes further to explain the nature of leadership as having the ability to “destroy or transform the prospects of a nation. Where the leadership is self-centred, intellectually bankrupt, morally or ethically bad, government policies, the economy and social life will be affected negatively; Nigeria has ceaselessly struggled to have authentic leadership since independence, but to no avail” (157).

Most often power is explained through diverse forms of leadership, being the commonest basis of power exhibition. Such use of power could be well meant or an abuse. Most people in power get intoxicated by exhibit actions and attitudes that are absurd to human coexistence and rights. Certain impending situations are imminent in Nigeria such that playwrights and other literary writers explore for the purpose of awareness creation, conscientisation and solution possibilities. The issue of corruption for instance, has been a canker in Africa, Nigeria precisely, such that Chinua Achebe declared that leadership was the bane of Nigeria’s problems. It is in the same vein that leadership problem is being projected in Barclays Ayakoroma’s play, *A Chance to Survive*.

Issues concerning human life, development, socio-economic lives of people, empowerment and skill acquisition as well as socio-economic challenges are intertwined with the dynamics of power and leaders at different levels. Ayakoroma’s aim is to ameliorate Nigerian society from certain cankers that have eaten deep into her fabrics. A critical assessment of the Nigerian society along the same lines is perhaps what prompted Emasealu into saying that: “illiteracy, unrestrained population growth, a high mortality syndrome, a cancerous tumour of ethnicism and corruption worsened by the deadly phenomenon of superstition” (9), is contributory to the numerous problems of Nigeria as a nation. Indeed, these negative attributes tend to hinder societal development; hence, the efforts of playwrights like, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Olu Obafemi, Esiaba Irobi, Sam Ukala, Barclays Ayakoroma, Rasaki Ojo Bakare, Alex Asigbo, Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, and others are poised to create awareness, educate the masses and proffer possible solutions that will enhance sustainable development.

One of the ways to ensure proper development of a society is to adopt gender ideology which tries to create balance between the patriarchal and feminist ideologies which are found deficient in seeking the good of the male and female genders. In strengthening this point, Emenyi is of the opinion that, “the genders must unite for the constructive development of the human society” (162). To Mabel Ewrierhoma, “gender represents the roles ascribed to females and males within the socio-cultural contexts” (137). The playwright represents this in a typical fashion, with the role played by Adi, Oloye’s mother in the bringing back to life, His Royal Highness (Dr.) Kurokaki from the unprecedented live or die situation he found himself.

This paper examines the power dynamics, socio-economic challenges and reactionary responses as portrayed by Barclays Ayakoroma's *A Chance to Survive* with the view to motivating the pursuit of good leadership qualities that would eschew socio/political self-indulgence.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study offers insights on the leadership context underlying the perpetuation of societal structure of leadership quality as observed in the Nigerian nation. With regards to the framework, Max Weber's social action theory is employed to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors that engender bad leadership in Nigeria. Weber's social action theory posits that individuals attached subjective meanings to their actions and social actions which are intentional behaviour of actors involving motives and feelings (Ritzer and Goodman 127). The level of interpersonal interaction is all-inclusive, especially as the work examines the dynamics of constituent parts of society such as institutions, communities, social status or stratification, social disorder in form of corruption, deviance, greed and so on, within which conflict can be engendered. It becomes the task of the theatre to discover how organisations/institutions can affect the behaviour of leaders in society in terms of how they relate or interact and how economic structures can also affect their decisions.

In this wise, a conflict theory of stratification is also used to explain the individuals material circumstances which is determined by his/her life-style of making a living. Basically, it portrays the human beings as social but conflict-prone animals; hence he/her is frequently in a conflict over control. The play, *A Chance to Survive* is evaluated in the context of transposing the characters in the play as individuals who take full advantage of their subjective status according to the resources available to them and to their contenders. Different individuals or people are most times explained in terms of their divergent self-interests and aspirations in a material world of survival of the fittest. It reveals that: "each individual is basically pursuing his own interests and that there are many situations, notably ones where power is involved, in which those interests are inherently antagonistic" (Kivisto 236). In the context of the play, His Royal Highest (Dr.) Kurokaki depicts a high propensity of situations that inequalities of resources result in efforts by the dominant party to take advantage of the circumstances over the less privileged in society.

Levels of Power in *A Chance to Survive*

A Chance to Survive treats the theme of power and the two main levels of power portrayed in the play are leadership and followership. Just like the plays of Osofisan which focus most times on lack of social justice in Nigeria, *A Chance to Survive* makes Ayakoroma a playwright in politics whose reactions are in tandem with emphasis on economic growth of a people as a crucial object for the development of such a people. From the point of view of addressing the politics of aesthetics in Osofisan's plays, Sam Ukala reiterates that,

these include corruption and insensitive governance; flagrant display of a few of ill-gotten wealth or power to the shock and envy of the poor and powerless majority; the suffering of the masses in a capitalist and/or totalitarian systems; violence as a means of protest; the roles of the individual and the community in bringing about a new and progressive socio/political order and the obstacles on the way (32).

This is an indication that there is almost corruption at all levels of our national and social life, embezzlement, fraud, biasness and nepotism is fast becoming a norm. It is clear that these issues decisively negate human development in any society, especially as they do not lead to the improvement of the human wellbeing.

However, other levels of power emerged through the analysis of the play. Those who lead, no matter at what level, belong to the category of leadership, while those under them belong to the group of followers. The play is an exploration of lack of profundity, greed of the Nigerian traditional rulers and wrong exploration of political and economic power at the expense of their subjects. This appears to be in line with Ugwunna's thoughts that, "the Nigerian situation requires that certain leadership issues be carefully analysed and addressed, and be directed towards solving society's basic problems" (8). Evidently, leaders in Nigeria care less about the welfare of the masses and their inability to achieve and/or develop the community, due to unparalleled greed. The character, His Royal Highness (Dr.) Kurokaki, the great Ibedawe is the representative of the traditional chiefs in Nigeria who most times maintain a rigid dictatorial approach of master-servant or rider-horse relationship. As the custodian of tradition, His Royal Highness is supposed to protect his subjects but instead, he is overtaken by self-aggrandisement and unparalleled greed. He diverts the compensation for gas exploration meant for his community as his, and so receives twenty million naira from the oil company without the knowledge of his people for his personal use.

The entire community of the Ibedawo suffers from the effects of the gas explosion and the compensation money meant to alleviate their suffering does not get to them. Just as power intoxicates, money intoxicates His Royal Highness and therefore rubs him of his sense of reasoning, especially as he does not have the interest of his subjects at heart. He lavishes money meant for his community on his personal interests such as buying of an Honorary Doctoral degree and other grandiose life-style. Just as it is said that nothing is hidden under the sun, such reckless spending and selfishness of Chief Kurokaki got into the ears of the youths of his community. The action based reactionary response of the youths to the treatment meted out on the people by their traditional ruler, is a decision to exercise their power to check the excesses of Chief Kurokaki. This was done under the leadership of the youth leader, Oloye.

Evaluating the play, *A Chance to Survive*, His Royal Highness, Kurokaki became frustrated because of the steps taken by the youths to appoint Oloye as their leader. Being so desperate to continue to be in power becomes cathartic in the Aristotelian sense, hence Chief Kurokaki resorts to the use of black magic he got from a native doctor to eliminate Oloye. While they were summoning Oloye's spirit to destroy him, his late father, Makpa's spirit appeared instead and throws an invisible object at

Chief Kurokaki and he became unconscious. This is a different dimension of power from the two earlier mentioned. This is purely spiritual power from the land of the dead. The evil he planned against Oloye bounced back at him. It was discovered that the only things needed to bring Chief Kurokaki back to consciousness are three electric fish which were scarce to come by.

The scarcity of electric fish at the time in question released the fate of His Royal Highness into the hands of Oloye whose life he sought to take. This is because he (Oloye) possessed several electric fish in his fish pond. This could not have been a problem if not for the selfishness and greediness of His Royal Highness who had sold the fishing rights of the communal lakes to outsiders. It becomes clear that the title of the play, *A Chance to Survive* is born out of the compassion which led to Oloye's eventual decision to save the life of Chief Kurokaki by providing the required electric fishes in spite of all that he had done to him previously. This is another level of power, power to save, which in this case, emanates through the reversal of situation. It is some sort of insight into motivation of action in human behaviour and sympathetic self-identification to provide total spiritual atmosphere of the collective consciousness of the people. This interpersonal interaction to a certain micro level carries the testing of social rituals, with emphasis on the resources and modus operandi that determine the effectiveness of appeal for emotional solidarity. Accordingly, Kivisto asserts that:

Weber comes to an insight parallel to those of Durkheim, Freud and Nietzsche: not only that man is an animal with strong emotional desires and susceptibilities, but that particular forms of social interaction designed to arouse emotions operate to create strongly held beliefs and a sense of solidarity within the community constituted by participation in these rituals (235).

This simply means that the playwright deposited a premium on the achievement of harmony and survival in man's cosmic environment in the hands of the led like Oloye. It is a point whereby, the mechanisms of emotional bonds are created in order to reveal the coordination of common action or gestures. This level of power is not common or constant. However, through much plea and conviction, the utilisation of the power to save is positively handled by Oloye whose family has encountered antagonism, hatred, denial and challenges in the hands of His Royal Highness who is privileged to be in power.

The second main level of power presented by Ayakoroma in *A Chance to Survive* is followership. Through the incidents in the story, Ayakoroma dramatises the smothering temperament and complementary relationship of people in the society irrespective of their class. It shows clearly that in spite of the organisational structure of the society, those at the leadership cadre and the subjects in one way or the other need each other. The love relationship between Oloye and the Princess also reveals caution in inter-personal relationship.

Socio-Economic Challenges and the Quest for Survival

The narrator of the play, *A Chance to Survive*, talks as an observer rather than a participant. However, in terms of the imperatives of human development, he takes the issues to a hitherto unknown level of human knowledge and consciousness. Indeed, the narrator's brief interpretation of the funeral dance and the critical essence of it portray the societal respect for the dead, belief system and cultural placement of the strong women as, "the Amazonian type, the man-woman" (19); and goes further to describe the dead man being celebrated as an honest and upright man. Such a good man as the one being celebrated is not influenced by power as far as honesty is concerned. He finally crowns his explanation with the societal superstitious belief that good men do not live long. The narrator's narration was interrupted by a chaotic situation created by the youths outside protesting for change in the village.

The bone of contention is the abuse of power by the Chiefs/leaders of the village who tend to ignore, though for selfish reasons a positive choice of investments directed at human capital formation. To the youths, these chiefs/leaders who have deliberately held on to investment resources are betrayers. The dead man being celebrated is Oloye's father who was collaboratively killed because of his positive position about the socio/economic wellbeing of his people and the settling of the people by the oil companies that have taken possession of their land. One significant thing about their economic situation is that Oloye's father, who stood for the welfare of his people, has sympathisers and followers who had received tutelage and hope of the vision of activism. There is a strong indication here that; his supporters have continued in the struggle to conscientise and liberate the poor masses from untold hardship. In other words, they had carried on with the ideology of the deceased.

The success of activism in the play lies in the nature of its objectives. When it is not personalized and selfish, the success and life span are more assured. The youths under the leadership of Oloye pursue selfless goals because the suffering of the community people affects the generality of the masses who the youths want to exonerate from suffering/poverty. Oloye succinctly describes the situation as follows: "we do not have fish in our river again; our food crops are not producing, and our only source of water supply is contaminated always because of incessant oil spillages. We have nothing to show for the presence of these companies around us" (20-21). Indeed, like most playwrights who "over time, preoccupied themselves with the predicaments that have befallen man in his rather hostile and complex society" (Ejue 127). Ayakoroma, as a member of his society, is propelled by certain degree of mental responsiveness to censor and reprehend the forces responsible for societal decadence. This is the summary of the economic problems bugging the society whose outcome is the abject poverty of the majority of the people.

The economic situation in the society creates two parallel classes of people in the society that is; the rich and the poor. In order to create a balance and/or alleviate the suffering of the masses in a rapidly changing society however, the oil company deems it fit to recompense the people through their leaders. Charles views on the human development aspect supports this point in this manner:

Interestingly, all multi-lateral agencies now see themselves as working in the interest of human development. In fact, donor agencies are now increasingly concerned that beneficiaries demonstrate that human development programmes are given pride of place not only in the evaluation of change strategies, but in the assessment of their outcomes as well (21).

This shows that, the economic growth of society is strategically pursued with the view to improving the human wellbeing. This notwithstanding, the question remains; does the compensation money released by the oil companies get to the people? There appear to be a betrayal of the trust of the people by their chief(s); as such monies never get to the community. This leads to several accusations by the oil company on the community for sabotage and causes of pipeline vandalisation. On the contrary, the youths see this as only a way to withhold the payment of their compensation.

The youths are resolute to sanitise their community of corruption, oppression, et cetera in order for justice to prevail. The change being agitated for by the youths is that of restoring leadership values and ideals. This agitation poses a threat to His Royal Highness, Kurokaki, hence he became restless. The case of looting and maladministration by His Royal Highness and his council of Chiefs led to the youth's agitation for change. One canker that has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria is that of generation of conflict especially in leadership tussle. The elderly ones refer to the youth as rascals as expressed by His Royal Highness who called them the "misguided rascals" (25). This sounds as if the principle of motivational leadership as a distinct aspect of a good leader to inspire their subordinates towards achieving their goals is thoroughly misplaced.

The message Oloye puts across to His Royal Highness is that, ideas especially when good and progressive in nature, lives on even after the death of the initiator. Such ideas keep germinating in the lives of those who share the same vision with the founder. This makes it possible for the wind of change initiated in the past to keep being projected to yield the expected fruit. Ideas generated by one, lives in others who share the same vision. Though Oloye's father is dead, but the seed (ideas) he planted becomes the stepping stone for the youths' agitation for change and better things for the community. Oloye defends this new ideology as he remarks before His Royal Highness thus: "My father planted the word, someday, in the past...and now it has taken root and is bearing fruit. You can't stop the wind of change now..." (25). Through the use of proverbs, messages are being passed on by both Oloye who is the representative of progressiveness (youths) and His Royal Highness who upholds age and position for wisdom.

The environmental degradation in Niger Delta area caused by gas explosions, affects everyone both old and young and the expectation of the masses is that such effects could be cushioned especially with the twenty million naira compensation given to the masses by the oil companies. The embezzlement of such huge amount triggers off reactions especially from the vibrant youths. Such negligence and abusive use of power by those who have looted and brutalized the land is also portrayed by Esiaba Irobi in his

play, *Nwokedi* and the vibrant youths who took up the challenge of clipping the wings of those who indulge in abusive use of power. In the words of Nwokedi, a character in the play:

Nwokedi: We must revolt against those disembodied godheads, those spotted scavengers of the Sahel Savannah who have plundered this nation like a conquered territory. We must revolt...Have you ever asked yourself what vision they have for us. What vision have they ever had? What is the vision of a grey-haired generation that ruptured the future of their offspring and tore it into shreds? (*He displays Awado's cap.*) This is our future! This is our tomorrow! Friends, where is the life we have come to live? (*There is fury in his chest. Fire in his eyes. Anger between his teeth. The corpers stare at him spell bound.*) We must seize the reins of power in this nation. Every generation comes and go. But each must leave changes... (30).

The socio/political and economic maladies due to poor leadership in the region have further widened the monumental gap between the haves and have-nots, thus creating a class conscious society and gloomy picture of the future of the nation. In this regards, Tsaku, however, insists that:

The insincerity on the part of leadership in the Niger Delta region and the national level has made the crisis to degenerate to this dimension as the enormous resources for the development of the region are merely shared among few individuals and groups who benefits from the crisis in the region and thereby, do not want the resolution of the crisis (326).

The bourgeoisies in the society uphold corruption and marshal out unjust treatment on the people of less economic standing especially on the slightest attempt to expose or prevent acts of corruption involving the rich and people of class in the society. In this regard, the playwright blames the suffering of the people on the greed and self-aggrandisement of the men in power who tend to vitiate the efforts of the masses. Yakubu and Iyav reinforced this assertion more succinctly thus:

playwrights on their parts have an important role to play in shaping attitudes, perspectives and understanding of the populace as they address corruption, exploitation, ethnicity, tyranny, and other ills which increase breeding grounds for war, within the country and the global level (124).

It is a case whereby, the playwright depicts a contest in which man's conscious will is engaged in what appears difficult to attain hence his resilience in making progress is yet actively resisted by the power that be. It is perhaps this attempt by the playwright

to mirror these callous and insensitive realities through his characters that Abbotson affirms that, “law and justice are clearly not synonymous in the eyes of most playwrights” (174). Characters that are relevant to the incidents in the play are created through their speech and behaviour patterns, thereby creating clashes between moral and legal law on one hand, and engaging audience’s judgement on the other hand. The situation is a clear case of power dynamics and reactionary responses to certain unprecedented challenges.

Emerging Relationship, Family Line Continuity and Feud

...women are endowed with mystical insights into the future. This is why a man usually seeks the opinion of his wife or daughter before embarking on any venture of importance. Due to this perceived epistemological depth of women, they tend to fore-warn the entire society on crucial matters (Azeez as cited in Asigbo 19).

Past experiences in life have made some women to prefer caution to outright bravery especially when it has to do with human life. Attribution of wickedness to individuals is imminent in Africa especially in relation to causes of death of certain individuals in the society. This drew a clear demarcation between Oloye’s perception of preparedness for change and that of his mother – Adi who out rightly condemns an open confrontation and frontal attack on His Royal Highness as a mode of achieving positive change. Oloye’s mothers’ recommendation of caution is not as a result of weakness but an outcome of pain, sorrow and death of loved ones which are clearly not based on natural causes. This is an indication that, feud once in existence will always provoke caution in future dealings with life-bound issues. Adi, drums up support for all to see His Royal Highness’ dilemma as that which require thorough reflection and penitence, the type whereby, common sense, understanding and spiritual concerns should take precedence over those that are mundane.

Family line continuity is very vital in Africa. This also explains the reason for Oloye’s mother’s uneasiness. Oloye is the only son of his parents hence his mother’s demand of him to get married and beget grandchildren for her. Meanwhile Oloye’s belief is that, issues concerning marriage should naturally fall into place rather than sort for by human crave and concern. The natural flow of friendship between Oloye and Princess could be an attestation to his claims of naturalness in relationship.

Oloye’s natural air and spontaneity of friendship, devotion and help given to Princess and carrying her bag won her heart. Providing companionship and walking her to the palace, heightens the anger and hatred of His Royal Highness on Oloye and his family. This reaction rather strengthens Oloye’s tenacity to build a strong relationship with Princess not minding the threat by His Royal Highness. However, to give peace a chance, he takes his leave and leaving Princess with these words: “Princess, please let me not spoil your happy family reception. I see you later as agreed. May the day break, your Royal Highness (Dr.) Kurokaki, the great Ibedaowei” (33). Fate has brought the two families’ heirs together in spite of the misunderstanding between them. The younger generation perceives life differently, especially when it comes to matters of being in

love with someone. Just like in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Oloye did not allow the existing feud of the older generation to act as a hindrance to the affection he already has for Princess. Thus, Princess disapproves of her father's reaction towards Oloye and openly declares that her mind is clear and made up, "I like him and if he gets serious about me..." (34).

Determination to have their way becomes the decision of both father and mother. However, as commonly exhibited by most men, Miebi, Princess' mother becomes the object of blame by His Royal Highness as Princess conveys her love for Oloye. Both old and young generations perceive love differently. To the older generation, love is not supposed to be the bedrock of choice of life partner as both tradition demands that both parties learn to love and content with each other when married, being originally strangers to one another. But to the younger generation especially in contemporary Africa, love is the main force of marital unity.

The reactionary behaviour of His Royal Highness is absurd. His instant visit to the widow, Adi, does not befit his status as a royal leader of the community. His threat on Oloye's life if he persists in seeing Princess is normal, but the mode and manner of delivering the message to his mother counters his royal status as, "the father of the whole land" (42), as the First Chief refers to him. Life threat is not taken lightly in the African cosmology, more so that it involves a traditional ruler. Hence Oloye's mother paid a visit to His Royal Highness with her son and three chiefs all in the bid to plead with His Royal Highness to leave Oloye alone. Little did they know that Oloye has a different intention for the visit as he stated clearly before them not minding the purported anger of His Royal Highness. Oloye pours out his mind thus: "...I wanted to state in the presence of you witnesses that I am asking for the fatherly blessing of Your Highness, that is if Princess agrees to marry me" (43). Oloye is so confident of himself in spite of the unhealthy atmosphere His Royal Highness tries to create. What gives Oloye so much confidence is the power of love for the Princess, which he declares openly before His Royal Highness and others without fear. He says: "You are correct, your Royal Highness. It is a real, deep, sincere and affectionate love for my darling Princess" (44).

On the other hand, what reposes confidence on His Royal Highness is his position as the ruler and the fact that he is Princess' father. Ayakoroma's realises that, "Arts becomes useful when it achieves the power to communicate..." (Yerima 93) The character portrayal of Oloye reveals a sarcastic response before leaving the palace with his mother as if to say that; no one is all knowing no matter the position one occupies in the society. In other words, power and knowledge of evil do not lie with royalty alone.

His Royal Highness did not only threaten Oloye but makes attempt to accomplish it by visiting the native doctor to invoke his (Oloye's) spirit in order to kill him. In a somewhat twist of doom, Oloye's father's spirit rather appeared before His Royal Highness and the Native Doctor; and that becomes a serious problem for both of them as the reverse becomes the case. His Royal Highness becomes inert. The only therapy to resuscitate the life of His Royal Highness is electric fish which shockingly to the community became so scarce. Ironically the only person in possession of the electric

fish in his fish pond is Oloye, his targeted victim. Oloye finds it difficult to save the life of His Royal Highness knowing that His Royal Highness is after his (Oloye's) own life.

Princess on her own part finds it difficult to understand how a man who confesses love to her can refuse to save her father's life. She turns violent, slaps Oloye and storms out of his compound. To her, if his love is genuine, the object of her interest should be a concern to him. However, Adi, through her motherly intervention and advice, makes Oloye to understand that the object of interest of the Princess which is her father's life could be a channel of restoration of their love relationship.

The playwright introduces a narrator who recounts the incidents concerning the life of His Royal Highness and his stale relationship with Oloye and the object of his safety, the three electric fish from him (Oloye). However, the electric fish brought by Oloye and administered to His Royal Highness by the native doctor revived his life. Oloye's merciful action worked like a magic and dissolved the hatred of His Royal Highness for him. The Princess not only apologised to him but surrendered her love openly which His Royal Highness commemorated by bringing them together in a fatherly embrace. Ayakoroma's preoccupation here is that genuine love is a serious binding force of opposing partners as it can neutralise hate and turns it into joy.

Conclusion

Barclays Ayakoroma's play, *A Chance to Survive*, aims at awakening the consciousness of the rural folks in understanding the socio/political configurations of their society and how they can better survive as vectors of change and progress. The play is a representation of the inconsistencies, sympathies and frailties of the human nature, especially their fundamental dispositions and traits as they affect functions and positions of leadership at the regional, national and international levels. These humanistic instincts are clearly depicted in the play by the characters' ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Indeed, the playwright upholds a philosophy that rejects supernaturalism and rather stresses an individuals' dignity, worth and capacity for self-realisation through reason.

The playwright engages in a problem – solving effort that encourages change as a process that can make a difference in empowering communal reforms in terms of our human resource policies and practices. In other words, the play, *A Chance to Survive*, provides a platform upon which values and beliefs that are based on the idea that people are basically good and those problems can be solved using an attitude, or way of life centred on humanistic ideals and values. Oloye's mother however had the foresight of the possibility of one good turn leading to another. She visualises the possible power of reversal of decision by His Royal Highness over the relationship and possible marriage of the Princess and Oloye. Besides this mental picture and foresight, one vital dramatic technique adopted by the playwright in the resolution of the conflicts in the story is sudden illness. Abbotson describes the use of illness in drama as an attempt to “humanise the stories of those afflicted and to promote a better understanding of what affects them in order to encourage the general public not to demonise or exploit these people” (128). This explains Ayakoroma's use of the sickness as experienced by His Royal Highness to resolve the conflicts in the play, *A Chance to Survive*. The incidents in the play venerate the saying that ‘experience is the best teacher’. Personal affliction

brings about a re-direction of the human mind stemming from torture and fear of death. The metaphorical death danger and the realisation of the source of life restoration are antidotes to feud and hatred, forgiveness being the master key.

The lesson born out of the situation in *A Chance to Survive* is a deep understanding and realisation by His Royal Highness of the unpredictable nature of life and the future. Ayakoroma proffers forgiveness as solution to feud and hatred and love for one another as a means to avert future problems. The portrayal of His Royal Highness, self-indulgence, and relationships, especially between him and Oloye's family is a precursor of prudence to leaders the world over, to mend their ways and establish harmonious accord for peaceful coexistence with their subjects. In essence, advocating for specific policies on the human survival space of the fiercely partial leadership value that ignores new knowledge and communal growth imperatives is the concern of the playwright.

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ECONOMIC RECESSION, FEMALE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND EMANCIPATION: A STUDY OF OSITA EZENWANEBE'S *ADAUGO* AND AKACHI EZEIGBO'S *HANDS THAT CRUSH STONES*

Martina Ochuwa OMORODION

Department of Creative Arts

University of Lagos

Email: omorodion.martina@gmail.com

Abstract

*Women's economic wellbeing is one area in which the male chauvinists' antics have been concealed. Maybe it has not yet occurred to many women that in the face of financial deprivations, they are tied to the apron strings of men. This paper evaluates the need to emancipate the woman from economic bondage and the denial of the right to eke a living for herself. Unequal pay, poor pay, capitalist exploitation through non-payment of wages for work done, and in some cases, outright denial of the opportunity to work by the male folks constitute the area of discourse that this paper looks at. Furthermore, the need for women to earn money to save the family and make sacrifices in cases where the breadwinners are unable to meet up informs the analysis of the primary data; Osita Ezenwanebe's *Adaugo* and Akachi Ezeigbo's *Hands that Crush Stones*. The paper is hinged on a theoretical framework of socialist feminism and Marxist feminism, which questions the circumstances of the female's inability to excel in an unequal society. It is submitted that given the socio-economic circumstances in which the citizenry is constrained, there is urgent need to consider options that make it critical for womenfolk to assiduously contribute a quota of their productivity for the sustenance of the society.*

Keywords: Recession, Women, Emancipation, Empowerment, Society, Development

Introduction

The prospects of women's socio-cultural and financial independence, especially one in which their fate is tied to the man's authority like is the convention in Africa will arguably leave womanhood perpetually in bondage. There is the bondage of lack of education for the female child, inability to choose one's spouse, conspiratorial denial of inheritance, the maltreatment by the man when power-play comes into the equation, cultural scape-goatism and a guinea pig for religious and cultural taboos. When a woman finds herself within these socio-economic and cultural limitations, with little or no power to undo the status quo, she needs to be emancipated. In this wise, emancipation can be defined as the efforts or process of procuring economic, social and political rights and equality, often for a disenfranchised group. In the same regards,

economic emancipation can be defined as the freedom to determine one's own financial position and future against the current and future circumstances capable of militating against ones wellbeing.

In a bid to emancipate women from entanglement of poverty and economic enslavement, the freedom from culturally inflicted pains and social vices, there is need for a radical redirection of their fate. Therefore, the freedom to earn decent wages which guarantees a better security of life and all that is dear to oneself and dependents cannot be taken lightly. The unflinching conviction fuelling this drive towards economic emancipation is that it grants women greater control of their personal and social life. It also helps provide women with social status and identity which men have deprived them of over the years. The economic emancipation of women ultimately leads to greater productivity, poverty reduction and rapid development as shown by research in the societies that have succeeded in reducing gender gaps.

Literature Review

In an attempt to focus on the concept of economic emancipation of women in Nigerian drama, Osita Ezenwanebe's *Adaugo* and Akachi Ezeigbo's *Hands That Crush Stones* influences the direction of critical commentary as the welfare of the female gender is addressed. Women make up a large percentage of the human population. According to statistics available from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), women make up 40% of the workforce, and women aged 18-65 years are actively involved in the workforce, women also work 65% of the work hour globally. The empowerment of women is key to achieving economic emancipation for women and the nation at large. According to the 7th Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, "there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women". The empowerment of women is the key to building a developing economy. It is said that when you educate a woman you educate a nation. Thus, women are the most powerful force of transformation and progress there is to be harnessed for socio-economic prosperity.

The African woman is faced by discrimination on all sides which adversely affects her productivity. The rights given to women are less emancipatory and more limiting compared to those assigned to men. According to Uma and Fatima Baby, "unequal gender relations imply that men not only can exercise greater power than women in almost all spheres of human functioning but they have also culturally and often legally more sanctioned power over women and have a greater of and access to resources and information" (1). This contributes to the poor and discouraging status of women in the society. In the light of the above, it is said that patriarchy reinforces women subjugation and exploitation. Corroborating this point is Reeves and Braden when they posit that, "dominant cultures reinforce the position of those with economic, political and social power, and therefore tends to reinforce male power" (4). When men have a cultural, economic, religious and political advantage over women, what follows is a situation where women are rendered powerless on all spheres in the society.

A critical look at the Nigerian nation shows that women are powerless on the principles of social stratification, leaving much to be desired with regards to their

fundamental human rights. In furtherance of this notion, Ayodele Ogundipe defines the three principles of social stratification as power, property and prestige (37). It is argued that, the Nigerian man is entitled to greater share of resources as they are culturally regarded as superior. For example, in J. P. Clark's *The Wives Revolt*, the men feel they are entitled to the greater share of the compensation money given to the village by the oil company, not because they worked for it, but simply for the fact that they are called-Men? There is no basis for such arrogation of power and resources given the fact that men and women are literarily, born the same. There is no attempt to share equally between both sexes as the women are regarded as second class citizens and as part of the properties owned by the men. Ogundipe reiterates the fact that because women in general lack power, prestige and property:

The position of women in various systems of stratification determines their life choices and chances. Prestige confers status and honour. It is a purely relational sociological concept, which depends on the respect others are willing to show. Status is based on the socio-economic stature of the individual: an income, occupation, education and social class. Since most women in the Nigerian society are at the lowest socio-economic, educational and social class levels, they have little prestige. Women lack access to other objects signifying success. They lack access to land, to credit, to owning property and to other sources of wealth (37).

The poor widows in Ezeigbo's *Hands That Crush Stone* are the poorest of the earth, the reject of the society. They are forced to do the work that no other person will do, earning slave wages to be able to feed to stay alive. Working under dehumanising conditions they are exploited, abused and ridiculed in their quest for survival. This captures aptly the state and condition of many poor women in developing countries. The struggle for women emancipation is conceptualised in the feminist movement. Feminism is a woman centred ideology that covers issues ranging from gender discrimination, women oppression and exploitation as well as women empowerment. It desires an end to the oppression of women and the achievement of self-fulfilment of the individual woman. According to Emma Goldman,

Emancipation should make it possible for woman to be human in the truest sense. Everything within her that caves assertion and activity should reach its fullest expression; all artificial barriers should be broken, and the road towards greater freedom cleared of every trace of centuries of submission and slavery (219).

Feminist writers and literature have done much to enlighten women on their rights and privileges, to promote the education of the girl child, to encourage participation in politics and advocate equal representation of both sexes in the corridor of power. Yet, there is the need for the economic emancipation of women to be

encouraged and their activities recognised and promoted for the total development of the society. Socialist feminism views capitalism as a social and cultural totality. The subjugation of women is based on the same forces that promote capitalism. While Marxism addresses itself to the class dynamics of a capitalist society, feminism addresses itself to the inequality between the sexes. The focus of this paper is therefore to highlight the importance of economic emancipation of women especially as the economy of many countries around the world is in recession. It also notes the strategies suggested by the playwrights in the plays understudy for women to achieve economic emancipation and to promote the socio-economic development of their society.

Women are generally recognised as the backbone of any society. They play multiple roles of mothers, daughters, wives and sisters. Often times they are saddled with the domestic responsibilities of the home and care of the children. Women also are at the receiving end of unfavourable policies and cultural beliefs. Women often bear the brunt of inequality, oppression, financial dependability, economic exploitation, domestic and gender based violence and other social ills. Ezenwanebe notes that, “critical appraisal of women in modern society shows they are oppressed, marginalised and subdued to an ignoble position vis-a-vis the men” (186). By using strong female protagonist and addressing salient issues that affect women, these playwrights seek to correct female marginalisation and project strategies that promote women emancipation and empowerment. It can be said that women are economically disadvantaged and therefore lack the political power to change their lots. The role of women in economic activities is largely subsistence and mostly consists of unpaid labour. Polygamy which is highly promoted in the traditional African society is based on the need for labour and as a manifestation of a man’s wealth. The agricultural economy needs a consistent available labour which was easily found in women as wives and their children. Hence, when a man marries plenty wives, it is to help out on his farms and increase his fortune, and prestige is only secondary in this situation. Women also engaged in other domestic occupation such as processing of the farm produce, weaving, pottery, dyeing, soap production and trading. Rita Okecha notes that the Nigerian woman is a crucial factor of production as they are largely responsible for the bulk production of crops, processing, preservation and the distribution of farm yields from the farms to the urban area (153).

It is a fact that many women are employed in low paying jobs or run small home stead businesses. The little income earned is channelled into care of the children and home. In many cases especially in polygamous homes, care of the children and the required financial obligation for their upkeep is left in the hand of the woman. Women and children are regarded as a disadvantaged group as they are the most affected by unfavourable policies. Lack of economic emancipation makes her unable to challenge the status quo and obtain political power. Unable to generate wealth due to their low social economic status, they often remain dependent on their husbands and men. This financial poverty is one of the reasons women settle for less and remain in abusive marriages and relationship. The women in Ezeigbo’s *Hands That Crush Stones* are willing to settle for slave wages doing slave work. In layman’s parlance, this is known as, “igedu work” – a work no other person will do. They do not even make demands for

the minimum wage stipulated by the government; their demand is a little increase on the wages paid by Chief Mbu which can barely cover their needs.

The play points out that women the world over are exploited and manipulated by the men. This is because patriarchy ensures that the laws favour the male-folk. Many cultural belief and practices subjugate women to very lowly status. A good example is the law of inheritance which often excludes women from inheriting lands. Widows are also denied access to their late husband's properties and wealth leaving them at the mercy of ruthless capitalist. Women are also forced to do work that are not necessarily financially rewarding but one that would grant them time to care for their families and home as they often play the multiple role of wives and mothers. Their earnings often go into the running of their home leaving barely enough for her personal needs. In the course of their jobs they are faced with abuse, violence, economic deprivation, oppression and exploitation. Reeves and Braden state that:

Women are generally expected to fulfil the reproductive role of bearing and raising children, caring for other family members, and household management tasks, as well as home based production. Men tend to be more associated with productive roles, particularly paid work, and market production. In the labour market, although women's overall participation rates are rising, they tend to be confined to a relatively narrow range of occupations or concentrated in lower grades than men, usually earning less (8).

Ezeigbo's *Hands That Crush Stones* tells the story of poor widows who crush stones with their hands to earn a living. The women embark on a strike action to force their employer Chief Mbu to increase their slave wage. Chief Mbu, apart from being a chief and the custodian of the culture and tradition of the people; is also the local government chairman. He abuses power in an attempt to crush the poor helpless widows and employs violence, manipulation and emotional blackmail to crush the industrial action embarked on by the poor women and widows. Finally, the women are able to have their demands met through the intervention of Madam Udentia, the political opponent of Chief Mbu. Chief Mbu gives in to the demands of the women only to score a political point with the press.

The women in Ezeigbo's *Hands That Crush Stones* are poor helpless women, majority of them are widows. They are faced with limiting conditions and challenges that make economic emancipation a pipe dream. Handicapped by these situations they are forced to subsist on hand-outs from the ruthless capitalist Chief Mbu. The capitalist class owes its existence to the continued exploitation of the working class. Paying less than what they deserve and have worked for, workers are caught in a wage trap, leading to continuous antagonism between the capitalist and the working class. The debilitating conditions faced by the women in *Hands That Crush Stones* are not much different from those faced by the African woman in a developing country. These challenges stand as strong barriers to women's economic, political and socio-cultural empowerment and

emancipation and automatically retard their contribution to national development. Rita Okecha notes the following limitations:

- a) High level of illiteracy;
- b) Lack of access to basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and security;
- c) Lack of expertise and specialised skills;
- d) Poor leadership;
- e) Cultural and traditional practices which are harmful to women;
- f) Lack of access to credit facilities and loans;
- g) Non-existence of assessable loans;
- h) High interest rates from money lenders;
- i) Lack of assets suitable to use as collateral;
- j) Low level of skill acquisition;
- k) Violence against women;
- l) Sexual and reproductive rights denial; and
- m) Lack of access to seek justice and redress (154).

Education is the key to economic empowerment and emancipation. Due to the low level of education attained by the women in *Hands That Crush Stones*, they are easily exploited and subjected to discrimination and oppression. Investment in the education of the girl child is often low compared to that of the male child. Poverty is the leading cause of poor education. The women stone crushers are forced by the hunger to engage in manual labour that needs no skill or expertise. Crushing stones is the only work they can find to do as it is work rejected by other people. According to Uto, “only widows accept to do such slave work”. Frustrated and pushed to the wall the women seek ideas to alleviate their suffering and hunger. Amina suggest that they send out their children to the streets to beg. This shows the loss of dignity a woman who has no economic power experiences. Financial poverty makes women settle for less than ideal. They lose their self-worth and dignity in the bid to make ends meet. Poverty forces these women to take drastic decision. All income generated by the women is channelled into feeding themselves and their children. Their first concern is the wellbeing of their children. The women worry about feeding their children while the strike last. Left with no choice they are ready to give up on the struggle and return to the wretched condition of work. This type of condition will not arise if the women are financially empowered and economically emancipated. They become pawns in the hands of politicians in a bid to feed.

The women promise to vote madam Udentia and to campaign for her if she fulfils her promise to give them foodstuffs. This exchange of vote for the reward of food is one tactics that Nigerian politicians aptly employ. This approach has evolved to what is called, “Stomach Infrastructure”, in some quarters. Okecha notes that financially independent women are useful to their families and fellow women (153). When women are empowered economically they can influence policies and cease to be marginalised. The important role played by women especially market women, during election are highlighted based on the importance and regards with which they are treated. The

widows are able to see Madam Udentia only after they had informed her body guards that they are from the Market women Association. This shows that women are important not only in canvassing votes but in the economic development of the community.

Women are indispensable in the development of any nation. They play important role in the economic growth of the nation. Despite the multiple roles of mother, wives, teacher, nurse, counsellor, advocate, farmer, petty trader played by women, their contributions to the development of the nation are undervalued and poorly appreciated. Bradshaw et al. note the importance and contribution of women to the development of the nation. Citing the research backing The World Bank Gender Mainstreaming Strategy launched in 2001, it states that, “this research highlighted that societies that discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction than societies that treat male and females more equally; and that social gender disparities produce economically inefficient outcomes” (4). Women are regarded as a cheap and reliable source of labour. However, the harrowing situation that leads them into such conditions is not often taken into focus.

Objectification of women as a form of property is evident in their status. All the women are wives, all except two are widows, and they are forced to do menial jobs, performing services for Chief Mbu a patriarchal male. These widows are regarded as the most wretched set of people because they have no man to protect and provide for them. The dependency of women on the men for welfare intensifies underdevelopment and chronic exploitation. They are faced with physical violence, emotional torture and low prestige. Chief Mbu as the Local government chairman is the representative of the government at the grassroots level. He is supposed to provide economically viable environment for the women to flourish. However, because he is a selfish capitalist, his personal interest and profit comes first before that of the women he is supposed to protect. The women are brutalised by the policemen acting on the orders of chief. This proves the Marxist concept that the source of power in the society lays in the economic infrastructure and the forces of production owned by a few. The capitalist class controls directly or indirectly the means of organised violence such as the police. Chief Mbu owns the stone quarry where the women work; he controls the police and manipulates the press in his favour. At all point, the widows (women) are at the receiving end.

In Tess Onwueme’s *The Reign of Wazobia*, Wazobia the regent employs the economic empowerment of women as a means to sustainable development of the society. She projects that an empowered woman is an enlightened one. Wazobia rejects the degradation of women to the lowest social strata. She abolishes harmful widowhood rites and unfavourable practices. All women are equipped with the tools of trade, commerce and education. Violence is employed by Chief Mbu to weaken the resolve of the women and to break their spirit. Singlebone, who is Chief Mbu’s bodyguard and thug beats up Kemi and threatens Uto who is old enough to be his mother with equal violence. Chief Mbu also orders a policeman to use teargas on the innocent and armless women. It is interesting to note that chief Mbu uses his power to manipulate assault and frustrate the poor women. These women are unable to seek redress because they are economically disadvantaged. Their interest is to earn enough to feed on and feed their families. They have no self-aspiration beyond feeding and are trapped in bondage. The

practical gender needs of these women are income earning opportunities, food, safe water, adequate living conditions and healthcare. The lack of these basic needs is as a result of the subordinate position of women in the society. Violence limits a woman and makes her vulnerable. In the quest for social well-being women are exposed to various forms of violence on the job and in the home. Violence against women impedes development and is a threat to economic development. Gender based violence is carried out by the opposite sex (Chief Mbu, Singlebone), while help comes from an empowered woman. Not only is Madam Udenta economically empowered, she is also able to seek political power and command respect because she is educated and informed.

In Ezenwanebe's *Adaugo* the protagonist Adaugo suffers in seeming dumbness but uses her earnings as a clerical officer to save her family from disaster and starvation. Despite the various challenges she faces, Adaugo is able to show that an economically empowered woman is a blessing to the family and the nation. Such a woman is not helplessly nor tied by frustration to a miserable fate nor is she a pawn in the hand of politicians. Adaugo shows through her resilience the important and complementary role a woman plays in the home and society. Adaugo experiences prejudice from her husband who does not want her to work for fear that she is his defying his position. This is an understandable but unfounded fear amongst African men who believe that once a woman starts earning money she becomes uncontrollable. Thus, to maintain patriarchy, the African woman is denied power, opportunity and prestige. However, as the times change there is urgent need for a change in gender relation. The times demand that men and women receive equal opportunities and existing gender roles be reviewed in the developmental process. Ezenwanebe notes that, modern life erodes and redefines the traditional roles and duties of the man as provider and protector as well as the supervisory role of the woman as mother and housekeeper thereby raising concerns on the family structure and survival (7). At the point of economic distress the woman come to the rescue of the family. A woman's loyalty always lies with her family. At all points in time she considers the welfare of her children and the family.

A similar situation is seen in Emeka Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* where the women collectively resist the exploitation and the harassment of the men as well as the unity of the family which is threatened. As stated by the playwright in the introduction of the dramatic text, *Adaugo*, the demands of modern life has made it mandatory that the woman is no longer a weak vessel but rather a partner in the economic, social and cultural pursuits of life. With increased threat to the main source of income, many women have moved from mere supervisory roles to the major performers and providers of the family. Adaugo, through wisdom and hard work, is able to keep her children in school, save her marriage and her home. The poor economic climate puts a lot of stress on the men and even more on the women. But with increased access to education, paid jobs and a higher standard of living, women can gain more political, economic and legal power. Despite the limitations faced by the Nigerian woman, some of these women have been outstanding in their contribution to the society. These women, such as, the late Professor Dora Akinyuli, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and many others serve as inspiration to other women caught in the bondage of hostile socio-cultural and economic environment. The contribution of these empowered women

makes huge impacts on the society and can determine the rate of development achieved by the society. It is mandatory to state that healthy gender relation between both sexes will lead to utmost development of the society in all ramifications.

Conclusion

The death of a partner should not spell doom, hunger, or servitude for the family and the wives. Women have become properties men possess because of their economic dependence on men. The economic emancipation of women leads to the betterment of life for women, the children, the family and the entire nation. As the recession lingers, it is mandatory that women receive better and equal opportunities. Gender gap should be closed through equal opportunity, equal pay, access to loans and better condition of work. There is need for the cooperation of the government, NGOs and other international bodies to collaborate in empowering women and helping them achieve their maximum potentials. The collective effort of these bodies as well those of the members of the society, women and men inclusive will lead to sustainable national growth and development.

There is additional need for the protection and the enforcement of women rights. Although these rights are entrenched in the constitution under the fundamental human rights, the enforcement of these rights are negligible. The neglect of women in all aspect of the society is detrimental to the socio-political and economic wellbeing of the nation. Women participation in public service should be encouraged. Education of the girl child should be made mandatory and enforced at all levels. Collective efforts by women through Self-Help Groups promote cooperation and the achievement of mutual goals for development. Cultural factors, which stand as hindrance to women empowerment should be tackled not only in conference rooms and in books but practically at the grassroots level. There is urgent need for reorientation towards the role and position of a woman. That one is born a woman does not translate to one being automatically subordinate. The roles played by women as wives and mothers are important and worthy of respect. A woman's contribution to the welfare of the family and children should be appreciated and not taken for granted.

Emphasis should be on integrating both the traditional and modern roles played by women. More income generating opportunities, greater control over resources and improved access to credit facilities should be provided. Women should be granted equal opportunities as they have been recognised to be more pragmatic and concerned when it comes to the welfare of the family. It has also been observed that women are more credit worthy this should encourage granting them more access to loans to promote their small scale businesses. Bradshaw et al. cite that the if women farmers access to productive inputs and human capital were at par with that of the men, total agricultural output is expected to increase by 6% to 20% (4). This shows the huge difference women contribution makes to national development. These strategies are not only beneficial to the women, but to the children, the family and to the society. The empowerment of women is essentially an emancipation process that leads to the general welfare of all and the socio-economic development of the nation at large.

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INTERROGATING THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION IN NIGERIA: A DISCOURSE ON EMEKA NWABUEZE'S *A PARLIAMENT OF VULTURES*

Philip Peter AKOJE

Department of Theatre Arts

Kogi State University

Anyigba, Nigeria

Email: philipakoje@gmail.com

Abstract

*This paper posits that good leadership is an important contributory aspect to the development of every society. It stresses that the success or failure of any society, politically, economical or otherwise depends on the type of leadership quality and principles adopted and practised. It centres on Nigeria democratic setting and adopts the eclectic theory to deduce leadership motivation for Nigeria political leaders using Emeka Nwabueze's **A Parliament of Vultures** as focus. The finding shows that most political leaders seek public office for personal gains. These corrupt government officials are an orientation of leaders that slipped the country into economic recession without measures in place to correct negative economic flows. It thus recommends the servant-leadership approach and adoption of its values as a core motivation for those seeking public office for the socio-political and economic development of the society. This would also enable the leaders to take preventive measures to correct economic contraction (recession) for the benefit and welfare of the citizens.*

Introduction

Leadership is an important aspect of every society. This is because, the success or failure of any society, or country politically, economical or otherwise depends on the type of leadership principles adopted and practiced. Leadership is present in every setting, whether religious organisations, pressure groups, schools, nation-states or native tribes and families. Irrespective of the political system of government practised, whether democratic, totalitarian, dictatorial, monarchical or feudal; there is a leader whose quality of governance is unique to his/her system of administration. It is in line with this notion that Richard Bolden asserts that "it is argued that in this changing, global environment, leadership holds the answer not only to the success of individuals and organisations, but also to sectors, regions and nations" (4).

In democracy, leadership becomes particularly important because decisions are made by the people and for the people. Daryl Hoobs and Ronald Power state that, "leadership is to democracy as water is to plant growth. It is vital" (1). This assertion is of utmost importance in a democratic setting because, effective leadership must be backed by good

followership so that decisions can be people-oriented. Efficient leadership can be best measure depending on the situations; the political system and motivation for leadership positions.

According to the Greek statesman, Pericles (459 BC-429 BC), democracy is a system in which power lies in the hands of “the whole people”, “everyone is equal before the law”, and public responsibility (political leadership position) is determined not by class but by “actual ability” (Habib 13). This position questions the statement that, “leaders are born, not made”. But the environment in which leaders function influences his/her leadership styles and types of leadership practice. This is because we are all born with certain innate mental and leadership potentials that can only be ignited by learning important leadership skills (Hoobs and Power 2). The concept of leadership itself defies definition. It is similar to other well contested concepts such as power and authority. In an attempt to define leadership, Stogdill states that there are “almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (qtd in Bolden 4). However, Hoobs and Power opine that, “leadership is interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation and directed through communication process, toward the attainment of a specific goal or goals”. The uniqueness of political leadership in a democratic setting is based on the notion that the will of the people is of utmost importance to leaders themselves. Kellerman posits that:

Leadership is not a moral concept. Leaders are like the rest of us: trustworthy and deceitful, cowardly and brave, greedy and generous. To assume that all leaders are good people is to be wilfully blind to the reality of the human condition, and it severely limits our scope for becoming more effective at leadership (qtd in Bolden 4).

This notation brings to attention that leaders are at one times followers and they are susceptible to errors. What are the motivations for political leadership in Nigeria democratic setting which may have domino-effect on the economy? This is the backdrop of this enquiry. The purpose of this discuss is to investigate the political leadership principles and motivation for the position of leadership as enshrine in Emeka Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* in relation to economic recession. It also focuses on the leadership orientations and motivations in Nigeria democratic environment. According to Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN):

Recession is a business cycle contraction, and it refers to a general slowdown in economic activity for two consecutive quarters. During recession, there is usually a decline in certain macroeconomic indicators such as GDP, employment, investment spending, capacity utilisation, household income, business income, and inflation, with the attendant increase in the rate of unemployment (1).

There is no doubt that the above affirmation defines Nigeria economic outlook in 2015/2016, a situation that affects economic activities adversely. BBC online business

news on 31 August, 2016 confirmed that: “Nigeria slipped into recession after the growth figures shows the economy contracted -2.06% between April and June, 2016”. RTC Advisory Services Limited; an economic advisory organisation outlines some of the factors that resulted to recession. These include slow sovereign saving, fiscal leakages, corruption, policy vacuum and wrong policy choices (25-26). It is postulated by economists that preventive measures such as saving and good economic policy would have prevented such economic shrinkage. CBN highlights that, “instruments of monetary and fiscal policies can be used to counter recession and bring about economic growth... injecting money into the economy to stimulate (economic) activities” (19).

Theatre has not been silent on the type of political leadership in Nigeria and motivation for those that assume position of authority. The leadership quality at any particular time affects both the literary theatre and performance theatre either negatively or otherwise. The type of political leadership in existence at a particular time reflects the content of theatre at that time. Using Emeka Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* as a benchmark, this paper shows that certain corrupt elements at the helm of affair in Nigeria are motivated by personal greed and selfishness to the detriment of the ruled.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts political realism and servant-leadership theory, respectively. Political realism explains, and prescribes political relations for individuals, groups and countries. It takes as its assumption that power ought to be the primary end of political action, whether in the domestic or international arena. It posits that nations and politicians only pursue power for self-interest. This approach focuses on the fact that politicians must ensure their own survival by securing their own needs and interests before looking to the needs of others. According to Moseley; “the theory has a long history, being evident in Thucydides’ Peloponnesian War experience. It was also explained by Machiavelli in his work, *The Prince*” (1). But some of the modern advocates of this approach are Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Emeka Nwabueze uses this theory as a description of the ruling state of affair in Nigeria political system.

Servant-leadership theory was first proposed by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970s. It is a theoretical framework that advocates a leader’s primary motivation and role as service to others. It upholds the notion that, “the great leader is seen as servant first” (3). Larry Spears, Executive Director of the Robert K. Greenleaf Centre for Servant-Leadership, defines servant-leadership as,

a new kind of leadership model – a model which puts serving others as the number one priority. Servant-leadership emphasises increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and the sharing of power in decision-making” (qtd in Smith 4).

This assertion shows that motivation for leadership position must be from the desire to serve others. The servant-leadership principle is the type of leadership theory that is in juxtaposition to political realism as a theory. Its proponents advocate it for

modern democratic governance. The researcher is also aware of other leadership theories. These includes trait and transformational theories that are respectively base on personality traits and learn leadership skills. The researcher posits that for the political, socio-economic development of Nigeria society, the servant-leadership approach should be adopted.

Th Leadership Question in *A Parliament of Vultures*

A Parliament of Vultures by Emeka Nwabueze is a macrocosm of the leadership role of Nigeria's National Assembly. It portrays parliamentarians who are more engross in financial deceit and eating without regard for their primary function of law making; such as proper economic policies for any unforeseen contraction in the economy. Madam Omeaku, An uneducated food seller and wife of a retired primary school teacher turned politician is voted into power to serve the country. However, she joins others like her to display a parliament of eating, drinking and looting. Her motive for joining politics is geared towards egotism and arrogance. Although the setting for the parliamentary operation is democratic; since it provides an avenue for periodic election, the election itself is not free and fair – a situation that usher in selfish leaders. The Parliamentarians base their leadership principles which serve as core values for parliamentary business on political realism: satisfying ones need first, before others. It is in juxtaposition to servant-leadership principles which its core ethics is egalitarian belief that leaders are not better than their followers; thus, focusing on the aspiration of the masses against personal ambition. Madam Omeaku's aim of joining the parliament is not to serve, but to loot and climb the political ladder from the house of Assembly to the senate. Her ambition is echoed at the beginning of the play thus:

Madam Omeaku: ...imagine the likeness, A whole honourable member of the house of Assembly; A future Aspirant to the senate, et cetera... (Nwabueze 7).

Madam Omeaku is not only corrupt, but morally spoilt and has no regard for her husband who she describes as a “bushman” (9). Despite the fact that her husband uses his years of service gratuity to open a restaurant for her, Madam Omeaku engages in an immoral relationship with her colleagues in the parliament, Mr. Brown in order to further her political position in the parliament. In her word:

Madam Omeaku: ...To be an honourable member is not enough, what matters is the position you get in the parliament, that is, what determine your financial security... (9).

In order to attain financial security Madam Omeaku engages in financial misappropriation. This is similar to what is obtainable in Nigerian National Assembly. Lawmakers engage in corrupt practices to the detriment of the people they profess to represent. A report in the *Premium Times* of 27 November, 2013, states that:

Messrs Lawan and Emenalo, both members of the House of Representatives, face a seven-count charge of allegedly obtaining N625 million bribe from Femi Otedola, the Chairman of the then Zenon Petroleum and Gas Ltd. The two lawmakers were chairmen and vice chairmen respectively of the committee set up by the House to probe the federal government's subsidy payment for 2011. They allegedly received the money as bribe to clear Mr. Otedola's company of any wrongdoing.

The poorly educated member of the parliament, Madam Omeaku, conspires with other parliamentarians and her daughter Nkechi to remove Mr. Otobo from the position of secretary in the parliament. She (Madam Omeaku) also assumes the same position as a secretary. She builds a number of houses and set up import and export business for her husband who later supports her as a result of financial benefit from her corrupt practices. The parliament is not made up of only the corrupt and immoral Madam Omeaku, but those who find their ways into the parliament through electoral fraud. As Mr. Brown explained how he rigged election for Dr. Parkers:

Brown: ...He could've crashed like a pack of cards if I hadn't stepped in to rescue him (Dr. Parkers) fortunately, the returning officer was my classmate. It wasn't difficult for me to negotiate the right figures for him as I did in your own case (10).

Mr. Brown was able to commit electoral fraud because of debase electoral system in Africa, particularly Nigerian. It is in line with this notion that Mohammed-Kabir Imam explained that:

Our leaders (are) undermining the interests of the common man in a democratic setting like Nigeria. The Electoral Commission has been subsumed, the Police have been engulfed, and all the stakeholders have been engrossed in all of these, in the interest of their anointed candidates. In some cases the ballot boxes don't even suffice at all, but there is still election (528).

This is how Dr. Parkers was rigged into the parliament in order to be used by his corrupt colleagues (having stayed in USA for years) to siphon money for the Parliamentarians without his own knowledge. The parliament is also made up of other title seeking members such as Big Boy, The very Reverend, Professor, Chief, Alhaji, Sir (43). Reverend Jossy assumed "the title of Reverend during campaign to purchase some credibility from voters" (11). Mr. Brown, who described himself as a political 'juggernaut', explains to Omeaku, otherwise known as, 'Madam Hoha', how professor earned his title:

Brown: He was a factory worker in London ...We asked him to take that title.... In order to make our party look intellectual.... He does not have certificate... we haven't called him professor of anything... (11).

Mr. Brown who promises a life of luxury for Madam Omeaku for her support as the Chairman, the Committee for Purchase and Supply, bribe Madam Hoha with the sum of three hundred thousand naira and ensures her of:

Brown: Air-conditioned house, posh car, travel to different parts of the world et cetera... (12).

It is important to note that the parliament is the only arm of the government that is primarily mandated to make laws for the country. Though, it uses delegated legislature to entrust such mandate to other arms of government. But *the vultures* are more concerned about eating and drinking and cooling off. The leadership of the parliamentarians is based on greed and debauchery. As the speaker of the house, Alhaji Dr. Nathaniel Habamero notes in his house to welcome other parliamentarians:

Habamero: this is only to kick-start the day. We shall move from here to the Hilton, My special assistant has already made reservation for us .We shall eat and drink until we are saturated then we shall each check into a presidential suite to cool off before returning to our homes (26).

An RTC Advisory Service Ltd article on *Nigeria's Economy and Recession: Outlook for 2017* outline, among other factors, why the country experience recession. These include lack of clarity over economic policy, low sovereign saving, fiscal leakages and corruption on the part of the leaders (25-26). These are the area that leaders can control, but they are instead busy with self-gratification rather than making viable economic policies that would have prevented the country from slipping into recession. It is this leadership mishap that is geared toward accumulation of wealth on the part of the leaders that Emeka Nwabueze brings to realities and condemns.

In the same vein, Chief Aggrandi, a public office aspirant for local government election is more concerned about eating and drinking as contained in Osita Ezewannebe's *Giddy Festival*. Habamero, and the parliamentarians focus on the parliament function of "cooling off, and other selfish practices. The parliamentarians share the sum of two million naira each as inconvenience allowance" (26-27). Ini Ekott reveals that:

The Nigerian National Assembly is regarded as one of the world's most expensive when measured against the standard of living of an average Nigerian, and the government's total revenue and spending. The

assembly spends a total of N150 billion annually which is three per cent of the entire federal budget as at 2013 (*Premium Times*).

This situation has continued to militate against economic development and good standard of living for the populace. Looting of state treasury and lack of proper economic policy has made the country to slip into recession. Speaking at the public presentation of the autobiography of Justice Mustapha Akanbi, in Abuja on the 26th of November, 2014, Nigeria's former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, lampooned the National Assembly, saying, "it is largely an assemblage of looters and thieves" (Isine, *Premium Times*). Immediately after assuming position of leadership, the 8th National Assembly members upon resumption of plenary were accused of many controversies that have to do with financial gratification and demanded for outrageous "Furniture Allowance" and lived ostentatious lifestyles that were not in sync with the economic realities of the Nigerian state (Adeoye 4).

The class of Aggrandi in Osita Ezewannebe's *Giddy Festival* and *The Vultures* are the epitome of Nigerian leaders, who are interested in juicy committee membership and exotic car allowances without paying attention to taking precautionary measures for possible negative economic flows. The parliamentarians who are servant-leaders, such as Mr. Otobo explain to his colleagues Dr. Parkers what the parliamentarians are known for, thus:

Otobo: ...that is the trouble with you, Dr. Parker you have PhD in political science, but you forget that some of those peoples with whom you share parliament did not go to school at all, but they have PhD in political manoeuvring. And don't think they are fools. They can manipulate even the most educated one just the way they manipulate the masses (34).

Such manipulation is evident in the electoral tussle between Madam Omeaku and Barrister Umeh, whose wife is a Canadian woman. The political manipulation is popularly tagged "the politics of beater leave and Canadian Masquerade" (36).

The parliamentarian, not only use their power to manoeuvre and deceive the masses, but all the conduct of parliamentary business is full of crude method of law making processes and disorder. Nathaniel Habamero, the speaker of the house points to Dr. Parkers about difference in timing to conduct parliamentary business that does not tally with the time in a letter to the parliamentarians, he reply thus:

Habamero: Dr. Parkers, if we have to call everyone to order because of every little error, there would be no one left in the services of this nation, may we proceed... (45).

Disorderliness is the part of the everyday process in the parliament that is evident in the fight often championed by Madam Omeaku. In a debate in the parliament, Madam Omeaku and Dr. Parkers argue thus:

Parkers: Mr. Chairman I can share parliament with all kinds of individuals, but I object to receiving unnecessary insults from a buffoon (46).

Madam: Who do you call bo-fool? (*Rushes to Dr. Parkers and holds him by the coat. He struggles to free himself. Jossy tries to stop her from tearing the coat while Mr. Brown urges her on*) (46).

The likes of Madam Omeaku are not new in Nigerian national assembly. Chinenye Ugonna reported that, “Several members of the House of Representatives scaled the fence to gain access to the (National Assembly) complex... after they were stopped by security agents” (*Premium Times*). The parliament uses crude method in order to swear in members of the parliament. They use the symbol of the ancestors, Ogbunabani (the one that kills by midnight) not to protect the interest of the masses, but to kill anyone who report parliamentary business to the press, report fellows parliamentarian as regard to financial gratifications. As the house speaker explains, Bible is for western culture and Ogbunabani is for African culture. If democracy is from Western culture, while will the parliament not adhere to it basic principles for swearing in members? This therefore is the height of barbaric parliamentary business as oppose to western doctrine of democratic governance. The business of parliamentarians is gear towards attending parties and voting enormous amount for such celebrations. They use expensive imported dresses for members to the detriment of the economy. Regarding St. Bottles Church thanksgiving services, Habamero explains the reason why ten million naira would not be enough for the thanksgiving:

Habamero: The bulk of the money will be distributed through the payment of inconvenience allowances to members for attending the thanksgiving services. Extra expensive will be accrued through the making of appropriate dresses for members and hiring music group. I, therefore, approve the sum of two billion naira for this purpose. Approved?

All: (*Except Parkers and Otobo*) Approved! (72).

Budgeting and spending outrageous amount of money on luxuries by the political leaders is evidence in Nigeria democratic practice. That is why, despite cash crunch, Nigerian Senate illegally voted N4.7billion for exotic cars for the Senate President and the other 108 senators, an action that can only lead to economic recession (Sani Tukur, *Premium Times*).

Habamero’s criterion for selecting chairman of Board member is strictly based on those that supported the party financially during election. To him, honesty and integrity is relative for chairmanship position of the board. That is why bribery is not news in our political democratic system. Ben Ezeamalu, on 31st January, 2013, reported that:

TSKJ, a consortium of four international companies (Technip; Snamprogetti; KBR, a subsidiary of Halliburton; and JGC), paid the bribe to Nigerian officials over a ten-year period to secure the construction contract worth \$6 billion (N900 billion) (*Premium Times*).

Political realism in *A Parliament of Vultures* is given more elaboration and explained by the president, who is part of the collaboration for ripening the economy, he stresses:

President: Thank you very much.... A good leader find time to be with his subjects to discuss some very pressing issues which may sound confusing to his subjects, but which he, as the president of this great nation, has the right answers to. The president is the servant of the peoples and the peoples he rules are his master. But the master-servant relationship is more of a verbal thing than actual reality (*Laughs*) (93).

Concerning the award of contract, the president rhetorically asks:

President: Would you award a contract to a person that is not your friend? I ask you, would you? (*Sighs*). Next question please” (96).

These are political realities in Nigeria political system that the playwright brings to the fore for everyone to understand. According to an article by Festus Owete, published online on 30th December, 2015:

an Investigation by *Premium Times* newspaper, spanning weeks, revealed that between 2009 and 2015, the management arm of the federal legislature led by the Clerk, Salisu Maikasuwa, his predecessor, Yemi Ogunyomi, and their representatives, extensively violated the *Money Laundering Act* (2004, 2011) in banking transactions leading to the withdrawals of about N42 billions of public funds (*Premium Times*).

The constitution of every democratic nation stipulates the principles of separation of power. It also adds that the executive and the two other arms of government, the legislature, and judiciary must work together for a good democratic setting which is sine qua non to good governance. Though democracy is a working system of government; because its practices and ideological application differ from countries to countries, but democratic leadership in Nigeria is more of politically realistic types that centre on selfish interest on the side of the leaders to the detriment of the masses. The parliamentarians are supposed to be servant first; a principle advocates by servant-leadership theorists. Madam Omeaku reflected on her poor childhood background and concluded that her realistic political achievement is the aim of almost

every Africa political aspirant; except the servant-leaders. She confidently tells her colleague in the parliament:

Madam: I'm fine. (*Reflectively.*) When a child is bitten by a snake he fears the earthworm. I have had my own share of poverty in the past. Now that God has buttered my bread, I'll never allow myself to be poor again. Not in this world or even in the world to come I'll make enough money to last me two lifetimes (101).

The political ambition of African leaders is geared toward accumulation of wealth for even their generation unborn. Madam Omeaku further noted her other corrupt achievements.

Madam: I now live in my own fifty-hectare estate... set up an import and export business... purchase only three different models of Mercedes, one model of BMW, and a Lexus and sent my children to study in America (103).

Similarly, it is this kind of monetary benefit that comes with leadership position that Ola Rotimi's social satire, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* addresses. Lekoja-Brown, a retire major and landlord ventures into politics with the motives of enriching himself. These are the same vision and mission of not only Nigerian parliamentarians, but most African leader and political investors who seek public offices and returns, respectively. Plato must have seen beyond his time the negative effect and shortcomings of a democratic government. He must have considered the fact that every democratic government is a gathering of untrained, uncooked, selfish and greedy people who haphazardly gathered to eat the polity to the skin. And since no bound to riches has been fixed for man, leaders continue to accumulate wealth for themselves with its attendant negative economic implications (Habib 13). The effect of such action is what is glaring in the life of the nation that is today bedevilled with many socio-political and economic problems (Taiwo 513).

The vultures' motivation for position of power is drawn on egocentric motives to empty the national treasury for personal self. Nwabueze is not alone in the aesthetics of dethronement of self-centred leaders. Notable playwrights and critic have used their creative imaginations to address leadership problems in Africa, particularly Nigeria. Prominent playwright and poet, Wole Soyinka ridicules Kamini, whose ignorance does not allow him to learn about the negative implications of over-printing of the local currency. The resultant effect is inflation and negative economic contraction as evident in the work, *A Play of Giants*. Ola Rotimi questions the leadership integrity of a landlord, who threatens to increase his rent from twenty naira (N20.00) to thirty naira (N30.00) for his tenants as he demands for their mandate in his bid for leadership position as a senator in the eve of the general election in *If...A Tragedy of the Ruled*.

Emeka Nwabueze unfolds core leadership questions that are begging for answers in our democratic terrain which may have links to economic recession. A

critical theorist, Ameh Akoh, writing on the role of drama in the political economy of Nigeria, opines that:

...civilian administrations have had their share in the devastation of the economy of the Nigerian state...economic programmes were built on self-interest either internally or with the collaboration of foreign economic and political powers. Consequently, the masses are left to bear the brunt of such programmes (61).

This evidently shows that the issue of leadership in the country has continued to militate not only against the economic development of the country, but also prevented those that are at the helms of affairs to take preventive measures against negative economic predictions. At the end of the play, the parliamentarians are engage in approving importation licences. An action that is detrimental to an economy that is in recession, even as agitators storm the state house.

Conclusion

An analysis of Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures* shows that the negative economic contraction that inflicts much suffering on the people would have been prevented if the political leaders make policies that are geared towards such occurrences. But instead, they are bent on the accumulation of wealth for selfish ends. The siphoning of the treasury for personal enjoyment such as partying, would have allow enough money to be injected into the economy during recession. The play shows that the country would only experience economic growth and make policies that would reduce suffering of the masses only if the selfless leaders are in position of governance.

It is important to note that the playwright's suggestion of radical approach can also mean taking action to replace selfish leaders by servant-leaders whose motivation is to serve the people during general election. The work of a critic is to bring to peoples' understanding the creativity of dramatist(s) as applicable to the society(s) not to destabilise, to confuse, intimidate but to correct the ills in the society(s) for healthier readjustment. This is important for those that are entrusted with position of power and authority particularly and the masses in general.

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**LEADERSHIP ISSUES IN MODERN NIGERIAN DRAMA:
A SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF ESIABA IROBI'S
*HANGMEN ALSO DIE***

Achor Friday AKOWE

Department of Theatre Arts
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education
Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria
Email: akoweachor@gmail.com

&

Lucy Ada ONAIVI

Department of Theatre Arts
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education
Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

Abstract

*Nigeria is currently witnessing the worst economic recession in the past decades. Leaving behind scores of high inflation rate, unemployment, decline in exchange rate and drop in gross domestic product, and so on. These challenges, which are draining the Nigerian economy, are products of maladministration of either an individual, as a president, governor, or member of the executive council and the like. This study is a critical discourse of Esiaba Irobi's **Hangmen also Die**, as a remedial measure to cushion the biting effects of the present economic recession, even if it cannot be totally contained. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology. The study recommends, among other things, that political office holders should be treated to stage performances at every political retreat, with this metaphorical construct. This is with the view to re-directing their focus on the need for them to become politically considerate in the art of state craftsmanship to save the nation from future economic downturns and sliding again into economic depression.*

Introduction

A recessing economy is a product of poor decision making either by a leadership or an institution conferred with the responsibility of decision making and policy implementation. It is evident that most of the Nigerian political gladiators are self-enriching, corrupt, and so on, prominence is not given to decision making and the implementation of policies that will bring about the advancement of the entire economy that will benefit all. Consequently, the Nigerian political leadership landscape is wrought with leadership ineptitude clueless policy implementers, economic mal-administrators, unnecessary cross-carpeters, hate mongers, attackers of personalities rather than issues, among others. With this in place, the Nigerian economy is bereft of tangible growth and development, leaving the Nigerian socio-economic terrain at the

mercy of a near absolute infrastructural lack and decay, high unemployment and exchange rate, armed robbery and terrorist attacks, kidnapping, pipe line vandalism, ethnic bigotry, hunger, poverty and the like. A nation with this kind of poor socio-economic report card ordinarily should have a recessing economy which leaves a great level of hardship on its populace.

It is against this backdrop, that this study will attempt a noteworthy study of Esiaba Irobi's *Hangman also Die*. It will dwell its analysis specifically more on the need to create a socio-economic and political platforms where the issues of high rate of unemployment (as a symptom of one of the factors responsible for recession and a recessed economy) are given due consideration with a view, to forestalling a further and future acute economic meltdown and decline of the Nigerian economy into depression. This is so because, to tame the excesses of recession, due politico-economic consideration should be given to diversification of the economy, which to a very large extent equals employment for the available human resource. And more so, Chiedu notes that, "there is a nexus between a country's level of development and its leadership. Since Nigeria became an independent country, it has not been led by its best politicians, who possess probity and leadership qualities" (www.sunonline.com/nigeria-at-a-crossroads).

Recession and the Nigerian Economy

Economic recession, as a phenomenon, has occurred many times through human economic records and it remains traditionally a part of the world economic sequence. The implication is that nations of the world from time to time could experience recession. This is so, because Adams Hayes claims that:

Less than a decade ago, the world economy sank into the Great Recession, the deepest and the most widespread down turn since the Great Depressions of 1920s and 30s. Since the stock market crashed in 2008, recovery has been long and slow, marked by persistent bumps in the road along the way (www.investopedia.com).

From Jonathan Hayes' argument, economic recession has always been a part of human economic history which occurs from time to time. It is a cyclic phenomenon that goes and comes with its recovery period usually very slow leaving scores of hardship on the masses while it lasts. As a general down turn in any economy, recession is associated with high unemployment, slowing gross domestic product and high inflation (Mckinney, www.study.com). The Nigerian economy was equally caught up with this economic bug some times in 2015, where suddenly its unemployment and exchange rate, prices of goods, and so on skyrocketed and its Gross Domestic Product declined. Malinga Doya captures the Nigeria's recession succinctly by saying that:

Nigeria's economy shrank for a fourth consecutive quarter in the three months through December and contrasted for the whole year, the first such move since 1991.... Gross domestic product of Africa's most

populous country in the quarter from a year earlier, after shrinking 2.2 % in the previous 3 months, the National Bureau of Statistics said in an e-mailed statement Tuesday the median of 10 economist estimates compiled by Bloomberg was for the economy to shrink by 1.4%. GDP contracted 1.5 percent for 2016. It was full year drop in 25 years, according to International Monetary Fund data (www.bloomberg.com).

The graphic picture from above relays a serious and pathetic recessed economy. A recession period which ought to have lasted for just a few months stressed through the whole of 2016, one which has not experienced for over two decades making the Nigerian experience peculiar. Little wonder many Nigerians have resorted to unwholesome practices to do something very unusual and out of place as remedial measure out of this quagmire. Some people have gone to the extent of taking their own lives at will. This disturbing menace Temilade Aruya relates thus:

Recent incidence of suicide in the country is, no doubt, alarming and disturbing. Most shocking is the fact that younger ones are not even excluded from this worrying trend. It is ironic that Nigerians that were once famously labelled 'happy go lucky people' now finds suicide attractive (www.pmnewsnigeria.com).

Okoye corroborates this as he posits that:

Nigeria is pirouetting dangerously, with millions of Nigerians becoming suicidal. In the recent past some Nigerian took their lives owing to the economic hardship which buffeted them. Our mono-economy, which went into recession when global oil prices slumped, has not recovered... (www.sunnewsonline.com).

The high rate of suicide committed by Nigerians in the last few months puts an average right thinking Nigerian on his/her toes to finding solution to this social concern. Many Nigerians, either now hang themselves, jump into lagoons or drink deadly substances. But before now,

Nigeria ranks well in the world Happiness Records. It ranked 78th in the world and 2nd in Africa on the world Happiness Report for the year 2016. Curiously, the country dropped to 103 and 6th position in 2017 Happiness Report (Aruya, www.pmnews.com).

This is what has become of this nation, with a once high record of happy and resilient people. So, the question now is; how did Nigeria get to this point? In furtherance of this discourse, Aruya again, tries to proffer an answer, saying that:

A host of factors have been attributed to the growing suicide trend in the country. The first on the list is current economic hardship facing the country. The country's debt profile is on the high, inflation is on the increase, companies are folding up while there is high rate of unemployment coupled with the escalating cost of living. It is therefore not unusual that economic recession is resulting into depression for compatriots who are increasingly being overwhelmed by its negative inputs (www.pmnewsnigeria.com).

From the assertions above, people just take their lives because they can no longer cope with the present economic reality as we have seen so far. And one issue, which one of the above quotes claims and which is of great importance to this study is that, the Nigerian present recession stems from being a mono-economic country, since it is highly dependent on crude oil (meaning, other sectors of the entire economy that would have taken care of the unemployed Nigerians are left unattended to) and because there is a global fall in oil prices, the nation has slumped into recession longer than expected with great negative impacts. To further substantiate Okoye's position, the Vice President of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, confirmed at the 6th National Conference of the Academy thus:

The oil sector remains the dominance revenue carrier earner accounting for about 70 percent of Nigerian export earnings. However, this non-mono product status is essentially predisposed to the vagaries and vulnerabilities of the world market with attendant consequences for the growth and development of the national economy (www.vanguardngr.com).

Nigeria is presently in her socio-economic/political journey experiencing the worst economic decline, partly because its leaders both past and present have refused to broaden its foreign earning beyond crude oil. They failed to create a robust economy, where government's policies and implementations are opened up to a multi-product-status that would have definitely curbed the excesses of this recession. Hence, other sectors that would have helped to stabilise the economy at a time like this are ignored. Substantively, Emy Arinze concludes:

Apart from corruption, another cankerworm dwarfing Nigerian economy is sole dependence on oil. The Nigeria economy is unstable as the fluctuating global oil price. The economy that depends solely on one product would be unable to meet the basic social and infrastructural needs of the people or develop like others. The oil windfall has been abused and mismanaged that it will be foolhardy for anyone to rely on it for development of this nation (<https://emyarinze.wordpress.com>).

From Arinze's position, Nigeria's over dependence on oil is a poor administrative policy which its leadership has perpetrated for decades since after oil was discovered. Hence, each time global oil price plunges, its very economic foundation is violently shaken, leaving its foreign currency reserve at the mercy of the devaluation of the naira and the cutting down of federal spending which could lead to retrenchment of staff (leading to high rate of unemployment) and untold hardship on the citizenry.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a theory, known as, Keynesian economics or Keynesianism, a theory that was considered to be one of the most influential economic theories of the 20th century. It was propounded by a British economist known as John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946). His ideas changed the theory and practice of macro-economics and the policies of governments most especially that of the developing nations (en.m.wikipedia.org).

This theory relays how within a given period, principally during economic down turn, how the economic outputs of an economy is heavily dependent on aggregate demand (total spending). For either of these theories, aggregate demand does not automatically become the productive capacity of any nation's economy. But could be influenced by others factors. Whatever the factors could be go a long way in affecting employment and inflation rate, which actually determine the production capacity of an economy. Furthermore, as far as the Keynesian economists are concerned, because and whenever total spending power of a country is unstable, a trading financial system will time and again experience a macroeconomic shocks and can be cushioned by an immediate monetary policy responses of the fiscal policy, either by the central bank or by the government in the quest to stabilise outputs over the business cycle

For Keynes, the profounder of this theory, an economy begins to undergo contraction when there is no guarantee that goods and services produced by an individual will be purchased. Resultantly, periodic unemployment reoccurs from time to time. Therefore, at the micro economic level people and firms will spend, invest and save less, leading a country to operate below its potential output and growth rate. ([https//en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)).

Recession in Nigeria and Keynesianism

The present precarious situation Nigeria is experiencing, has drastically affected its level of production of goods and services, employment and inflation rates. As things stand, it is glaring that the Nigerian economy is at present under recession, and that has actually affected the socio-political and economic life of the masses and governmental policies and its implementation. For instance, from the argument of the Keynesian apologists, it is characteristic of any nation under recession for its populace to lack the financial capacity to patronize the goods and services in circulation thereby leading to low investment rate and less saving attitudes among its populace. This dictum is succinctly captured in Maria Famakinwa's assertion that:

The current economic crisis Nigerians are going through is taking its toll on almost every sector of the economy... findings across the nation show that the economic situation is getting worse by the day, as prices of food stuff and other essential needs has jumped up. Citizens are lamenting the rising in inflation, factory closure, which is increasing the already disturbing unemployment rate. Some financial institutions in order to wade through this hard time resulted to sacking of workers, while some slash salaries by 20-50 percent (www.thehopenewspaper.com).

The quote above only revalidates the predicament of most Nigerians who are presently under the strangulating grips of abject lack and want. Many of them cannot afford to buy staple food items because of high increase in prices, pay their children school fees and to travel from one destination to other both at local and international levels. To heighten their plights, institutions, both government and private, that would have helped to cushion the effects of this hardship are either shutting down or downsizing and slashing salaries, even when there is a high increase in the cost of goods and services. A case in point is a comment made last year by Guy Ryder to mark the International Labour Organisation Day as the Director-General in Ahiuma-Young Victor that, "though work should be the best route out of poverty, but 327 million working men and women live in extreme poverty and 967 million moderate and near poverty" (www.vanguardngr.com). This goes to show why there is low patronage of available goods and services, low investment by individuals and companies and low saving attitude among the Nigerian populace.

To further advance this discourse, the theory under scrutiny reveals that an economy that is contracting will always have its government coming up with spontaneous economy policies so as to save its economy by injecting more money into the economy in the main. This is why the theory says that,

within a given period of short time principally during economic down turn ... the economic outputs of an economy becomes strongly and heavily dependent on aggregate demand (total spending). For this theory, aggregate demand does not automatically become the productive capacity of any nation's economy (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>).

Because the total spending of an economy becomes unstable, a market economy will usually and negatively affect the outputs of the macro economy. And this can only be corrected through active monetary policy by the central bank and fiscal policy by the government. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>). Therefore, Nigeria being a recessing economic nation, in the heat of the moment embarked on erratic monetary and fiscal policy action to save the nation's economy from further decline, which of course, in the real sense of economic reality does not reflect our productive capacity in the main. In this vein, the African Development Bank GP, commenting on *Nigeria Economic Outlook*, reports that:

The Central Bank Nigeria pursued a contractionary monetary policy stance. It increased the monetary policy rate to 14 percent from 11 percent in 2015 to attract capital inflow and control upward ticking inflation. To protect priority sectors from the rate hike, the cash reserve requirement was reduced and the amount raised was warehoused to be accessed by priority sectors at single digit interest rate.... The fiscal authorities on the other hand pursued an expansionary fiscal policy with the objective of deflating the economy by allocating close 30 percent of the budget to capital expenditure. The expansionary budget was planned on the back of existing fiscal consideration underpinned by domestic resource mobilization and expenditure rationalization measures (<https://afdb.org/en>).

From the above, Nigeria being a mono economy of crude oil, which accounts for 75% of Federal Government export, and with the consistent fluctuations in global oil prices, for it to defend its currency against the present account deficit occasioned by low oil pricing and raising capital outflow both at the local and global economic level and the increased utilization of foreign exchange reserve, the financial authorities have to carry out monetary action by devaluing the naira in order to curb federal spending. Which is why “the year saw a significant reduction in foreign reserves which fell to USD 25.8 billion as at the Year ending 2016 from USD 28 billion in the corresponding month 2015” (<https://afdb.org/en>).

Drawing strength from the dissertation so far, another indicator of a recessed economy as espoused by Keynesianism is high rate of unemployment. An economy which its populace can barely patronize its goods and services, means that, there is little or no cash in circulation for the masses, whose spending powers would have reduced the speed and effects of recession on the nation. One factor that could be responsible for lack of cash in circulation is unemployment. When people do not earn, invariably there will be low investment and saving rate and such an economy will only experience stunted growth and is easily vulnerable to economic holocaust. Nigeria is one country that deliberately positioned its economy to the attack of economic meltdown even before the 2015's. This is clearly substantive in the report on Nigeria Unemployment Rate released by Trading Economics in August, 2017 that:

The unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 14.2 percent in the last quarter of 2016 from 10.4 percent earlier. It is the highest jobless rate since 2009 as the number of unemployed went up by 3.5 million to 11.549 million.... Unemployment rate in Nigeria averaged 9.76 percent from 2006 until 2016, reaching an all time high 19.70 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009 and a record low of 5.10 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010. (www.tradingeconomics.com).

The report from above, points to the fact that, the unemployment rate has been enjoying a mathematical progression on its labour force until in 2016, when it skyrocketed to an alarming rate because of the recession. 10.4 percent unemployment rate as of 2014-15 is an anathema for a nation that is naturally endowed with so much natural and human resources. In the area of decisive policy making and strict implementation, Nigeria leadership has refused to appropriate these blessings by expanding its production capacity beyond crude oil to the benefit of all, so that when the world witnessed short fall in global oil price, other sectors would have provided it a soft landing into recession.

About the Play, *Hangmen Also Die*

Hangmen Also Die is a graphical dramatic piece which sets in an imaginary world called Izon State, relating the ordeal of seven graduates from the university, with varying excellent results up to PhD levels in their different fields of study. As undergraduates, they were conscripted into a group known as Comrades, which disrupted many political opponents of their master, Dr. Ogbonsiegbé. They later realize that he is using them for his selfish interest. They hang him and disbanded after then, and to regroup into a Suicide Squad, having sought jobs for seven years after graduation, terrorising, stealing, maiming and acid bathing community members.

In the process, Dimeari, Tamara (a leader of the Widows Association of Izon state)'s son, joins the squad, being frustrated by the society which they have served during their National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is unable to provide for their basic needs and employment. Hence, the only way to live is to live dangerously. In a bid to find her son and to persuade him from joining this group, since she does not want to lose her only son and as widow, the pains will be so unbearable. She locates their hide outs, demands for her son and enjoins them to turn their anger on one Erekosima Isokipiri a commissioner for a local government that is given three million naira to clean up the oil spillage in that community which he squanders and that has rendered their farmland, water, and lives useless.

The squad interrupts Erekosima's coronation ceremony at the nick of time; kidnaps him to their hide out in the forest. Under pressure he relates how the money was squandered without a single wretch getting a dime. The squad decides to hang him, Tamara begs on his behalf and in the heat of the moment, some aggrieved members of the community team up against the squad and make a request for an immediate release of Erekosima, since the reason for his abduction is unknown to them. In the middle of the struggle, a mobile police team arrives on the scene, Tamara is killed among others.

The seven members are arrested, tried and condemned to life imprisonment without fair hearing. Daminagbo, the Chief Superintendent of the Prison Service, who is the Godson of Erekosima, writes to the governor of the state that they should be hanged, having benefited from the three million naira. Yekini, a former fisher man turned hangman at the prison service declines in spite of the pressure and threat from his superiors having realised the under currents behind their execution. He takes off his uniform, throws it at them and returns to the sea.

Guidance from *Hangmen also Die*

The playwright being an integral entity of the society, weaves his/her craft, using the socio-political, economic and cultural goings on in his/her immediate constituent as his/her unprocessed bits and pieces into a graphic whole. He/she does this most earnestly, to chart the course for a better society (among others) through his/her work by putting the society at and on a very conspicuous platform for all to see. Agaku Jacob buttresses this validation when he says that,

Every society produces its artistes and they react to the social creation depending on their understanding of that which creates them. Thus, being a product of a society the good artiste studies the everyday innuendo of political, religious, cultural and other non-material aspects of culture to talk to the society (45).

This he/she does, to trigger critical thoughts among its audience (either private or public), thereby bringing about communal accomplishments that could bring about desired change for the betterment of all. This responsibility he/she treats with a sense of obligation. It is this onerous task that prompts Esiaba Irobi to poke at some ills which are inimical to the overall development of society, and which the researchers try to high light here.

Of uttermost concern to this study, is the abandonment of the agricultural and raw mineral sectors at the dawn of the oil boom by our past leaders, sectors, which were already generating a steady foreign exchange, and putting food on the table for the populace. This singular economic policy is what he throws up through Yekini, one of the characters in this work, as he relays thus:

Yekini: (*With feelings.*) You see, Doctor, (Pause) I was once a fisherman living by the power of my paddle and the weight of the net. My life was the sea and it sustained me and my family with the fishes that I caught day by day... and Doc, I was happy. A very happy man. A joyful man. A contented man... But, one Saturday, I remember very well, in 1965, that Superintendent...came to my stilt hut at Forcados and said to me, "Yekini, my brother-in-law, I don find job for you. Better job. Government job. A warden's job..." I didn't even ask him how much. I was...overjoyed. I dropped my paddled and net and followed him like a fish follows fattened worm, not knowing the worm conceal a metal hook. The hook of death... and since that day..., something in me has been dying. Dying daily (19).

Yekini's ordeal, paints vividly how the government of that time and at present take hasty decisions on policy of governance concerning over 170 million people, and mortgaging their welfare without recourse to critical thoughts on the way and manner in

which economic policies ought to be scrutinised before reaching a conclusion. For instance, it is in this clime that a presiding president left the vast Nigerian economic and political sectors running for six good months without ministers even with key sectors like agriculture, power, petroleum, and so on, and then suddenly withdrew the Niger Delta agitators guiding the oil pipe lines at the creeks, that equally led to the drastic reduction in the production of the oil level, 75% foreign earner of the economy. Good economic policy promulgations and implementations demand that sentiment and selfish ambition are shelved in order to give room to critical and logical arguments, which could take a little while yet, its results, are worth their onions.

Additionally, it suffices to say here that, from the moment the Nigerian leaders then abandoned other sectors of its economy and were carried away by the lure of the oil boom era, unemployment sets in. Diversification of its economy would have brought about a robust economy that would have taken care of this economic malady. Of course, an economy that is mono-economic should experience worse economic recession, if its only source of foreign earnings experiences a financial shock.

Another critical issue of concern, which Irobi is quick to identify and which he thrusts to the fore of our discourse, is that our leaders are egocentric, self-enriching, politically inept and clueless. Hence, they do not know what good governance entails. This is so because, each time decisions are taken and implementations are made (if there are actually implemented), the people who voted them in to power and who they claim to have come to serve, are usually at the receiving end of their hasty decisions. Irobi capture this argument again through Yekini who has refused to hang members of the Suicide Squad, though as part of his primary service, saying that he knows why they committed the crime. He says:

Yekini: Thank you. You see, some time ago, the Federal Government gave the citizens of this state, which as you know is a riverine state, the sum some of three million naira as compensation money for the oil spillage which has ruined their farms... homes, and their lives.... But the man they killed. One Chief Erekosima, a Commissioner for Chieftaincy Affairs, connived with his Councillors and Local Government Chairmen to confiscate the three million naira. The Councillors took one million and shared it among themselves. The Local Government Chairmen shared one million. The Commissioner himself, one million. No single citizen, no matter how wretched, got a kobo. That was when these men stepped in. That Commissioner, who they killed was also responsible for Daminagbo's rapid promotions in the prison service. That is why, when all the citizens of Izon State petitioned the Governor asking him to commute the death sentence of these boys into life-imprisonment, Chief Superintendent Daminagbo went to the Governor's house and spoiled his mind. He told the Governor

that these boys were armed robbers..., criminal, head-hunters, terrorists, everything... (22-23).

From Yekini's dialogue with the Doctor as seen from the dialogue above, pops to the public domain the reckless impunity with which office holders handle the issues concerning the governed. There is no time in Nigerian politico-economic history where decisions and implementations are pursued to the later holistically without their selfish interests. Is it not because of their own welfare that they callously abandoned other sectors of the economy to the suffocating grip of a monolithic economy? Is it not also, as a result of self-aggrandisement that that huge sums of money meant for the overall development of our nation, are stolen from the Federal treasury, laundered and stashed in homes, foreign accounts, while virtually almost every sector of it economy like agriculture, education, health, and other critical infrastructure are left at the mercy of brain drain, importation rather than exportation of goods and service, health tourism, bad roads, epileptic power supply among others. Diversifications of the economy, transparency and accountability on the part of office holders would definitely take care of the economy in the time of economy crunch without ruthless consequences on the masses.

It is also the order of the day among Nigerian political actors, to treat popular opinions with levity. If not, why is that even when the masses are given a "chance" to contribute to making policies that have direct bearing on their welfare, such decisions if ever taken, are treated with utter disdain and levity or is it the case of playing politically to the gallery? If not, what has happened to the report of the happening to the constitutional conference convened by the immediate past President Goodluck Jonathan (at a time like this when the entire economy is under the threat of depression), where huge sum of money was squandered on what the researchers believe is a jamboree. Trust Nigerian leadership, that document is lying there gathering dust. Pray it is not missing, being padded or eaten by rats.

In the opinion of Irobi, the masses have no place in the scheme of things within the Nigerian political space. Their rights are not only been relegated to the back bench of altruism but slaughtered on the altar of bad administrative prowess, leaving the average Nigerian in depravity, rejection, dejection, frustration and worthlessness. Consequently, to live becomes a dread as no one is sure of what the future holds for him/her. This is captured in the dialogue of all the members of the suicide squad. Take, for instance, the following:

Acid: (*Standing.*) After that the comrades disbanded. We disbanded.
Then the years went by and we graduated.

Dayan: (*Turns.*) And we started looking for job.

Chorus: No jobs.

RIP: (*Vehemently.*) We have no jobs.

Acid: Therefore we have no money.

Dayan: Which means we cannot marry.

RIP: And consequently cannot have children.

Chorus: We are the rejects of the world.

RIP: Seven years later we met again. This time at the office of the Directorate for Employment... which claims that the government is giving loans to unemployed graduates who want assistance for self-employment for small scale industries.

Acid: We were there seven times a week.

RIP: From eight in the morning to eight in the night.

Dayan: We even went on Sundays.

Aid: But we never got a kobo.

Chorus: Our job in this nation is to look for jobs.

Nigeria still remains one country, where the talk about the welfare package of the citizenry is a mere rhetoric and only found on the pages of newspapers, billboards, radio and television. Practically speaking, the Nigerian leadership has not been able to appropriate the Nigerian vast resources to the benefit of all; so much that unemployment is reduced. Therefore, the white collar and private jobs are in short supply considering the number of graduates churned out every year from our citadels of learning. In fact, to a reasonable extent, the entire economy provides no level plain ground for even those who want to be self-employed. It is either government loans are given to relatives, cronies or private financial houses give loans with unbearable high interest rate. Consequently, many Nigerian graduates are found on the streets loitering about in frustration and rejection thereby resorting to economic sabotage and ventilation of their justified anger with dire attendant consequences as witnessed in the play. We dare say the proliferation of terror groups like Niger Delta Avengers, Egbesu Boys, different cult groups and even the dreaded Boko Haram Islamic sect that have become a menace to our nation, are as the result of the crux of this thesis. Their actions are acts of frustration and retaliation for negligence, untold hardship, mal-administration, and nepotism, and so on, that have become the bane of our national life.

Finally, another topical social malady, which the playwright tries to address in this dramatic piece is the rate at which people want to cut short their own lives without recourse to its whatever consequences. Hopeless living has a dire dangerous effect on even the most astute minds, if it goes on for a long time unchecked. This assertion he consolidates through the character of Dimeari (Marine Engineer, who also graduated four years and yet jobless and now wants to be a member of the Suicide Squad) and R.I.P thus:

Dimeari: I am a frustrated soul. A frustrated mind. I am tired of living a lifeless life.

R.I.P: A lifeless life how?

Dimeari: I graduated from the University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, four years ago.... Since then I have been unemployed. I have bruised my knuckles on the doors of oil companies.... I have slept on the pavement of the recruitment office of shell, B.P for two nights. I have attended more fifty

interviews in the last two years. Still no job... I am a reject of the society. A piece of human furniture standing unobserved in the living room of blind world. I feel empty. I feel impotent. I feel useless. I want to do something that will shock the world. Something that will make the world realise that I exist. And also make me feel I am some body. Something challenging. Something violent! Some form of dangerous employment (69, 72).

Nigeria, as a country, is one clime where the welfare of its citizenry is treated with the highest order of recklessness. As a nation blessed with enormous resources, it becomes unheard of that widespread poverty, dearth of social services, insecurity, high unemployment rate etc. look many Nigerian straight in the eyes. It is equally annoying that, “no fewer than 112 million Nigerians now live below poverty level... representing 67 percent of the country’s total population of 167 million... it robs individuals of their dignity and increase vulnerability to hunger, physical and mental illness, human rights abuses and exclusion” (Ahiuma-Young, www.vanguardngr.com). This dicey ugly scenario is what most Nigerians go through, makes them worthless and make them want to take their lives without winking an eye, as if to say, that it is safer being dead.

Conclusion

It has been established that Nigeria is passing through one of the worst economic meltdown in decades, leaving its trail of unbearable hardship of hike of price in food stuffs, drop in GDP, retrenchment and downsizing, and closure of business outlets and hardship in nearly all strata of our national life which made the government of the day taking some spontaneous fiscal and monetary policy that does not reflect the real productive capacity of the nation in the face of economic recession. It has been observed that there is a connection between the stability of a nation’s economic policy and the decisions made and carried out by its leaders. The Nigerian leadership has deliberately refused to make and take decisive actions that will bring about appropriation of the vast natural endowments to the general well-being of the masses.

This frustrating stance has left the masses leaving their lives dangerously, in a nation that was once rated among the happiest people of the world becoming suicide freaks. The suicidal trend among Nigerians became glaring as many astute personalities turned thieves, jump into lagoons, hang themselves in their rooms or nearby bushes and drink poisonous substances, because they could no longer afford money to buy the exorbitant food stuffs, pay house rents, pay their children’s school fees, settle hospital bills, and so on. It is this challenge, that prompted this study as it takes a critical look by analysing Esiaba Irobi’s *Hangmen Also Die*, with a view to forestalling further and future severe economic meltdown and its unbearable consequences on Nigerians and majorly, the over 112 million Nigerians who now live below the poverty level.

The Way Forward

Nigeria, as a country, we all know is enormously blessed with human and natural resources. Therefore, enough of the lip services paid to the diversification of the economy. The onus is on the present administration to ensure that its economic decisions are carefully thought out and implemented without recourse to whose ox is gorged.

Hasty political decision should be jettisoned. The peoples' opinion should be given fair hearing, and dialogue instead of the military option, should be implored to resolving impasse between government and the host communities where these human and natural resources are inhabited. The carrot and stick approach remains sacrosanct in the body of world politics.

There is the need for most Nigerian politicians to embrace the call for moral value. Politics should be seen as a platform for service to humanity and not a goldmine for acquisition of primitive wealth at the detriment of the people who voted them into power. There is the need for prudent financial management on the part of those empowered by the constitution or statutory rules to ensure strict implementation of policies in the area of economic and employment challenges. For a better future, the onus also lies on the masses to take a resolute stance in the face of their sufferings, to see election periods as opportunity to vote out corrupt leaders, who will always come around doling out peanuts to canvass for their votes during electoral campaigns. This is where theatre has a vital role to play. As an agent of change, the practitioners should take advantage of the sociological relationships on-going in our climes, to revitalise and furnish our stage with more topical political issues and also, go into collaboration with other political institutions to ensure that from time to time the Nigerian political actors are treated to stage plays of this kind during their political retreats so as to instil the necessary dynamics of statecraft in them until the desired change comes.

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MANAGING THE NIGERIAN RECESSED ECONOMY THROUGH THEATRE AND DRAMA: GREG MBAJIORGU'S *WAKE UP EVERYONE* AS A PARADIGM

Mohammed-Kabir Jibril IMAM

Alvan Ikoju Federal College of Education

Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

Email: kabirjib@gmail.com

&

Ridwan SULEIMAN

Government Secondary School

Jiwa, Abuja-FCT, Nigeria

ridsimam0123@yahoo.com

Abstract

*There is no gainsaying that the Nigerian economy is recessed. Nigeria is perhaps one of the countries that dropped other means of economic survival avail to them and embrace the oil at its discovery. Since the discovery of crude oil the economy has lived on a mono-economy. Interestingly, it is now looking at the bedevilment of running a mono-economy in the eye. The means of surviving economic recession becomes the concern of many Nigerians. Before, salaries of workers can take them home, but now, it cannot even take them to the gate of their office. The ways to ameliorating this avalanche of problems posed by economic recession is the concern of both leaders and the led. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology and makes use of the content analysis instrument to investigate this menace through Greg Mbajiorgu's *Wake Up Everyone*. Therefore, the paper opines that since the way out of recession is the concern, theatre and drama can help in quashing the menace of economic recession. However, it should be noted and acknowledged that recession is a country's problem, but its correction can begin from individuals to the family level through drama and theatre. The findings show that drama through reading and theatre through gate taking can improve the lots of Nigerians in a recessed economy. The paper recommends that the family's economy can be managed during recession by organising theatre troop and can be extended the nation at large. It concludes that if such is put into practice it will cushion the effects of the recessed economy on the people.*

Introduction

There is no denying the fact that there is economic recession in Nigeria. What is arguable is the way to manage the country's depressed economy. However, Nigeria is not the first country to undergo recession. Countries like America, United Kingdom, Greece, China, Japan and many other Western countries have experienced it; and some are still experiencing worse forms of economic recession. In some of the aforementioned

countries, their recession had metamorphosed into depression, which is the worst type of economic recession. This means that recession can lead to depression if it lasts long or is not well managed. For instance, in a recession, the economy contracts for two or more quarters. Depression, on the other hand, lasts for several years. In a recession, unemployment can rise to 10 percent. In a depression, the unemployment rate could be up to 25 percent. In another vein, a depression is a deep and long-lasting recession. While no specific criteria exist to declare a depression, unique features of the “last U.S. depression, the Great depression of the 1930s, included a GDP decline in excess of 10% and an unemployment rate that briefly touched 25%” (Koo 32).

For purpose clarity, the questions to be answered are: What are the causes of economic recession or depression? What are the frontline signs of economic recession? Unless these questions and others are given rightful answers, there may be no measures to tackle the already existing economic recession in Nigeria and to block the future occurrences of economic recession. Therefore, the current study discusses and opines that recessions generally occur when there is a widespread drop in spending. This may be triggered by various events, such as a financial crisis, an external trade shock, an adverse supply shock or the bursting of an economic bubble. Governments usually respond to recessions by adopting expansionary macroeconomic policies, such as increasing money supply, increasing government spending and decreasing taxation.

A recession has many attributes that can occur simultaneously and includes declines in component measures of economic activity (GDP) such as consumption, investment, government spending, and net export activity. These summary measures reflect underlying drivers such as employment levels and skills, household savings rates, corporate investment decisions, interest rates, demographics, and government policies. Richard C. Koo argues that, under ideal conditions: “a country's economy should have the household sector as net savers and the corporate sector as net borrowers, with the government budget nearly balanced and net exports near zero” (45). When these relationships become imbalanced, recession can develop within the country or create pressure for recession in another country. Policy responses are often designed to drive the economy back towards this ideal state of balance.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) states that, “global recessions seem to occur over a cycle lasting between eight and 10 years” (76). The IMF takes many factors into account when defining a global recession. Until April, 2009, IMF several times communicated to the press, that a global annual real GDP growth of 3.0 percent or less in their view was “...equivalent to a global recession” (Lall 56). By this measure, six periods since 1970 qualify: 1974-1975; 1980-1983 (www.bloomberg.com); 1990-1993; 1998; 2001-2002; and 2008-2009 (www.bloomberg.com). In April, 2002, what IMF termed the three global recessions of the last three decades, global per capita output growth was zero or negative, and IMF had stated that, “because of the opposite being found for 2001, the economic state in this year by itself did not qualify as a global recession” (Rogoff 10). In April, 2009, IMF changed their Global Recession definition to:

a decline in annual per-capita real World GDP (purchasing power parity weighted), backed up by a decline or worsening for one or more of the seven other global macroeconomic indicators: Industrial production, trade, capital flows, oil consumption, unemployment rate, per-capita investment, and per-capita consumption (Davis 86).

By this new definition, it is surmised that, a total of four global recessions have taken place since World War II: 1975, 1982, 1991 and 2009. All of them only lasted one year each; although the third would have lasted three years (1991-93) if IMF had used the normal exchange rate weighted per-capita real World GDP as criteria rather than the purchase power parity weighted per capita real World GDP (Davis 87).

According to Melbourne, “another recession – the most recent one to date – came in the 1990s, at the beginning of the decade. It was the result of a major stock collapse in 1987, in October”, referred to now as, “Black Monday” (43). Although the collapse was greater than the one in 1929, the global economy recovered quickly; but North America still suffered a decline in lumbering savings and loans, which led to a crisis. The recession was not limited to only America; it also affected partnering nations, such as, Australia. The unemployment level increased to 10.8%; employment declined by 3.4%; and the GDP also decreased as much as 1.7%. Inflation, however, was successfully reduced.

Theoretical Framework

The catastrophe theory underpins this study. The theory, in Mathematics, is a set of methods used to study and classify the ways in which a system can undergo sudden large changes in behaviour as one or more of the variables that control it are changed continuously, a variable like a nation’s economy. If some elements or major derives of the economy: employment, reserves and others are not well managed, they experience sudden changes thereby leading to economic recession. The theory is generally considered a branch of geometry because the variables and resultant behaviours are usefully depicted as curves or surfaces, and the formal development of the theory is credited mainly to the French topologist, Rene Thom.

Thom is best known, however, for the catastrophe theory, an attempt to model abrupt behavioural changes, such as, the transition from farming to oil, liquid to gas; or, in human events, from peace to war; and now from stable or progressive economy to economic crisis or recessed economy; or from stable economy to dwindling economy, as a result of mismanagement (like the Nigerian economy) with functions on surfaces that have folds and limits. The mathematical insight was valuable; but the subject became controversial when some of Thom’s friends and colleagues made rather extravagant claims on the applicability of the theory. In addition, it was realised that many of the associated ideas, under different terminology, had already been employed by applied mathematicians.

A simple example of the behaviour studied by catastrophe theory is the change in shape of an arched bridge, like crude oil, as the main stay of the economy, and as the load on it is gradually increased. Like a stable economy, which is not well managed, it

will be embedded with too many policies like the Nigerian experience. As the policies increase, the economy begins to metamorphose and if care is still not taken, it degenerates into a recessed or depressed economy. Nigeria as a nation is currently facing recession because of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds and money laundering. As a result, the bridge, like the economy, deforms in a relatively uniform manner until the load reaches a critical value; at which point the shape of the bridge changes suddenly and it will collapse. While the term, catastrophe, suggests just such a dramatic event, many of the discontinuous changes of state so labelled are not. The reflection or refraction of light by or through moving water is fruitfully studied by the methods of catastrophe theory, as are numerous other optical phenomena. More speculatively, the ideas of catastrophe theory have been applied by social scientists to a variety of situations, such as, the sudden eruption of mob violence. We shall see the application of the theory in the analysis later in this study.

Conceptualising Economic Recession

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines recession as, “a business cycle contraction which results in a general slowdown in economic activity” (309). Under this phenomenon, “macroeconomic indicators such as GDP (gross domestic product), investment spending, capacity utilisation, household income, business profits, and inflation fall, while bankruptcies and the unemployment rate rise” (*Encarta World Dictionary*). Put simply, a recession is when the economy declines significantly for at least six months; that means there is a drop in the following five economic indicators: real GDP, income, employment, manufacturing and retail sales. Furthermore, people often say a recession is when the GDP growth rate is negative for two consecutive quarters or more. But a recession can quietly begin before the quarterly gross domestic product reports are out. A recession is usually underway when there are several quarters of slowing but still positive growth. Often a quarter of negative growth will occur, followed by positive growth for several quarters, and then another quarter of negative growth.

A recession is destructive. It creates wide-spread unemployment, sometimes as high as 10 percent; that is when it affects most people. As the unemployment rate rises, consumer purchases fall off even more; businesses go bankrupt. In many recessions, people lose their homes when they cannot afford the mortgage payments. Young people cannot get good jobs after school; that throws off their entire career. The impact of recession can be long-lasting, even if it is short (nine to 18 months). Economic statistician, Julius Shiskin suggests that, “several rules of thumb for defining a recession, one of which was two down consecutive quarters of GDP” (54). Some economists prefer a definition of a 1.5-2 percentage points rise in unemployment within 12 months (*HM Treasury*).

In the United States, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) defines an economic recession as: “a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real GDP, real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales” (Eslake 90). Almost universally, academics, economists, policy makers, and businesses defer to the determination by NBER for the precise dating of a recession’s onset and end. In the

United Kingdom, recessions are generally defined as two consecutive quarters of negative economic growth, as measured by the seasonal adjusted quarter-on-quarter figures for real GDP (*BBC News*). It has also been stated that, recession is “a significant decline in activity across the economy, lasting longer than a few months” (*NBER Business*). This is visible in industrial production, employment, real income and wholesale-retail trade. Emmanuel Ebo corroborates the above when he argues that, “a general depression in the economy affects every other aspect of the national economy” (109). Ebo argues further:

...a depressed economy where salaries are meagre and apart from being meagre, are irregular, one does not expect a favourable theatre going culture. A depressed economy where businesses cannot flourish and businessmen live from hand to mouth does not encourage theatre going culture ... gate takings in a depressed economy are low because most people cannot afford the money to pay for leisure (112).

Recession is a normal, albeit unpleasant, part of business cycle as can be viewed apparently from Ebo’s position above. However, one-time crisis events can often trigger the onset of a recession. The global recession of 2007-2009 brought a great amount of attention to the risky investment strategies used by large financial institutions, along with the global nature of the financial system. As a result of the wide-spread global recession, the economies of virtually all the world’s developed and developing nations suffered significant setbacks. Numerous government policies were implemented to help prevent a similar future financial crisis as a result. Typically, a recession lasts from six to 18 months; and interest rates usually fall during these months to stimulate the economy.

About the Play, *Wake Up Everyone*

The play, *Wake Up Everyone*, is one of the works of Greg Nnamdi Nnadike Mbajiorgu, who teaches at the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. Greg, as he is fondly called, is an accomplished solo actor and dramatist, who has written several other plays, including *The Prime Minister’s Son* (a solo drama), *Hands of Fate* (a drama), and *Wata na Wata* (a drama and poetry on water), to mention a few.

The play, *Wake Up Everyone*, opens with Professor Aladinma and the Local Government Chairman discussing the plight of the people of the Local Government, as it regards environmental threat and the problem of climate change. They discuss the urgent need for precautions and to take drastic measures against the environmental disasters and climate change. As a result, Prof. organises and engages some youths in rehearsals for a play performance in the quest to enlighten the people of the danger of climate change and the abuse and misuse of the environment, while the youths were making livelihood from the rehearsals and performances. As the play progresses, it is revealed that Professor Aladinma has been sensitising the people on the disaster that looms over them if care is not taken. Some of the farmers in the Local Government

welcome Professor Aladinma's idea, which yields good result when the disaster came. On the other hand, those who blatantly refused to heed to his advice suffer greatly when the flood came.

Professor Aladinma predicted flood, which later came to past. The effort by Prof. Aladinma to convince the Local Government Chairman to approve the money needed for him to carry out his research on climate change fell on deaf ears. At the end of the play, all the predictions by Prof. Aladinma materialised: the flood swept and swallowed their farmlands and their farm produce. The farmers eventually wake up and march to Prof. Aladinma, who reveals to them that the chairman had refused to heed to his advice; that he had failed to approve money for his proposed research on climate change. The chairman had also failed to attend to the people's plight and ordeal. The play ends with the farmers marching to the Local Government chairman's house to register their grievances, issuing all sorts of threats.

Managing Nigeria's Economic Recession through Drama and Theatre

Having given a synopsis of the play, *Wake Up Everyone* by Greg Mbajiorgu, which serves as a background to the study, it is necessary for us to analyse it within the context of Nigeria's economic recession. Jenny Armstrong argues that:

If there's a crisis, one can be sure there is always someone prepared to turn it into a drama, and increasingly it is playwrights who are ready to do so. The curtain is set to rise on a number of plays that tackle the global recession and entertain audiences with grim tales of greed, bankruptcy and bankers high on power, drugs and money (1).

In line with the above, Peter Hall notes that, "theatre is well-suited to respond to the crunch. Theatre is fast on its feet, quicker than film" (cited in Armstrong 3). Consequently, we are going to examine Greg Mbajiorgu's play, *Wake Up Everyone*, and raise issues of economic recession and how they could be managed.

Prof. Aladinma: You see Mr. Chairman, when the drummer changes beat, the dancer must change his steps. Things are no longer the way they used to be, and even a child must have noticed the changes... (*Wake Up Everyone* 13).

This explains the axiom that, change is the only thing that is constant in this world; although the change could be in a negative or positive form. One may want to see the change promised by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in Nigeria as the negative one. It is negative because since the 2015 election that Nigerians shouted change, we have not known any rest, especially, from the angle of the nation's economy. From the lines above, it is apparent that maybe the Nigerian government paid deaf ears to the drum of economic recession since it started looming though it may not have started from the current administration. But the government rather turned her back to the predicted economic recession that is here with us.

Chairman: Stupid old man. Who does he think he is? I, Edwin Ochonkeya, the Crocodile that guards Ndoli creeks, the unsterilised knife that cuts the thick balls of Oyibo, release money for such useless project? Nonsense, nonsense... (18).

The above exposes the attitude of some of our leaders when they see those who give them constructive advice on the way to lead the people and better their lives. They insult such people and call them all sorts of names. But they are always ready and prepared to accept and accommodate those who mislead them and perhaps lead them astray. It supports the view that when it comes to spending on irrelevant things (projects that are not important to the people), there is money; but when it comes to projects that will benefit the people, there is no money. Imagine the amounts of money being mentioned on radio, television and on the pages of newspapers; see the monies being recovered every day; perhaps monies that were misappropriated and recovered. But when those leaders were in power, there was always no money to execute meaningful projects. We see the chairman praising himself and beating his chest to the fact that he will not release money for such useless projects.

Chairman: Yes, Jango, I was only angry with that troublesome and restless octogenarian professor who just walked out of my office.

Jango: You mean Professor Aladinma? (19).

It is obvious from the exchange between the Chairman and Jango, his old friend, that the Chairman does not even like the presence of Prof. Aladinma. He tells his friend that he is angry with Prof. Aladinma simply because he had told him to bring money to complement the money the Oyibo will bring for the project. As the play progresses, it is discovered that the rehearsal group managed by Prof. Aladinma is the way forward for the amelioration of economic recession. It is no longer news that recession is here with us and every one of us is feeling the heat. However, the issues to investigate are how to manage it and how to get out of it. Greg Mbajiorgu succinctly captures that in the play thus:

Ekene: (*To NWEKE*). What about our feeding allowance?

Nweke: Prof. is coming with the money.

Ekene: Okay, okay, let's continue. Spread your legs. (*NWEKE spreads his legs. EKENE does the same as he issues out command*). Hands up. (*With their hands up, EKENE intones another song. They exercise as they sing.*) (*Wake Up... 32*).

Ekene: What about our feeding allowance?

Adaora: He will answer that question when he arrives. He has gone to the motor park to pick up a visitor.

Nweke: No rehearsal until he comes. We must wait for him, the three thousand naira he gave us last week has finished. Last night, I rehearsed on an empty stomach, now you want me to start work without food (*Bitterly*.) Is that possible?

Ekene: No food ...

Nweke: No rehearsal ... (33).

Obioma: Eu-u-u Ewo-o- POVERTY! Poverty of the flesh has degenerated to poverty of the mind, and the spirit of poverty has cast it spells on us. What is left now is for man to become the predator of fellow man (*Moves to EKENE*.) My dear brother, release yourself like a gunfire and stray into your memory lane... (36).

When one engages in rehearsals, in the time of recession like this, there would be a way out to cushion the effect of recession because he/she gets stipends from the rehearsals. From Nweke's line in the above dialogue, we see that if you engage in theatre activities during recession like this you have no cause to complain like other citizens as one gets stipends that will survive him during this period. In the time that people are craving for how to put food on their table, Nweke is talking about rehearsal allowances to keep body and soul together. As the exchange progresses, Nweke makes the point that without the allowances there would be no more rehearsals. And that is in line with the catastrophe theory, which underscores this study: Nweke wants to manage the situation so that it does not degenerate to depression, as aptly suggested by the theory.

Therefore the question could be asked: A person who gets allowances from rehearsals, will that person not earn more than that during and after the production? This is particularly if the same person is engaged in different rehearsals and productions. Obioma's line in the interchange opens one's mind to the reality of economic recession. One of the resultant effects of economic recession is poverty, as it is clearly seen in the play. The poverty that sets in as a result of the economic recession, if not well managed, can lead to man becoming the predator of fellow man. This explains further the position of the catastrophe theory as even if the poverty created by recession is not well managed it will equally degenerate. And the end, Obioma's wakeup call was re-echoed to our hearing, so that we can look back and see where we have missed our steps which precipitated economic recession in the country. Thus, one can borrow a leaf from Prof. Aladinma, who organises a theatre troupe and engages the minds of the youth to

organise plays and rehearsals, where they get paid to manage the effect of economic recession.

Another interesting aspect of the play is the conversations between Prof. and Desmond. Their discussions espouse more on the challenges embedded in economic recession; challenges like increase in crime wave as was witnessed by both Desmond and Prof. in Lagos. This is aptly captured by the playwright thus:

Prof. Aladinma: What is your impression of Lagos? I hope you didn't have any sad experience there?

Desmond: I lost one of my bags there; it's alright, it's nothing to worry about ... I wonder how people survive there.

Desmond: But it's quite a pity that the nation has not changed much after fifty years of its birth. I was shocked to go through the airport, the same ordeal my father and I went through five years ago when we returned to bury my grandmother (*Wake Up...* 43).

Desmond's experience in Lagos reveals the true state of the nation if the people can no longer put food on their table. It was equally revealed that after fifty years of age, Nigeria is still crawling to grapple with development and upliftment. Catastrophe played out here because the economic crisis was not managed and it degenerated to what Desmond experienced in Lagos.

Another issue that was exposed during the reading of the play is the quest to leave the country when situation is no longer friendly. This alone can lead the country to a more catastrophic and deadly situation. This can succinctly be found in the play with Prof Aladinma's wife who is not a Nigerian citizen. She had to leave the country when the country became unbearable to her. She took her children and ran away from the country. The question to be asked is: will running away from the country solve the country's problems? Rather, it will compound the problems. Let us hear Prof. Aladinma and Desmond as they talk:

Prof. Aladinma: I married a foreigner who, after a few years of struggling to endure the country's condition with me, decided to return to her country with our two children.

Desmond: Was there a prior notice?

Prof. Aladinma: Oh yes, she had pleaded that we leave this "God-forsaken county", as she calls it, but I refused, insisting that since the country obviously needs help, someone has got to help it, even if God has forsaken it. Since she left me, I've devoted my time and passion to helping my country. She has returned to

her country where she believes things work; I've got to remain in mine and make things work (41-42).

It is obvious that running away from one's own country can never in any way contribute to the development of the country as people are going out of Nigeria. Rather, it will help degenerate the prowess of the people of the country thereby leading to brain drain syndrome.

The conversation between Prof. and Desmond continues till it was revealed that Prof. studied theatre in his first degree before he later switched over to agriculture. And later in agriculture he finds out that theatre is a viable means to disseminate knowledge and information to the people. That was the main impetus behind him organising a theatre troupe. And the troupe became a means of livelihood to many people. Here the researchers make bold to say that despite economic recession and its attendant challenges, it can be managed through the organisation of theatre troupes. They perform for the audience to relax their nerves and the performers make their money either through gate-taking or through appreciation. Hence, using this medium to manage and cushion the effect of economic recession in the present Nigeria.

Desmond: Thanks. I would be glad to know why you switched from theatre to agriculture as a career?

Prof. Aladinma: Well ... in our school days, scholarships were awarded mainly in education and agriculture. Frankly speaking I had passion for theatre. I studied it in my first degree, but seeing that agriculture was the force driving the nation's economy at that time, unlike the present day oil economy, I decided to pursue additional degrees in agriculture in order to be more useful to the nation.

Desmond: Oh! I see.

Prof. Aladinma: Today, I am a proud retired Professor of Agricultural Extension. But theatre did not leave me. It haunted me; it followed me everywhere I went in pursuit of excellence in agriculture, like a hunch on its bearer's back.

Desmond: That is interesting (44).

Theatre and its haunting spirit did not allow Prof. Aladinma to run away despite his switching over from theatre studies to agricultural science. How will a juicy profession like theatre leave you to go when it is a discipline that can rescue one from any form of economic challenge like the economic recession the country is facing presently? It did not stop at that but went further reveal to Prof. Aladinma the interconnectedness or synergy between agriculture and theatre. As Prof. Aladinma tries

to run from theatre which is his first degree he gets weaved into theatre, thus leading him to discover that theatre is a viable means to pass his message to the people:

Prof. Aladinma: Yes. And over time, I've grown to see the relationship between theatre and agriculture. It may not be like the union of a man and his wife, but it is not far from that of the native doctor and his fetish amulet. (*They laugh.*) (44-45).

Desmond: I understand what you mean.

Prof. Aladinma: Agriculture is my profession no doubt, but theatre is the only way I have learnt to relax myself outside my profession. Call it my greatest hobby if you like (45).

Desmond: It's more than just a hobby for you. From your recently published play, *The New Dawn*, which I bought online, you seem to be neck-deep into experimental theatre (45).

Prof. Aladinma: Good, you got it right. That is driven by my search for an approach that is flexible and accommodating; an approach that can give the audience a broad vista... (45).

The exchange espouses our minds that these are many issues that bedevil a country that is looking at recession in the eyes, just like Nigeria. As can be seen again from the following dialogue, Prof. Aladinma and Desmond expose one of the challenges that confront a country as a result of economic recession. This can be seen from their lines:

Nweke: Yes, tell me, when was the last time you had a decent meal?

Adaora: I can't remember (45).

To make it worse, Prof. Aladinma does not stop at the discussion; he goes further to reiterate the reason why there is recession as a result of sleeping country. The principle of the catastrophe theory is already being played out. Hence, the authors ask: can a country go to sleep? Rather, it is the leaders that are sleeping and not the country. Therefore, if the leaders turn their back and turn their faces away from the realities of economic recession, there is no way out. As suggested by the catastrophe theory, you will rather manage your situation rather than running or turning your back against the reality. The call for diversification of the economy was obvious at this point:

Prof. Aladinma: Look, Desmond, this country is asleep. Great leaders in other parts of the world are busy embracing serious ideas like how to produce alternative energy sources that will replace

fossil fuel. Here, our leaders are busy sharing oil well and buying fuel tankers (57).

Prof. Aladinma: in this country, we have done nothing, absolutely nothing and our leaders who should show more concern are completely nonchalant (60).

Desmond: Yes, he refused to see us, preferring the company of a whore. I can't imagine why a harlot should be more important to him than the safety of his community (72).

It is glaring and can be deduced from the comments above that, one of the causes of economic recession is the sharing of oils well and the buying of fuel tankers, as succinctly captured by the Professor. Apart from that, our leaders seem completely nonchalant about the welfare of the people. This is confirmed by Desmond when he refers to what the chairman did to them when they visited him in his office. The chairman had blatantly refused to attend to them but preferred the company of a harlot; a replica of what the Nigerian politicians do. They abandon matters that affect the state and give attention to matters that have no positive effect on the state and the people.

However, this study opines that we have heard enough of praise-singing on the challenges and prospects of economic recession. Rather, we should think of how it can be managed and how we can completely get out of it; so that it does not degenerate as opined by the catastrophe theory. The study proffers and maintains that the way forward on how to manage economic recession instead of allowing it to degenerate into economic depression is the theatre and drama. Despite the recession, people love going to the theatre or watching plays, at least to relax their nerves. Therefore, an individual can go into the organisation of a theatre troupe, which will see the engagement of so many people; and this can go a long way in helping to manage the recession, even starting from the family level. This can be borrowed from Prof. Aladinma's initiative. He organised the youths and used them to conscientise the people through rehearsals and performances. Here, theatre can be organised to engage people in the time of economic recession, while using the same theatre medium to educate the people on ways to manage, control and cushion the effects of economic recession. This can be adopted at the government level if the organisers make the leaders to see the reality of what they do as was seen in the case of the local government chairman. He realises it at the end because, despite his being adamant on the proposal Prof. brought to him, Prof. ignored him and used his money to organise the theatre troupe.

Recommendations

It must be acknowledged that economic recession is not restricted to the family level; rather, it could be an entire country and sometimes a global phenomenon. Perhaps, efforts may be generated from the microcosm (the family) level to manage the phenomenon through families having small theatre troupes that can help in generating funds that such families can use to survive the recession because of the gate takings at

the box office attached to theatre practice. This is because the theatre industry engages more people and creates jobs. The Nigerian Government can look inward and encourage theatre and arts practitioners to be ingenuous in order to cushion the effects of the current economic recession before it metamorphoses into economic depression.

Again, theatre practitioners should persistently engage the audience, such as, performing in unconventional venues like motor parks, warehouses and other such places. This approach will further give practitioners the visibility to showcase themselves. With this, more money could be generated when practitioners create the right form and content. Government will then see the viability of theatre as a venture that can rescue us from the endemic grip of economic recession.

Theatre is a commercial enterprise in a more profound way than many other creative pursuits. Each play is a business re-invented: it requires capital, a business plan, premises, staff, a unique marketing strategy and sales. Consequently, when government gets involved in the business of theatre and drama, it will go a long way in ameliorating the retrogressing or retrogressed economy.

Jerzy Grotowski's concept of "poor theatre" may be adopted in the time of recession to managing spending as it deemphasises elaborate costumes, make-up, design, light and other elements of the theatre ensemble, as there is not much money to spend in the time of economic recession. Therefore, maximising profits and bringing in money to enable dramatic personae and crew survive in the time of economic recession or depression should be encouraged.

Conclusion

From the discourses above, it could be deduced that, we need to invest and recognise the place of theatre and drama and the entire entertainment industry, as an alternative revenue-generating source to the government, community and the family in the bid to overcome economic recession. Theatre will not only boost the economy, but it will also create jobs for the teeming youths roaming the streets. But the question to be asked here is: does the government and in some places the family give recognition to the theatre and the artists? This may affect the soaring of the theatre during a time of economic recession like this.

It must be stated clearly that the role of theatre and drama cannot be underestimated. Whereas other sectors of the economy are struggling under the bite of the economic recession and depression as the case may be, even in the most unreceptive environment we find ourselves, the Nigerian theatre and drama professionals continue to creatively and ingeniously put out shows that continue to amaze the people and bring naira to the people in the creative realms. Therefore, while other sectors concern themselves with the economic recession, drama and theatre artists and crew members are busy putting food on their tables; and they are enjoying themselves in this time of economic recession; thus, making drama and theatre salutary options to managing the economic recession.

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THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC RECESSION IN NIGERIA

Chris OMOTOSHO, PhD

Department of Theatre Arts
Federal College of Education
Abeokuta, Nigeria
Email: kristosho2000@yahoo.com

Abstract

*Theatre for Development is a theatrical experiment that raises the consciousness of the people, builds confidence in them and opens their eyes to what they can do on their own towards ameliorating their unpleasant situations. Thus, TjD can be used to address societal issues like economic recession. But it has been observed, over the years, that successive governments in Nigeria have looked down on the art of theatre. This is borne out of the parochial belief that Arts have little or nothing to offer in addressing societal problems. It is assumed that Nigeria is existing recession but the indices of recession are still prevalent. It is against this background that this paper, anchoring on the Endogenous Development Theory, brings to the fore the inherent ability of TjD in eradicating economic recession. A TjD project was carried out at Osiele Community on the outskirts of Abeokuta in Odeda Local Government of Ogun State on one of the ways to solve the problem of economic recession. The project presented the locally made **adire** fabric not only as clothing materials but also as materials that can be used for the production of bags and shoes. It was obvious, from the interactions that followed the production, that the people prefer the use of locally made fabrics of **adire** to the imported materials; a proof that the masses would prefer the Nigerian made products if they are made to see their beauties. It was therefore recommended in the paper that government should engage Theatre Arts Practitioners in its quest for a complete eradication of economic recession in Nigeria.*

Introduction

The uniqueness of theatre is in its ability to address issues that have direct bearing on the society. It is a medium through which profound and vital communal experiences are projected and appreciated (Umukoro 15). Theatre is not just another work of art but one with essence, purpose and drive. Theatre is a shared experience. What is put on stage, or watched live in the arena or market place, enables the people to be part of a larger engagement and discussion that uplifts the life of the community. This is in line with Jerzy Grotowski's view that, "theatre is an encounter" (55). Theatre is artistic reflection of society's values, ethics, mores and aspirations. If properly packaged therefore, theatre has the ability to shape and or re-direct the socio-political status of a society or nation. This explains why Lanrele Bamidele posits that, theatre can be used for social

investigation in social anthropology or ethno-sociology (65). The import of this is that theatre can be used to interrogate and or address issues in the society.

Theatre has always been part of human society. In supporting this, Ahmed Yerima is of the view that theatre has joined forces with culture in recent times to fit in with a function of culture which is to preserve the reconstruction of the political space where the citizens are able to accommodate the social realities of their individual and national conflicts and begin to think of ways to resolve the issue of national question (11). Addressing issues that are of national relevance with theatre, therefore, is not just to bring theatre into the front burner but much more for it to assume its fundamental role in nation building cum societal development. Theatre has, over the years, been addressing national and societal issues in Nigeria through Theatre for Development (TfD).

Theatre for Development (TfD) or Community theatre is often defined as the theatre of the people, by the people and for the people. The import of this is that, (TfD) originates or is culled from the community concerned. Every material needed for the theatre: storyline, actors, place of performance inclusive is taken from the community. The theatre is often time planned and executed by the people, though under the supervision of an experienced theatre practitioner. The theatre is originally, intentionally targeted towards every member of the community in question, rather than a group of audience(s) like in the conventional theatre. Perhaps the way it is made, and the way the community have input, differs depending on the situation.

The primary objective of TfD is to promote civic dialogue within the community in order to stimulate social debates that would lead to development. The ability of TfD to stimulate discussions is evident as audiences often engage in debates and even constructive argument surrounding sensitive topics. Over the years, in Nigeria and other countries around the world, theatre has been successfully used to initiate community engagement on issues as diverse as health, sanitation, education, HIV awareness, ending violence and child marriage. Theatre for development is a theatre for economic and socio-political information and reformation. It is a kind of theatre that aims at stimulating a process for the community or group of people to come together in solving problems and using the people to create the theatre themselves in their own language and idiom that they can understand.

The issue of development has been of much concern to Nigerians. The income per capita is low, so is the level of industrialisation and life expectancy. Nigeria is presently experiencing economic instability. Generally known as economic recession, it is an economic situation that has weakened the purchasing power of the common man with the meagre resources available to him. This has, expectedly, led to hunger, unemployment and a high level of impoverishment in the Nigerian society. With the record of TfD as a veritable tool in addressing socio-political issues in the society, this paper is therefore aimed at presenting TfD's style and approach in addressing the raging unpleasant economic situation, known as economic recession in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This paper relies on the Endogenous Development Theory for its operation. The thrust of the theory is how societies can develop along the lines and pace of their historical realities. It encourages each society to harness its inherent potentials to better the well-being of its members. The theory conforms to the concept of Tfd, which emphasises active participation of the people and utilisation of their indigenous creative energies, peculiar experiences and performance modes to mobilise, entertain, educate and empower the majority (Dandaura 6). The Tfd approach used for the research is a combination of both the homestead and outside-in approaches. The homestead approach requires a temporary residence of facilitators in the host community all through the duration of the exercise to allow for a better rapport between the facilitators and the community. In the case of outside-in approach, the facilitators from outside rely on and use the people in the community for the project. The two approaches were used because the community (Osiele) where the project took place hosts the institution where the students and lecturers (the facilitators) came from. Osiele is a semi-urban community in the outskirts of Abeokuta on Abeokuta/Ibadan Road. It stands out chiefly because of the location of Federal College of Education in it. A good number of the institution's staff and students either have their personal buildings in the community or are living there; for it is directly opposite the college. It is a mixture of the enlightened and indigenes who have been living together in peace for years. It therefore portends a fertile ground for the experimentation of Tfd project on economic recession. The year three students of the Department of Theatre Arts of the institution, who were not strange to the theory and practice of Tfd, having participated in some, took up the challenge with this researcher for the project.

Economic Recession in Nigeria

The National Bureau of Economic Research defines recession as,

a significance decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in a real gross domestic product (GDP), real income, employment, individual production and wholesale-retail sales (Noko 1).

It has been argued that the recession is due to policy inconsistency, the conspicuous consumption habits of the ruling elite and their appetite for imported luxury items, the removal of subsidy, the owing of salaries to millions of workers across the land, the sharp depreciation of the naira as well as the over-reliance on an exogenous source of revenue, oil. Parts of the reasons for the recession are the bad debt servicing policy, the situation of insurgency and economic instability, which is another traceable reason for the flight of foreign capital and investments in the country as well as the policy of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) by the Nigerian government which has been accounted for by many as the reason for low lending activities by commercial banks in the country (Nwankwo 2).

The economic recession in Nigeria is caused by both endogenous and exogenous factors. There have been symptoms of a recession in the Nigerian economy, just that it became full-blown under the President Muhammadu Buhari's civilian regime due to certain drastic actions taken to solve perennial domestic economic problems. The socioeconomic effects of the recession include; unemployment, inflation and loss of livelihood strategies. These have serious negative consequences on the stability of families. The standard of living, education, healthcare, infrastructure and general wellbeing are affected. People are suffering, life is tough and crime rates are on the increase as life expectancy reduces with increases in infant and maternal mortality rates. Consumer confidence is lost; there is psychological bad faith in the economy and the government, especially by the suffering aggregate households, businesses and external sectors (Agri, Mailafia & Umejiaku 7). The livelihood strategies and opportunities available to the rural and urban poor are shrinking with the recession, leaving more people in slums, squalor, darkness and hunger, thereby increasing the pressure to clear forests for food and firewood, hunting of animals for bush meat, just as a survival strategy. There are also increased militant and criminal activities, destruction of national economic assets such as petroleum pipe-lines in the Niger-Delta and electricity cables and transformers in the East. The land, air and water are being polluted. Essential natural resources and ecosystem services provided by the environment to support economic growth and sustainable livelihoods are increasingly being destroyed.

The effect of economy recession is biting hard, according to Agri, Mailafia and Umejiaku, chiefly because Nigeria has unrepentant, unpunished corrupt political class, over relies on the Federal Government revenue, over-dependes on crude oil, to a large extent, feeds on imported food, lives on foreign furnished household electronics and communication manufactures, military gadgets, transport and electricity, infrastructure inputs, cloth in imported textiles and garments and drives in 100 percent imported cars (7). The government is not faring better for the economy recession has serious negative impacts on government revenue, employment, income vulnerability, inflation, human health, infrastructural supply, poverty and natural resource management in Nigeria. The resultant effects of the recession are daily seen and manifested through the aggregate demand and supply resulting to volatile shocks in economic activities. There is scarcity of foreign exchange, few money, reduced income, decreased finances available to households and businesses. There is also weak purchasing power, reduced consumer spending and decrease in sales of goods and services. The purchase of goods and services by individuals, households and firms has drastically reduced as a result of the economic recession. Business activities are now at the low ebb, there are jobs losses and increase in unemployment rate. The reduced employment is due to decreased sales of goods and services by business owners, companies, street vendors, farmers, shop owners, retailers and wholesalers. The aggregate spending power has sharply declined. This is the unfortunate situation of things that is staring Nigeria and Nigerians in the face. Without gainsaying, there is a dire need for the country to get out of the economic mess she is presently entangled in.

Addressing the economic recession requires a shift from a mono-product economy structure, overdependence on imports and diversification of the economy. In

other words, there is need to move away from the norm, away from the hitherto means of finding solution(s) to the Nigerian ailing economy. A lot of ideas cum solutions have been proffered by the government with the exception of arts or theatre. But if the wheel of theatre is adequately oiled, it has the ability to bring about change in the socio-economic situation of the Nigerian state. One of the ways of doing this is through Tfd.

Features and Effects of Theatre for Development

Theatre for Development is a theatre for economic and socio-political information and reformation. It is a viable instrument of conscientisation and mobilisation. Its primary aim is empowering the disempowered people. The common feature of Tfd is that the theatre, in its various forms, is used to entertain people and make them think and act on their problems. In this way, it is expected that the life of the community is changed. Tfd has always been concerned about problems of poverty, development and underdevelopment. It has raised the issues of “who controls the resources of a nation or community?” Or “How can those resources best be used or shared in an equitable manner for the benefit of all?” (Illah 7). Tfd helps the people to see what they can jettison in their old way(s), why they need to adopt a new method. Lanrele Bamidele posits that it is a process of involving individuals in a community to examine the factors that contribute to his own level of development along-side the development of his community (in Akoh 107). The whole idea of Tfd in spurring the people or community towards a participatory dialogue, especially in Nigeria and other African countries is to sow an integrated development strategy in which all sectors in the society that have a direct bearing on the society work and are regarded as an integrated package.

The campaign of Theatre for Development is basically on how a people, community or nation can look within to solve their problems with no interference from the outside world. It is a type of theatre that is devoid of glamour, sophisticated costume or props. The important thing in Tfd is the simplicity of the message for a better understanding by the audience. The form is not as important as the content in Tfd. This goes to show that the work of the artist is incomplete, unless it bears directly on the life of the community. This is in line with Jerzy Grotowski’s idea of “Poor Theatre”. It is Grotowski’s opinion that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage) without lighting and sound, and so on. However, theatre cannot exist without the actor-audience relationship of perpetual, direct, “live” communion. He submits that,

we abandoned make-up, face noses, pillow stuffed bellies-everything that the actor puts on in the dressing room before performance. We found that it was consummately theatrical for the actor to transform from type to type, character to character-while the audience watched-in a poor manner, using only his own body and craft (Grotowski 20).

In Grotowski’s “Poor Theatre” and Theatre for Development, the actor makes a total gift of himself. Adopting this method and the idea of stripping theatre of all that is not

essential to it, in the real sense of it, reveals to us not only the effectiveness of the idea but also the deep riches which lie in the very nature of the art form.

Theatre for Development is participatory. As Lee Bill puts it, it is part of a family of approaches and techniques that enable community or groups to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to formulate appropriate and empowering action (20). It does not require formal education in a university or major levels of technical knowledge of the arts of theatre. Rather, the practice of Tfd indicates a strong belief in the creative capacity of every individual. It seeks to make theatre a really popular art, which people can easily understand, since it relies on already existing indigenous local materials. It is a theatre practice that builds on or integrates indigenous popular forms in democratising systems and structures of communication. The play-making process is improvisational, not inherently literary, and it is about a community and people-centred problems. The performance is in the open and open-ended, to allow for meaningful intervention by the audience. It is a process of collective problem identification, scenario/playmaking, rehearsals, performance and discussions which often lead to community action or positive behavioural change amongst the people.

The idea of solving societal problems through art or theatre can only be regarded as one of the several approaches to solving human problems. None of the ideas that are being experimented in solving the problem of economic recession is art or theatre oriented. This is because the Nigerian society has not been convinced of the potentials of theatre. The parochial belief that theatre has little or nothing to contribute in the amelioration of societal problems still persists in Nigeria. This is sheer ignorance for theatre has been used as a tool or instrument in search for a people-oriented development for over three decades. In the 1960s, travelling theatre experiments of several African Universities, such as Ibadan, Makerere, Nairobi, Lusaka and Yaounde flourished. Groups of students and teachers, for instance, took plays depicting the clash between traditional and modern society to rural and semi-urban communities, as a form of “cultural democratisation”. In the 1970s, the Laedza Batanani experiments in Botswana provided a forum for communities to come together and critically assess their situation and discuss plans of action. In Nigeria, theatre has been used as a catalyst in community action, through the “Theatre Collective” projects of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and the “Theatre Collective” projects of the University of Jos. In these instances, villagers were involved in the development process, from the point of in-depth analyses of their immediate community situation, to concrete follow-up action as a part of the development process. The examples cited are a proof that in solving the societal problems, the development and or solution has to be engineered and sustained by the people themselves, through their full and active participation. A far reaching and sustainable development should not be undertaken on behalf of a people; rather, it should be their organic concern and endeavour. This will not only give them a sense of belonging but also a sense of self-worth and bring out their creative ability.

Theatre for Development and Economic Recession

The Nigerian nation has enormous human, material and natural resources, yet about only 20 percent of her population benefit from her natural resources. This is one of the

unfortunate paradoxes the Nigerian economy exhibits (Agri, Mailafia & Umejiaku 9). The country has over 250 ethnic groups and hundreds of languages; but the advantage of unity in diversity had eluded the country. Today, millions of Nigerians owe allegiance to their ethnic/tribal groups more than they do to the Nigerian nation. The country has not had it so good. She fought a three year civil war but seems to have taken for granted the blood shed by many Nigerians during the struggle for independence and the civil war. The various military regimes looted and ravaged the commonwealth at a time when oil-revenue windfalls would have developed the nation's much needed infrastructure.

The Nigeria has remained backward and underdeveloped with poverty increasing over time. From the 1970s to the middle of 1980s, there appeared to be an emerging middle class as reflected by the quality and provision of social services, the rate of unemployment, the rate of inflation and the provision of social amenities to the majority of people. During periods of decline in oil revenues, the government borrowed to spend on consumption, hence, fiscal rascality permeated all facets of government business. There was no accountability, transparency or comprehensiveness in the conduct of government business. The effect of all of this has been on the hapless masses. The import of this is that the successive governments in Nigeria have not been sensitive to the plight of the masses but preoccupied with mismanagement of the resources of the nation which had resulted in economic recession.

Nigeria is said to be existing recession, this is debatable as the indices of economic recession are still prevalent. The Nigerian masses are still feeling its pang and are thus in search of answer(s) to the question of economic recession. How can the economy completely exit the recession? What is the outlook for the Nigerian economy, particularly for households and their families as well as businesses? A lot of suggestions have come up from different quarters as likely ways out of the economic recession, but none has looked the way of theatre. This is due chiefly to the fact that theatre, as we all know, is mainly treated as an entertainment material, whereas the society thinks of development in terms of economic, social, political and technological advancement. But the function of theatre has always gone beyond entertainment. Both theatre makers and development workers have come to appreciate and access the impact and educative value of theatre in engineering social change. It is no longer the issue of popular theatre as it were drums, song and dance for sensuous representation but theatre that is focused on developmental goals be it on social, health, politics, technology, agriculture, and even in recent preoccupation with human rights, environmental studies and conflict resolution (Bamidele, in Akoh 106).

Thus, the style and methods of carrying out theatre for development can be applied to solve the Nigerian economic problem. A good number of suggestions that have been offered pointed to the importance of searching within in the course of tackling the issue. This is in conformity with the technique of theatre for development, that is usually unstructured and spontaneous but which feeds on the existing issues in the locality for its operations. The performances do represent the factual living situations of the community. The import of this is for the Nigerians to embrace everything local and Nigerian made products instead of relying on foreign goods and materials for sustenance. It is a known fact that Nigeria is a blessed country with abundant human and

natural resources, just as it is obtainable in theatre for development, where the people's eyes are opened to the resources that each community is blessed with, the resources that the Nigerian nation is blessed with can also be harnessed, galvanised and explored in solving her economic issues. Why is the country relying almost entirely on foreign foods to feed her citizens in spite of the abundant arable lands that the country is blessed with? There is a need to look within to increase agriculture produce and export, if possible. In the 1960s, agriculture was the main base of Nigeria, in terms of GDP, foreign exchange earnings and employment.

Today and sadly, Nigeria spends about 10 billion dollar a year on the importation of agricultural products Noko (1). One can only hope that the idea of exporting yam, as initiated by the Buhari administration, would be sustained and complement with other farm produce. Why is it that the country is not developing her arts, culture and artefacts that would attract tourists and make money from there? It should be stressed that if properly harnessed, encouraged and sustained over the years, arts and culture can fetch the country enough earnings more than what the country is presently earning from oil. It would be good and profitable if the country can "stoop low" and live by the principle of Grotowski's "poor theatre" and theatre for development, disrobe herself of glamour, sophisticated lifestyles and maintain a low profile that could help in saving some money for the country.

As it is obtainable in theatre for development where the people, the rural men, are given opportunities to participate and portrays the real situations of life, it would be good if the Nigerian government see and appreciate the talents, gifts and creative abilities of her citizens and tap them in attacking the economic issue and for the overall development of the country. The country is blessed with men and women of outstanding talents in every area of human endeavour. But sadly, most of these talents and gifts are wasting away, whilst those who can are trading with them abroad; boosting the economy of other countries. Theatre for development is an approach which is committed to using theatre as a relevant medium and language in mobilising people, particularly those in rural communities, towards self-reliance and development. There is no other time for the Nigerian nation to embrace this style than now, if not for anything but for the purpose of solving her present economic problem. It would be appreciated if the people are brought together to solve their problems by themselves, this has a way of instilling in them a sense of value and self-worth. As it is in theatre for development, where most of the hitherto age long myths and beliefs that are retrogressive are dispelled, it is high time for the Nigerian nation to realise that her problems are man-made and it would take man, committed Nigerians and not foreigners, to solve them.

Another good thing about theatre for development is its ability to bring about unity, team work and oneness amongst the people; where people come together, irrespective of status, to face the challenges confronting them headlong. There is no gainsaying the fact that lack of unity is one of the major problems facing the Nigerian nation. And where there is no love, unity and oneness progress or development in any form would be a mirage. If the idea of team work, cooperation and love can be taken from theatre for development and consciously embraced by the government and people

of Nigeria, the developmental opportunities that the country would be exposed to will not only be in economy but also in all areas of human endeavour.

Theatre for Development Experiment in Osiele Community

This researcher and students, (Lecturer and students of the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria) who served as facilitators for the project are well familiar with the terrains of Osiele community which is just a five minute walk away from the college's main gate. And having taken part in some Theatre for Development projects in the past, putting up a drama sketch on economic recession was not a problem. The drama focused on the use of locally made fabric of *Adire*, which is locally produced by the people of Abeokuta. The idea was to discourage the use of imported materials as a way of appreciating the locally made products. The open field of St. Mary Primary School, that is located within the community, was chosen for the performance. Mobilising audience for the performance was easy as the students are directly or indirectly part of the community. A large number of people in the community came out, in the evening of the day set aside for the performance, mainly to enjoy the free and unhindered show.

The fact that a good number of members of the cast (fifteen in number) are known to them was also good bait that drew them to the show. The play that used Yoruba language and Abeokuta dialect (*Egba*) as means of communication dramatised how *Adire* fabric can be used to make school bags, shoes and clothes. The twenty five minutes performance received applause and responses from members of the audience, who engaged the facilitators during interactive session after the performance, on what they need to know further on what had been staged. The performance turned out to be an eye-opener as the beauty of using locally made materials was not only shown but was also seen as a viable means of employment for the youths. The main message in the performance was to encourage production and purchase of Nigerian made products as a way of discouraging importation of items that can be produced locally; as a way of strengthening Nigerian economy. This is because, as it has been posited in the paper, conspicuous consumption habits of the ruling elite and their appetite for imported luxury items is one of the reasons for economic recession.

Recommendations

From the Osiele TfD experiment, it was obvious that TfD can be used to address not only the issue of economic recession but other issues that have direct bearings with the people. Concerted efforts should therefore be made by the government to engage Theatre Arts practitioners in its bid to completely wipe out economic recession. Thus, the people and governments, in all tiers, should embrace arts, give it attention and learn from its inherent abilities. The present situation where the governments from local, states and federal delight in supporting science and technology at the expense of arts is not only discouraging but also detrimental. As clapping with one hand to create sound may be somewhat impossible, the idea of thinking and behaving as if the Nigerian nation can only develop solely through science and technology is doing more harm than good to the country. Where all the theories and economic policies have failed, arts may

be the solution and the hitherto neglected stone may be the pillar that would sustain the building.

Conclusion

The thesis of this paper has been the use of Tfd as a panacea to the perennial economic recession that the Nigerian nation is somewhat battling with. In doing this, the concepts of economic recession and Tfd were brought to the fore. Attention was also given to the impacts cum effects of the recession on the country and the masses. Efforts were made to establish the fact that theatre for development, with its features and style of operation with a practical experience in Osiele community, has all it takes to completely take Nigeria out of recession. As it has been pointed out, in the paper, theatre for development is a theatrical practice that utilises the existing theatrical forms within and available to a targeted community in a creative and participatory manner, to highlight awareness of factors and forces militating against the community and hindering its development and growth. Thus, the paper has been able to (re)direct all stakeholders in the Nigerian project to the participatory methodology of theatre for development for it encourages the people themselves to take part in identifying their problems and to proffer solutions to those problems through team work. It is the position of this paper that the Nigerian nation will be totally out of recession if the country can embrace the idea, theory and practices of theatre for development in solving her economic problem.

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THE SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERDEPENDENCE OF THEATRE AND SOCIETY AND NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC RECESSION

Stanley OHENHEN, PhD

Department of Communication and Performing Arts

Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria

Email: stanleyohenhen@gmail.com

Abstract

Tracing the origin of theatre, it is a priori knowledge that theatre started after society began to exist, during the pre-historic times, a period when man learnt to survive by making nature work for him. Man engaged then, in performative mimesis through story-telling, dance, re-enactment, music, and drumming, for his sustenance and survival. The human society has since then, served as an indispensable platform for the theatre to thrive having been the primary platform and source from which the theatre derives its essence, sustenance and livelihood. Conversely, the society does also have ways in which it depends immensely on the theatre for its socio-cultural, political and economic viability and sustenance. This paper interrogates the existing argument on the socio-cultural and economic interdependence of theatre and society, and hopefully, provides a balance in the argument of which determines the existence and sustenance of the other. Conclusions are reached in the end, on ways in which society can leverage on the creative socio-cultural and economic dynamics of the theatre especially in ameliorating the banes of recession. Focused group discussions, case study analysis, review of relevant literature, especially play texts, and participant observation methods were largely relied on, and data collected were subjected to content analysis. Although usually unfairly dismissed as a mere courtesan entertainment parasite in its relationship with society, the theatre however is actually a quintessential interdependent ally of society and do possess socio-cultural and economic potentialities that can help salvage society's recessed economy.

Introduction

Theatre can be defined as the art or medium of expression through which a specific message – entertaining or functional – is deliberately orchestrated before a viewing or participative audience, through the imitation of an object, animal, person or abstract phenomenon. Inferring from this definition, the operating word that makes theatre all the time, differentiating it from the other arts – still or performing – is the 'imitation' act. This is traceable in the main, to its origin way back to the pre-historic times, a period during which the primitive man engaged in performative activities such as story-telling, mime, dance, re-enactment, music, and drumming, in his attempt to survive and make nature work for him.

Bakare Traore avers that, “religious belief was an essential part of life in Black Africa” (13). So, the African, due to their religious beliefs established a functional link between them and the gods, spirits and the ancestors. They engaged in religious performative activities which enabled them to easily identify with the cosmic forces and natural elements like the sun, moon, stars, lightning, thunder, seasons and seasonal changes. The primitive African at those initial stages of human existence engaged in ritualistic re-enactment of real life situations such as the waging of war against enemies, celebrating war victories, preparing for hunting expeditions and even food gathering and crop harvesting processes. Gradually, as civilisation progressed, these performative activities which were expressed through story-telling dramatisation, music, dance, mime and drumming, became more organised and integrated into the entire communal life of the pre-civilisation. African traditional, and socio-cultural entity. According to Fasuyi, the Nigerian arts and cultural activities were closely interwoven with the social life of the kingdoms under the traditional rulers who were not only political heads but also spiritual leaders (or priests) of the people (17).

At this initial extremely sacred level, theatre in Africa, was essentially functional, though also communally entertaining. However, with time, the public performances began to get more organised and more secularised. A typical example is the seasonal Egungun Cult festival of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The festival was initially essentially ritualistic as well as culturally entertaining in structure. But again, with time, the ritual festival eventually gave birth to the first organised traditional performing arts company which became known as the Yoruba Traditional Traveling Theatre or the Alarinjo Traveling Theatre (Brockett 635). The account of the theatre origin from the West shares similarities with that of the African origins in that it is also traceable to having an intertwined off-shoot from rituals and religious observances. From the early pre-Greek classical age to the medieval period, theatre, society and religion have always been interdependent. The origin of the theatre is most widely accepted as arising out of myth and ritual. Greece, historically described as the root of the Western tradition, was critical to providing a broader culture of theatrical performances, which include religious festivals such as celebrating Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility. Performers wore costumes and masks to represent and re-enact certain mythical or supernatural forces. Then in Ancient Egypt also, are the Passion plays, which happened to be one of the reportedly earliest recorded quasi-theatrical events which date back to 2000BC. The story of the god, Osiris was usually ceremonially performed annually at festivals throughout the Egyptian civilisation, establishing what an enduring relationship between theatre and religion became (Akande 1).

The Interdependent Relationship between the Theatre and Society

Society began when man began to exist, when man began to multiply and found the need to interact with one another, depend on one another, communicate with one another, associate with one another, have expectations from one another, collaborate and even engage in one form of conflict, or the other. The term, ‘society’, is derived from the Latin word, *socius*, which means, association or companionship. Society, to that extent, suggests a large group of individual who are associated together on some

common grounds. According to Farooq, the individual is the basis of society in that the interactions of the individuals give birth to group while the social groups, in interacting with each other and developing relationship eventually grows into society (1).

The *Cambridge Dictionary* describes society as, “a large group of people who live together in an organised way, making decisions about how to do things, and sharing the work that needs to be done. All the people in a country, or in several similar countries, can be referred to as a society”. It will also be instructive to add the descriptions of the *Wikipedia Dictionary*, presenting society as,

a group of people involved in persistent social interaction or a large social grouping sharing the same geographical or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Societies are characterised by patterns of role-playing relationships between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institution; a given society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent members (en.wikipedia.org).

Against this background, it is evident that society derives its essence and meaning from the level of inter-individual/intergroup interactions and the relationship derivable as a result of a bonding that exists within the groupings of individuals. According to *Wikipedia*, “insofar as it is ‘collaborative’ a society can enable its members to benefit in ways that would not otherwise be possible on an individual basis; both individual and social (common) benefits can thus be distinguished, or in many cases found to overlap” (en.wikipedia.org). A society can also consist of like-minded people governed by their own norms and values within a dominant, larger society. This is what is sometimes referred to as a subculture within the larger societal configuration.

Now, in the course of the origination of society and the intermingling of the individuals that made up the early societies, there happened to have also been the evolution of theatre and theatrical activities in the interactiveness that occurred between the social components that existed, such as the mimetic acts, religious observances, story-telling dramatisation and transactional interactions. However, the story of the origin of man as well as that of the theatre, (whether against the background of that of the Western version, or the African), leaves a mind-boggling question as to which then, really gives essence to the other between society and theatre. The early societies derived their meaning and survival through the art of mimesis and other theatrical activities. In the very everyday activities of man living out his daily chore, he naturally acted, imitated and dramatised the unseen supernatural forces, gods, ancestors, the weather and seasonal conditions, animals, persons – living and dead – and even objects; he mimed his way through, told and dramatised his stories and experiences.

The performing arts, according to Costa, “are inherently social arts and do provide a necessary opportunity to develop the skills of socialisation and communication required by a healthy democracy”. He emphasises that cultural activities and the performing arts specifically, uniquely serve as a meeting place, a site for the formation of a shared communal identity as, ‘the public’ (www.theguardian.com). This is where

society begins but found its meaning and essence through the theatre without which there really would not have been a meaningful society. In other words, the meaningfulness of society resides in role-playing and the mimetic interactions of the individuals that make up the society.

The various artists of the theatre namely, the playwright, the actor, the artistic director, the costumier, the light and set technicians, the make-up artist, all generally represent on the stage, a manifestation of their imagination of the real social issues that pervades their immediate or distant societies. It is apparent therefore that the creative raw materials of the artist are derivable solely from the society. Even the very canvas of the painter, the textile materials used by the costumier, the stage used by the actors, the actors themselves as deployed by the artistic director to carry out the physical expression of his inner concepts of the plays' plot on stage are all social phenomena obtained from the larger society. The playwrights draw their ideas, inspirations, subject matters and themes from their social experiences, as well as also eventually depending on the same society for their audiences and feedback, for their works to have any essence or meaning. This underpins the popular theatre axiom, which says: "the audience makes the play".

Ngugi Wa Thiongo also says in his *Homecoming* essays, that, "literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society (iv). He states further that, "the relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and new-colonialism" (viii). Every aspect of the social life, including the issues that constitute relationships between social beings and their ecological environment are raw materials for the artist to reconstruct their imaginations around: divorce, religious harmony or conflict, insurgencies, political instability, starvation, unemployment, the hunger for peace and societal harmony, the undying quest for an egalitarian society. politics, religion, economics, culture, traditions, beliefs, ethnicity and diversity, academic freedom, liberty, gender issues, justice, equity, truth, deception, themes from the real world to the ethereal, from the *nuomena* to the phenomena world, from the concrete to the abstract, all constitute the subliminal, subconscious conjectural warehouse of the theatre artists as well as being products of society.

The Theatre as the Conscience of Society

Over the years, the theatre has initiated remarkable socio-political impacts on society at a magnitude that no other discipline could have. The Nigerian Theatre for example, has always been a pictorial self-examining and pedagogically dialogical avenue through which people weighed the performances of the ruling class. It has since remained a tool for appraising or condemning the class. It is also a means of mobilising the people to support or reject a particular government. Theatre practitioners have refused to bulge in their objective as well as subjective but radical reactions to unsavoury political realities.

Hubert Ogunde is one of the earliest theatre pioneers in Nigeria whose theatrical activities made so much change impact on the society. His responses to the social

conditions in the Nigerian state through his popular travelling theatre of the 1940s were evidently radically outspoken. He was renowned for his caustic satirical sketches with which he toured the country, and even into Ghana, the then Gold Coast. Most of his works caused both the colonial and the neo-colonial government a lot of concerns. His radical conscientisation of the Nigerian government and society in general was established throughout the nation by his timely play *Strike and Hunger*, performed in 1946. The production of *Strike and Hunger* on his first and only night in Jos lasted only half an hour way through when a constable entered the stage through the dressing room and arrested Ogunde. The hall was suddenly besieged by about forty other police constables scattering the audience, and arresting five other members of Ogunde's cast (Ogunbiyi 298). Many of Ogunde's early plays were attacks on colonialism, while those of his later works were focused essentially on political themes deplored interparty strife and government corruption within Nigeria. Yoruba theatre became secularised and even commercialised through his careful blending of astute political or social satire with elements of music hall routines and slapstick (Ohenhen, "Trends..." 7).

Femi Osofisan, a most renowned second generation Nigerian dramatist, had grown up witnessing many changes and challenges in his native Yoruba farming village in Western Nigeria. These memories went a long way in impacting on his dramaturgy as a playwright, artistic director and dramatist. His theatre, as reflected in his works, were largely influenced by the social indices of his background as illustrated, for example in his *The Chattering and the Song*, *Red Runs the Freedom Road*, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, *Once Upon Four Robbers*, and *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*. Osofisan exhibits a critical perspective, towards the exploitation, poverty, pseudo nationalism, and self-aggrandising disposition of the political class. According to Awodiya, Osofisan is not just a provincial writer by also informed or inspired by the culture and social events from various parts of Nigeria. Muiyiwa Awodiya cites *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* as,

a play that illustrates the triumph of young love over social divisions, commemorating issues in the Nigerian Civil war, while *Midnight Hotel* satirises the political and religious profligacy of Nigerians especially during the civilian government of Shehu Shagari between 1976 and 1983 (61).

Another instructive reference to the conscientisation of society by the theatre is the theatre of Ngugi wa Thiongo. Ngugi effectively deployed the creative raw materials derived, especially from his immediate society, which were essentially the prevailing social conditions in the post-colonial and neo-colonial Kenya, produced works that made so much impact on the masses and on the government, so much so that the government claimed to have been 'embarrassed and upset' to the point of actually imposing an out-rightly ban on the works. For example, when the first production of *I Will Marry When I Want*, in Limuru in the Gikuyu language as, *Ngashika Ndeenda*, the play was immediately banned and Ngugi himself interned. *I Will Marry When I Want* largely and unreservedly exposes the condition of abject poverty to which the peasants

have been consigned by the imperialists and neo-colonialists. Kigunda and his wife, Wangeci, are very hard-working natives who slave for their opportunistic fellow blacks like the Kiois and the Ikuas who readily stepped into the shoes of the colonialists. The exploitative tendencies of the bourgeoisie of the Kenyan neo-colonial society are clearly brought to bear in Gicaamba's bitter narration. These peasants, having worked and sweated savagely, are given mere peanuts-worth of wages while the rest of the result of their sweat is sent to the imperialist nations such as Japan, America and Britain. The helpless peasants are dispossessed of their landed properties for token amounts or nothing at all, and any protest was summarily squashed. In Kigunda, the hope for the oppressed persons almost fizzles out as he allows himself to be bamboozled by the oppressors and the petit-bourgeois religious fanatics. But in Gicaamba, there is hope as all his actions and words tend to generate rage and provoke a mass cause action.

So, the theatre artists, through their works, are able to define a conception of art, and a robust romance between the artist and his society as inevitable. The likes of the contemporary European, African and African-American dramatists and ideological thinkers like Karl Marx, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and Amiri Baraka, believe that the artist must be committed to deploying his art to addressing the socio-political issues of his day, and so his art must be functional, committed, didactic and dialogically pedagogical in content, form and style. To that extent, the artist, his art and the society must be intertwined by way of dialogically impacting one another.

The Socio-Economic Relevance of the Theatre to a Recessed Economy

What relevance can the theatre contribute to society? Why should the citizenry value the theatre, and make time and space for it within their lives, patronise, sponsor or support it in any way? Why should democratic governments and their machineries be expected to invest in it or even pay due attention to it in their policy formulations and implementations? These are the questions that have bothered the minds of scholars, practitioners and other stakeholders of the arts and culture, especially the performing arts genre over the years. Even more particularly, are the expressed doubts about the socio-economic values the theatre has to offer society that necessitate a concerted reciprocal investment in it by society. When the relationship between the theatre and society is well horned, there are immense socio-economic benefits that accrue to the society through the engagement of the arts of the theatre.

There is no doubt that the Nigerian economy is presently going through a recession as portrayed by a number of economic indicators. Barclays Ayakoroma identifies some key indicators identified by analysts that affirm that the Nigerian state is still in a recession. These include:

- a) Massive job losses in banks and financial institutions;
- b) Inability of State governments to pay workers' salaries;
- c) Federal Government borrowing to fund annual budget;
- d) Nigerian companies recording massive losses;
- e) Foreign airlines exiting from the country's
- f) Aviation market due to unfavourable business climate;

- g) The nation's currency, naira, plummeting in the foreign exchange market; and
- h) Drastic cut or outright shut-down of oil production (www.nico.gov.ng).

Thus, it goes without saying that the recession situation in Nigeria is evident. Most African and other developing countries of the world identify with this recessed economic situation. Incidentally, this state of recession goes a long way in adversely affecting the health of the activities and operations of the theatre in their various host societies. Nonetheless, the theatre in the Nigerian societies and other parts of the world still have many ways contribute immensely to the alleviation of the socio-economic pains of recession regardless of its enormous economic constraints.

In most part of the world, such as, South Africa, Argentina, Bosnia and Northern Ireland, growing prominence is being given to the contributions made by the performing arts and cultural activities to processes of peace building and reconciliation. According to Meersman, most of these societies, “find the artistic activities a necessary leverage in trying to work through difficult and divisive pasts” (www.critical-stages.org). They readily are turning to the restorative and therapeutic power of drama, music, film and literature to break down walls of silence and bitterness about atrocities of war and intertribal conflicts, to allow victims to share their stories of suffering, and to rekindle the ability to imagine again. The therapeutic value of the live-performing arts in releasing and purging powerful emotions previously repressed is also increasingly becoming apparent and has played significant roles in these conflict resolutions and reconciliation projects.

In another vein, the theatre itself relies on the synergy of various artists of the theatre namely the playwright, the director, the actors and actresses, stagecraft artists, the theatre managers and crew, to make theatre happen. Then for a performance to happen, about a hundred to a thousand or more people need to gather in one place for a couple of hours, and share together in witnessing and contemplating an event, like a ‘slice of life’ cut out and placed on stage, that may be beautiful, funny, moving, thought-provoking, or hopefully at least diverting. And in an age when most of our communication happens in front of a screen, theatre as in ‘live-stage’ gathering function of theatre is, in and of itself, something that matters. The following are more socio-economic values the performing arts and culture contributes to the alleviation of the critical conditions of a society's recessed economy.

- a) ***Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities:*** The arts and culture industries go a long way in creating employment and various forms of economically gainful occupation and career for a larger segment of the Nigerian community namely, school leavers, graduates, retirees, entrepreneurs. A teaming chunk of these population earn their living as actors and actresses, dancers, musicians, film producers arts company directors and producers, technical and lighting designers, broadcasters, journalists; copy writers, artisans; costume and make-up artists; camera personnel; photographers; architects; playwrights and script writers, film/stage directors, stand-up comedians, professional masters of ceremonies, show business presenters, models, and so on. The performing arts and culture indeed, are

increasingly finding a route to the global market, which is leading to radical transformations in the way people create, consume and enjoy cultural products. The creative arts and culture industry has, as much as any other industries in the world economy of the 21st Century, become a great potential for entrepreneurship, wealth and job creation and in fact, employability opportunities (Ohenhen, “Entrepreneurship...” 233). According to Brown, “entrepreneurship in the creative industry sector has been recognised as a distinctive and increasingly important area of a nation’s economy” (6). Performing arts and culture organisations are fundamentally (consciously or unconsciously), founded on the principles of innovation and entrepreneurship in that their origin is rooted in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. The operators and stakeholders in the creative arts and culture in Africa only need to take full advantage of these endless economic opportunities. Most of the developed and even some developing countries of the world are already doing this. For example, South Africa is increasingly beginning to focus on cultural and creative industries as potential contributors to economic growth and job creation. According to Snowball, “South Africa did its first cultural and creative industries mapping study in 2014. Though not yet publicly available online, the interim report showed that the industries had created between 162,809 and 192,410 jobs, about 1.08% to 1.28% of employment in the country, and that they contribute 2.9% to South Africa’s total GDP” (www.theconversation.com). Meanwhile, it is also reported that the total jobs in the UK cultural sector as at 2015 was 642,000, which had grown by 17.8 per cent since 2011; and that the estimated number of UK jobs specifically in music, theatre and the visual arts as at 2015 was 291,000 (www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk). This is apparently an enormous to contributions from the arts to society’s economic development and resuscitation where required.

- b) ***Enabling the Weak Economy of Host Communities:*** The dis-accentuated nature of the arts and culture sub-sector can benefit the corporate and individual citizenry of the host communities considered to be lacking in economic strength. For example, when a carnival is hosted by a State government in an erstwhile not-too-popular or an initially economically and socially disadvantaged community, the economy of such a community suddenly becomes strengthened with the corresponding stimulation of economic activities that arises from and/or around the carnival event (Ohenhen, “Arts and Culture...” 152). Also, a number of influential or now affluent artists and artistes who are typically well-connected in their local communities who, when linked with either NGOs or with even entrepreneurship opportunities both inside and beyond their immediate local environment offers numerous valuable economic development possibilities. Again, cases in point are the immeasurable economic and social activity-spin-offs in the immediate communities surrounding state-organised carnival events in Nigeria. Performing Arts and Cultural organisations and practitioners in the UK are reported to have

contributed £27bn to the UK economy in 2015, a 15 per cent increase on the previous year. This represents the fastest growth of any of the sectors covered by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (cultural, digital, the wider creative industries, gambling, sport, telecoms and tourism (www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk)).

- c) ***Democratic, Dialogical and Social Reconstruction Platform:*** Theatre provides models for a kind of public discourse that lies at the heart of democratic life, and builds our skills for listening to different sides of a conversation or argument. It makes it possible for members of society, through the audience, to empathise with the struggles of their fellow human beings regardless of whatever their views may be. When a play is watched, the consequences of unresolved conflicts therein are usually apparent, and what happens when they get resolved. The faculty of the audience for imagining the outcomes of various choices they might make in their personal lives and their political lives also get sensitised hence in repressive societies, theatre has often been aligned with the movement toward openness and freedom and also serving as a means of self-expression and empowerment by people facing hostile political or social circumstances. In South Africa and East Africa for example, theatre, through the drama of the likes of Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Athol Fugard, Mukotani Rugeyendo, played a critical role in the struggle against apartheid, colonialism and neo-colonialism. For example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* is a creative reconstruction of the heroic role played by the legendary Dedan Kimathi, the leader of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya. Through mime and flashback, it equally shows the historic contributions of the Kenyan peasants and workers when they rose against the British colonialists to regain their lost lands and achieve political independence. The Tiv people in Nigeria used the traditional Kwagh-Hir puppet and masquerade theatre to voice opposition against the political victimisation during the 1960s. The works of Hubert Ogunde are satires that deal with topical issues in Nigerian politics. One of such works, *Yoruba Ronu* (Yoruba Think), sheds light on the crisis in the Western Region during the 1965 elections, which eventually culminated into the 15th January, 1966 bloody coup. Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame* is a Nigerian adaptation of the *Oedipus* theme in which Rotimi uses the metaphor of communal dispute, self-love and ethnic pride to symbolise the problems that culminated in the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970.
- d) ***Education and Literacy Platform:*** Both the making of theatre as the artists and attending the theatre as the audience, contribute to education and literacy. Re-enacting, or watching the characters talk back and forth in the theatre is tricky; it requires sharp attention, quick mental shifts, and nimble language skills. It teaches us about human motivation and psychology. In classical or historical plays such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*; William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Ola Rotimi's *Kurumi* and *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*, for example, we get lessons in leadership, politics and government. Then in more contemporary plays

like Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, and Ahmed Yerima's *The Sisters* and *Pari*, society learns about people and cultures in different parts of either its host country or other countries. Making plays together as cast, crew or audience also draws every stakeholder out of their shells and helps them learn to socialise in a productive and healthy way.

- e) ***Invigorates the Life of its Host Communities:*** The theatre as an industry contributes to the social life as well as plays a special role in the revitalisation of neglected neighbourhoods. This is evidenced in the social recreation and activities that spring up in theatre immediate host-environments, especially during seasonal productions. The environments of the National Arts Theatres in Lagos, Accra, and Nairobi and indeed any other country in the world where the National Theatre is alive and functioning, are usually a hub-nub of such socio-economic activities during one form of performing arts festival or social event or the other. The artistes, artists, crew and then, audiences attracted by singular events do stimulate commercial activities for other businesses in the environment. For example, a consecutive number of night runs of a play production in a performing arts house will complementarily create business of food vendors, fashion shops, arts and craft shops, bookshops, and other petty shop retailers. By this, the larger purpose of state economy-boosting is achieved.

This is also reported to be the case in the role that the Studio Theatre played along the 14th Street corridor, or Shakespeare Theatre along Seventh Street, or Woolly in both these neighbourhoods, or Gala Hispanic Theatre in Columbia Heights, the Atlas along H Street, or the new Arena Stage along the waterfront (Shalwitz, www.theatrewashington.org).

As each of these theatres opened, new audiences started flooding in, new restaurants opened, jobs were created, the city improved the sidewalks, and neighbourhoods that were once grim and forbidding became vibrant hubs of activity. And this pattern has been repeated in cities around the world.

- f) ***Value Addition to the Quality of Life:*** The theatre helps to infuse into society an enhanced state of well-being and quality of life through the enrichment of local infrastructural amenities such as theatres, cinema houses, amusement parks, club houses, tourist centres and other refreshment and entertainment centres. These go a long way in the attraction of young and upwardly mobile professional workforce to the communities where they are available. The culture industries no doubt play a critical role in the said attraction and retention of this key segment of the population. The performing arts and culture sector of Great Britain for example is reported to contribute an important benefit on the health and well-being of the British society. Those who had attended the theatres or some cultural festival or event in the

preceding 12 months were, according to report, 60 per cent more likely to report good health, and theatre-goers were 25 per cent more likely to report being in health than the average. People valued being in the audience for the arts at about £2,000 per year, which is higher than sport (www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk).

- g) ***Platform for Social Enlightenment:*** Theatre is a virile tool used to sensitise the society on matters that affect them on daily basis. These include matters of family planning/child-spacing, conduction of census, campaign against sale and distribution of fake and illegal drugs, HIV/AIDS and other STDs, abortions, child abuse/neglect etc. Drama, as one of the core genres of literature, is the mirror of any society because it documents what is happening and throws it back at the same society.

Summary and Conclusions

The theatre is unique in its nature in that it constitutes one sub-sector that cuts across the economic, political, social, cultural and technological fabrics of society. It serves as a cross-road of the arts, business and technology in that, in the process of its creation, there are usually manifestations of a bit of various sectors therein: design, stage craft, ICT, creativity, architecture and so on. The live-performing arts communities continue to enjoy some philanthropic supports and patronage across the world, though its fortunes have no doubt, been largely affected by the on-going economic recession in the world today.

Market fluctuations, disinvestment in the cultural sector and declines in charitable donations, reluctance by partnership investments in the arts for fear of likely low returns, or no returns on investments, government policy and budget formulation and implementation marginalisation of the performing arts and culture sub-sector, have hurt endowments, leading to reductions in private sector funding, patronage and sponsorship as well. Evidently, the economics of the performing arts environment do adversely affect the arts. The economic system exerts its ripple effects as constantly and tirelessly as gravity affects the natural world. So, the peculiarities of any particular economic system ultimately mould the arts and the society they reflect. Howbeit, the socio-cultural and economic benefits accruing from the interdependent relationship between the theatre and society especially as discussed above have not been suppressible. This goes to further accentuate the interdependent nexus between the theatre and its host societies.

The society and culture within which the artists grow up is also a part and parcel of the artists themselves. To that extent, the theatre becomes a visible demonstration and outward realisation of our culture. The arts of the theatre imitates, replicates as well as interprets cultural beliefs and traditional ethos, ideals and changes so desired by the artists. This brings about an inseparable and almost undistinguishable intertwine between the theatre and society.

Theatre, Mackey says, “is the most social of the arts in that social relationships in action are not only demonstrated on stage and in the audience, but also in the relationship between what is happening on the stage and the audience” (208). As matter

of fact, all the relationships that exist in society are usually experienced by the audience, as it all play out in front of them. The audience literarily see themselves being played out on stage. The audience each time, is either relating to the actions on stage because it tells them about themselves or paints for them a utopia they will like to attain. For the survival and fulfilment of both therefore, a socio-cultural and economic interdependence between theatre and society becomes a given.

Theatre started when society deployed theatrical activities to enable them survive and sustain their existence meaningfully. Whereas, theatre also wholesomely depended on the society for its creative raw materials as well as for its audience which actually becomes a determine factor the theatre's completeness. To conclude therefore that they both need each other for their survival and for their meaningfulness is a statement a priori and hardly requires any further justification.

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PROSPECTS OF BOX OFFICE MANAGEMENT IN A RECESSED ECONOMY: A STUDY OF UNIPOINT ARTS THEATRE

Felix Nnamdi AGBATA

Department of Theatre and Film Studies
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Email: felyabelacity@yahoo.com

Abstract

*It is a statement of fact that box office poses a great positive impact on the economy of any nation. However, for theatre organization to record higher levels of economic performance, there are number of critical issues of management that require effective leadership and professional handling. With the recognition of box office as the most commercially viable unit of theatrical production, this paper opines that the box office holds a robust potential for improving the Nigeria's economy. In spite of this cheering potential, the practice of box office management in Nigeria is highly underdeveloped in scholarship. This paper examines the management of theatre business with the view of making possible recommendations that would culminate in improving the Nigeria's economy, using University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre, as a case study. This paper which adopts historical and literary methodology is anchored on Herbert Simon's **Decision Science Theory of Management** which is simply identified as decision-making. The finding of this paper among others is the scanty nature of the organizational structure of the Arts Theatre; it means that there are organs or arms that ought to be included. The importance of these organs cannot be neglected. Similarly, this paper recommends the immediate need to review the administrative structure and policies of the Arts Theatre. The box office personnel should be made to undergo proper training. Above all, this study provides modalities on how to improve on box office management in order to have enough returns to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's economic growth.*

Introduction

No matter how good theatrical production turns out to be, the occasion is bound to be a disappointment to the participants if there is no large audience patronage and enough money realised to cover the expenses incurred in the production. Box office is the financial nerve of the theatre, as well as the power-house of the theatre that needs to be oiled, boosted, enhanced, and uplifted for a better tomorrow. In other words, box office is the bedrock of every theatre enterprise, and this has gained prominence over the years. It is also the image maker and the hope of the theatre especially as the economic status of the theatre depends on box office returns. To support this, Stephen Langley posits that,

Box office is the wallet of a theatre. It must be secured, well organised and managed with reverence for accuracy and details. It should also be regarded as a primary factor in creating the image of the theatre, as few things or more conspicuous to the public than the box office and the people who work in it (363).

Going by what Langley said, it is therefore, important to note that box office is the first point of contact between the audience and the theatre management staff. The first impression is essential towards building a lasting relationship with theatre patrons. This is why box office personnel should be persons who are intelligent, efficient to render smart services, diplomatic, and be on familiar terms with the theatre patrons.

The success of any human endeavour anchors on its management. It therefore entails the ability to co-ordinate, control, harmonise and organise its human and material resources towards achieving a target goal. In theatre practice, management of human and material component remains an essential ingredient. Therefore, box office management involves the understanding of human relations, the planning of productions, the projection of results, and the pooling together of resources for the successful execution of a given production. Box office management is faced with various problems, ranging from lack of trained personnel, audience patronage, lack of accountability, management deficiency and others. It is understood that the challenges of box office management in an educational theatre causes some serious setback to the effective and efficient management of an educational theatre.

The causes and solution of economic recession in Nigeria have become the major subject of discussion on the lips of major citizens of Nigeria. Indeed, some economists go so far as to define recession as being characterised by a period of negative economic growth for no more than two consecutive quarters. Rise in unemployment, fall in industrial production, adjustment in real gross domestic product (GDP) or inflation decreases, stagnation or fall in incomes, especially with regard to their purchasing power in wholesale and retail sales and increase in government borrowing are all considered to be characteristic features of a recession. Fortunately, as frightening as these features appear, they tend not to last for too long in a recession. If they last for too long and gets worse, then it becomes a depression, (the a more severe form of recession). Traditional or orthodox economist believe that, as it is in nature economic expansion and growth constitute the normal state of affair in the economic world and recession is an abnormality that does not or should not last for too long. This therefore, is predicated upon the sensitisation of the theatre practitioners on the need for proper box office management in theatrical productions, so as to have enough returns to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's economic growth using University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre as a case study.

The Concept of Theatre

According to Innocent Ohiri, the word, theatre, is derived from the Greek word, *theatron*, which means a place for seeing (1). Theatre is also an architectural structure

built to house dramatic offerings and other types of presentations. Viewed from other perspectives of definition, “a place for seeing”, it can also be seen as an “area” (without any architectural building) for the performance of plays and dramatic spectacles. In other words, it is a scene of important event. Ohiri observes that, “theatre is simply the art of ‘acting out’ something. It does not even need a special building and stage, for it can take place in a threshing circle, in a street or any piece of ground” (17). He concludes that, “in a more specific relation to the art of presentation, theatre denotes the art as a whole, of which the building is only a part” (17). In this sense, theatre could be said to be one of the performing arts, the distinguishing feature of which is the public nature of the expression.

In a narrower but more specific sense, theatre is believed to be an experience. Edwin Wilson explains that, “theatre is experience, an immediate art whose meaning is grasped through an understanding of the encounter between who creates theatre performers and those who view it” (1). He believes that theatre is created by a series of shifting impressions and stimuli where a child can learn and develop a right attitude in the society; and that “theatre is a performance, an action in contrast to sculptures, painting or literature” (1). Hence, theatre is a dynamic art, changing from moment to moment as performers interact with one another and with audience. Oscar Brockett describes theatre in support of the above views as, “the most objective arts, because it presents characteristically, both outer and inner experience through speech and action” (7). Wilson and Brockett believed that theatre is dynamic and transitory.

Viewing theatre from a more complex perspective, Chenery opines that, “no definition can ever be broad enough to capture in words, the elements and the modes or the arts, the facets and the directions of theatrical life” (13). He sees theatre as the art where all art meet. To him, theatre events cut directly and vividly into life, having to do with the currents of man’s being, with personal crises and interesting moments of experience. He therefore, concludes that, “theatre is most notably the art where spiritual light illuminates human living” (9). In attempt to explain the meaning of theatre, Jerzy Grotowski observes that, “theatre is a place where an actor recites a written text, illustrating it with series of movements in order to make it more easily understood” (cited in Herbert 9). By this explanation, the theatre is conceived of as a useful accessory to dramatic literature and other subject areas. The theatre is a place of entertainment. The essence of performance is to educate, entertain and inform the people about the good and bad of the society. This is why Dapo Adelugba asserts that, “theatre mirrors life, therefore, culture which is life itself is mirrored” (cited in Herbert 9).

Looking at the theatre from the perspective of Nigerian culture, Yemi Ogunbiyi observed that, “the primitive root of Nigerian theatre must be sought in the numerous religious rituals and festivals that exist in many Nigerian communities” (3). Going by this, Nigerian theatre and drama originated with the Nigerian himself, embodying his first preoccupations, his first struggles, success and setbacks. Ilami Krama expresses the same opinion, when he said that, “African traditional theatre is a creation of man’s social experiences that attempt the explication of relationships between man and gods, man and man, and man and the environment” (1). However, Ben Ejiofor observes that:

The ambience of theatre reaches beyond the physical location identified as *theatron*. The context of theatre relevant to our purposes is a composite context which employs the arts of playwriting, costume and make-up, acting, scenography and theatre management in concert and performance for the sole purpose of communication (qtd in Ogoh 10).

From the foregoing, the word, 'theatre', as it were does not mean only the structure of a building but it encompasses all other elements of arts. Theatre extends beyond the confines of the stage; it is a marriage between drama and its community with the aim of promoting moral, political, cultural and even religious consciousness in the society. It is through drama that the theatre artiste communicates the experiences, emotions, ideas, and beliefs of the people which lie beyond ordinary speech and action. The action of drama is produced out of human world view. It is a production of what the mind perceives in order to stimulate and arouse the emotions of the audience which serves as a tool for national development.

The significance of the theatre to the society cannot be overemphasised, reason being that, it has the potential to capture and represent life as it is. It deals with human relationships, and uses it as influence to the dynamic growth of the society. The motivation behind any theatrical action may be to redefine a particular thought, out of the desire to educate and create awareness on the consequences of social vices that could impact negatively on the life of the people. Thus, using the theatrical machinery to create the right norms, and values, which fits the trends of the society at that particular time?

The playwright in the theatre handles historical materials different from the historian, because of the power of the theatre artiste to manipulate issues with his/her raw materials to galvanise social vices and at the same, satirising the act of oppression, violence and corruption in the society. Consequently, the theatre empowers the society and eliminates all forms of under-development, maltreatment, social vices arising from ignorance, inequality, injustice and poverty in the society. Austine posits that,

The theatre is visualised as a place of reconstruction. A reconstruction that has the tone of the miraculous, based on the use of the creative imagination to display inspirational ingenuity, augmented by the audience's willing suspension of disbelief (23).

It is imperative to note from the foregoing, that, theatre operates as an agent of change and transformation that brings to perspective, the very essence of politics, culture, religion and moral in the contemporary society. The real ideal conception of theatre is to bring to reality the very essence of human existence, thus, drawing the relevance of other elements of the arts with the sole aim of promoting a balance in the society.

The Concept of Box Office

The success of every human endeavour anchors on its management. It therefore entails the ability to coordinate, control, harmonise and organise its human and material resource towards achieving a target goal. In theatre arts as a discipline, management of human and material component remains an essential ingredient. Therefore, theatre management involves the understanding of human relations, the planning of productions, the projection of results, the ability to control results, and the getting together of resources for the successful execution of a theatre production. The bane of this study therefore, is to examine the management of theatre business with the view of lack of desired attention in terms of proper box office management in educational theatre practice in Nigeria, using University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre as case study.

In educational theatre, its success or failure depends on the management of the box office, which Barclays Ayakoroma defined thus:

The box office is the small office in front of house where tickets are sold. It is the point of contact between the audience and the theatre management staff. Thus, the first impression is essential towards building a lasting relationship (39).

Basically, the box office is the life wire of the Arts theatre. The box office returns is mainly generated from the students. This is because the educational theatre is built to enhance learning and practical performances of the students. Therefore, the financial gains that are generated from the box office may not be as much as that of commercial theatre that is profit oriented. The commercial theatre must continue to exist and remain profit oriented, as well as educational theatre which lays more emphasis on learning and research also remain profit oriented. Matthew Umukoro highlights the importance of business management as he stresses thus:

Business management, a major art of the theatre, has steadily become one of the cornerstones of theatre practice, even in the educational theatre which is not supposed to be burdened by commercial considerations, otherwise, known as theatre management business. Business management is concerned with the management of available economic resources in the planning, promoting, surveying and post-production perception of performing project (84).

Although, not a commercial enterprise, educational theatre cannot shy away entirely from economic consideration. It must at least strive to break even, or make some minimal profit for re-investment in the next project to guarantee the continuous survival of the educational theatre. It is pertinent to mention, however, that educational theatre has to depend to a large extent, on extra budgeting and funding, by way of grants, subventions and sponsorships from government, corporate bodies and well-meaning individuals. To this effect, with adequate financial backings, the box office returns would be high and educational theatre can devote maximum attention to its

primary objective of teaching, research and provision of community service, without the anxiety of possible financial embarrassment. However, Barclays Ayakoroma adds that:

One of the aims of theatre management is to facilitate the operation of all the commercial aspects of a production and handle those operations in an efficient and responsible manner. To co-ordinate and control all the theatre business, which includes sales, purchase, and publicity activities remains a major target of the box office manager. Effective theatre event publicity and advertising, to a large extent, determines audience patronage. Where there is no coordination of sales at the box office or purchase of items required for productions, there is bound to be problems (27).

He further adds that, “in the final analysis, theatre management exists for ensuring a good production before a good audience, in a good environment: where there is mutual understanding and a feeling of a shared dramatic experience” (28).

From the foregoing, it is imperative to note that in theatre business, every unit is important. This is why theatre is described as a collaborative art where all concerned contributes mutually to the end product. If one person fails to do his bit, then the product stands the risk of failing.

The Concept of Management

According to Willie-Pepple,

concept in reality is a commonly agreed upon definition of an object, event or process. Scholarly grouping of concepts and principles creates a theory and a theory presents a framework of principles and concept for clarification of a theory. The theory of management is the synthesis of the concepts and principles of management (35).

Going by this, it then appears that for any human endeavour to function properly there must be some organisation of its factors. Consequently, all types of organisations, such as, government establishment, business enterprises churches among others, whether they are profit or non-profit making require management for their effective operation.

Management, according to Enikanselu and Oyende, is “a process of planning, organising, directing or leading, representing, coordinating and controlling the efforts of the organisation members and the use of organisational resources (human and technical) in order to achieve stated organisational goals” (5). This view sums the details of management irrespective of the background. The fact that management is an activity involving humans makes it an action achievable via human beings. This view explains why the concept can be said to be “the process of working with others to achieve organisational objectives in a changing environment. Central to this process is the effective and efficient use of limited resources” (4). The import of this view suggest that working in surplus or excess of required prerequisites for any production process

requires management or amounts to wastage of resources. This explains why management occurs whenever people take responsibility for an activity and consciously try to shape its progress and outcome. In view of these, it is obvious that management is an act which involves distribution of available resources to achieve the desired objective.

The Concept of Box Office Management

The practice of theatre box office management ensures the proper harnessing of resources and coordination of individual efforts in an arts theatre to achieve goals or meet the objectives of the theatre's administration. To this effect, box office management becomes the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which the box office is effectively and efficiently managed to accomplish the set goal. The practice of box office management becomes the careful organisation and coordination of the efforts of various people working together in order to achieve the theatre's aim and objectives. Ayakoroma defines theatre box office management as, "the process or art of handling, controlling and directing all commercial and non-artistic aspects of any production programme in order to generate audience patronage, audience satisfaction, and maximise profit" (4).

From the foregoing, the theatre box office management aims at getting as many patrons as possible to get money off them by ensuring that they are satisfied with artistic performances. To achieve this aim, certain principles which include: planning, organising, directing, and controlling have to be applied.

According to Chris Nwamuo, "the theatres in the university campuses acquire and deploy human, material and financial resources in executing their planned academic and professional programmes and activities as well as artistic productions" (41). To this end, the appropriation of funds and planning of operating expenditure are expected to be considered as unavoidable financial strategies by managers in the arts theatres. It becomes desirable to think of various ways of designing, installing, and operating a viable system of box office management.

More significant to a theatre's survival is the public perception of the operation. An efficient, organised, pleasant box office will encourage ticket sales. Expensive advertising and high production values may never thwart a negative experience at the box office. The forms and procedures that follow will help organise a theatre box office operation, one that avoids the embarrassment, confusion and financial losses that can result from disorganisation. Clifford's comments are particularly noteworthy. In this regard, he posits that,

No one can deny that the educational theatres must also spend time, energy, and devotion on the commercial aspect of production. Materials must be purchased, tickets must be sold, money collected and deposit records kept, and a budget prepared and adhered to (64).

The subject of theatre management has been extensively discussed but there are few scholarly works aimed at promoting box office management in Nigeria. Considering its

importance, this researcher feels that it is high time a detailed research such as this was conducted.

Economic Recession in Nigeria

The recession that has depreciated the Nigeria economy in the past two years has in no little measure crumbled growth, shut down businesses, increased loss of job, caused scarcity of cash, hyper-inflation and the likes. In the midst of the prevailing results of abject poverty and hardship inflicted deaths, amongst other devastating effects; the country appears to be moving to a negative direction. Nwinee observes that,

The federal government of Nigeria has adopted economic stimulus packages in the initial phase of the recession, pushing up public spending, but the persistence of the recession has led to a decrease in national revenues and an increase in deficits. Pressure from financial markets forced many governments to cut budgets. Social protection responses have worried considerably in magnitude and makeup. When budget cuts became unavoidable in certain state, the shift from stimulus to consolidation increased inequality and contributed to worsening living conditions for citizens (5).

From the responses of sub-national governments to the recession in the country, it is obvious that none of them was prepared for the extent or depth of the recession and none reacted in the same way. Many states of the federation with higher levels of vulnerability would have been wise to strengthen their safety nets during the pre-recession period of dynamic economic growth, which was marked by rising disparity and a growing concentration of wealth. As a country, we are currently faced with difficult choices, limited budgets and worsening financial conditions of the citizenry. Looking at this, it is quite clear that, if the poor response to the recession persists, the crises among the citizenry will continue and the social well-being of the Citizens of Nigeria will be at stake.

Theoretical Framework

It is necessary for managers to understand and implement a theory in order to achieve productivity or organisational goals. Generally speaking, the organisational structure of the theatre is divided into two namely, the artistic and the administration. While the artistic aspect is headed by the director, the administrative is the responsibility of the theatre manager.

The theoretical framework of this research is anchored on Herbert Simon's decision science theory of management. Herbert Simon (1916-2001) was an American political scientist, economist, sociologist, psychologist and computer scientist who proposed decision science theory of management. This theory is simply identified as decision-making. Herbert Simon distinguishes between programmed and non-programmed decisions. Programmed decision denotes decisions made by following a pre-arranged set of instructions or conventions and traditions, while non-programmed,

decision is often complex and unstructured. This is based on judgment, intuition, experience, training and insight that allow individuals to arrive at different conclusions given the same subject and information. Decision-making is the process of planning, identifying problems, searching for alternative solutions, evaluating such solutions and arriving at a sensible choice of options.

The existence of anybody or corporate organisation depends on the principles of its management which is the bedrock by which it will endure the passage of time. Theatre has been an enterprise and therefore, needs managerial personnel who know the rudiments of running a theatre business, be it commercial or educational. Innocent Ohiri posits that, “theatre can be used to educate the public” (15). In fact, we are talking about forming, establishing or running a theatre with the aim of teaching or educating the people. These and other problems have necessitated a good research into the management of these theatres. A good theatre is much more than entertainment. The arts of the theatre rest on a common foundation with all learning on man’s capacity to explore wonder and reflect. On the other hand, it would be dishonest to pretend that theatre always functions on the level of great art. As an imitation of life, it embraces almost everything that life embraces, including much of life’s chaos and confusion. It then requires good managerial skills and principles to run this great network.

Management is a process by which we achieve desired results through efficient utilization of human and material resources. Badeian asserts that, “whatever is the goal of the organization concerned; management is the process by which the goal can be achieved” (qtd in Obanye 13); while Nwachukwu posits that, “there is no human endeavour that does not requires proper management for its functioning, whether profit making or non-profit making, every endeavour require good management to function, which takes us to the theatre discipline” (2). Thus, it is imperative to note that, management plays a key role in any organisation that is desired to achieve a target goal; a desired result can be achieved through efficient utilisation of human and material resources.

Ohiri defines theatre management as,

the art and science of planning organising, motivating, directing, and controlling human and material resources in the art of the theatre and their interaction in order to attain the predetermined objectives of guaranteeing satisfaction, having full house and maximising profit (1).

The most distinctive mark of management therefore, is the integration and application of knowledge, and a detailed breakdown study approach developed by so many other disciplines. Every management process (that of theatre not excluded), has a fundamental knowledge underlying it. In other words, the concept of management is strictly to design and maintain an environment that is conducive to the performance of individual who work together towards some preselected goals. Nwachukwu sees management as, “getting things done through people, the guidance or direction of people towards organisational goals, through planning, organising, directing and controlling” (4).

In all of these definitions, there is a trace of similarities, involving performance, activities, persons, and so on. Therefore, management is functional, not organ mental, concerning people primarily in occupying the performance positions of authority for activities and how to go about them. Going by performance, management involves disciplines; it can be described as marketing, advertising and annexation of the gains of production.

University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre (The Crab): An Overview

Friday Nwafor, informs that, “the University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre (The Crab) came into existence in 1979 (81). He further notes that, “the Arts Theatre popularly known as, “The Crab”, under the Directorship of Ola Rotimi, was meant to serve as a laboratory for the then Department of Creative Arts that was established in 1982” (81). According to him, the Arts Theatre structure was designed to host a small drama presentation and a few class lectures, especially as the population of students at the time was not as much as it is currently. Beyond serving as a laboratory and model for the department, The Crab, according to the founding Resident Director, Ola Rotimi, was also designed to serve the following functions:

- a) Act as workshop for the Department of Theatre Arts in the area of theatre practice;
- b) Serve as lecture venue for the Certificate in Theatre Arts (CTA) programme, thus relieving the Department of Theatre Arts of her problem of lecture space;
- c) Serve as venue for public lectures, concerts, symposia and conferences;
- d) Serve as venue for enhancement of communal and intellectual life of the University through artistic displays;
- e) Serve as venue for command performances;
- f) Assist the University in the reduction of cost of jobs requiring artistic skills; and
- g) Found jobs for the personnel of the theatre in pilot-roles as technical/acting instructors under whom both the certificate and degree students of Theatre Arts shall undergo apprenticeship in the technical as well as historic aspect of theatre.

The department started with five students (two males and three females) in the theatre unit. In the subsequent session, there was a gradual increase. With the aid of the Rivers State Council for Arts and Culture, the department was able to perform plays, which were used to tour schools; and it was in 1982 that a staff of the Rivers State Council for Arts and Culture, Columbus Irisoanga transferred his service as a producer in the Arts Theatre of the University of Port Harcourt. Ola Rotimi, as the head of the department, doubled as the artistic director of productions. The department could not afford a house manager but rather had a business manager, who also doubled as a house manager. In 1985, the CTA programme was introduced. It ran for twelve calendar months without any break. The programme was entirely different from the degree programme, which had the semester system. With the introduction of the certificate programme, it was possible for the theatre to have a variety of plays productions during convocations and festive periods. The department also extended its working relationship

with the University Demonstration Secondary School and by so doing helped the school to start its own drama club. This was done with the aid of Gloria Hart, an American visiting lecturer, who had on several occasions done some work with the secondary school students. The department was noted for its efficiency in productions and as a result its plays were taken to schools in Port Harcourt. Such plays included *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, written and directed by Ola Rotimi, himself. He was able to use his influence and that of the department to go on national tours. Ola Rotimi's *If...* was one of such plays the department took on tours to Ibadan, Ife, Lagos, and Port Harcourt. The third tour which the department embarked upon was done with Rasheed Gbadamosi's *Behold! My Redeemer*. It was performed at the National Theatre Lagos, with the playwright as the sponsor. In 1991, the department had its first international tour during the World Universities Games that took place in Sheffield, England. The play, *Orukoro*, written and directed by Henry Bell-Gam (now a Professor), depicts the rich cultural heritage of the Rivers people.

The Administrative Structure of the Uniport Arts Theatre (The Crab)

Friday Nwafor states that,

in terms of administration of the University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre (The Crab), there is scanty Organisational Structure with the Head of Department as the Resident Director. He is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor of the University. The Resident Director can go directly to the Vice-Chancellor to report matters and take feedbacks affecting the theatre. Other staff under the Resident Director are Producer(s) Managing Director, Business Manager, Artists, Attendants Drummers, cleaners (qtd in Anyanwu 75).

Looking at the scanty nature of the organisational structure, it means that there are organs or arms that ought to be included. Positions for Scenic Designer, Costume/Make-up Officers, Property Officers, and Lighting Designer are missing. There are also some non-artistic Organs missing in the Chart, such as, Publicity, House Management, and Box Office Management etc. The importance of these organs cannot be neglected.

University of Port-Harcourt Arts Theatre Box Office Operations

The box office of the University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre is one of the units that is crucial to the survival of the arts theatre. In spite of this, most of the facilities are not functional. A study of the Arts Theatre reveals that, lack of production facilities is one of the challenges of box office management in the University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre (The Crab).

Insufficient fund is another challenge; especially as one cannot run a theatre production without sufficient funding of such production. In the arts theatre, the students who are most of the times the target audience are the contributing factor to poor financial returns of the box office: most of the students tends to watch such production without paying gate fees, especially as they dubiously gain free entrance into the

auditorium to watch shows. This singular act adversely affects the production output. Unreliability and irresponsibility of the box office personnel is another great challenge of the Box Office. When some box office personnel face poor economic situations, they may resort to fraud, thereby creating the problem of poor box office returns. Lack of proper management of the box office contributes to gate crashing in the University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre. The box office needs careful management to avoid the audience gaining free access into the theatre to watch shows.

In a normal, standard and functional arts theatre, box office staff takes care of any ticket issues at any event. Beyond this, they may have to serve in the theatre café, bar or as an usher. The job carried out by box office staff is often more of short administrative tasks. Customers often face problems such as redeeming tickets issued for the wrong performance, exchanging tickets, getting refunds and even dealing with counterfeit tickets. Box Office Treasurer is responsible for managing the box office and supervising the box office assistants and other staff. It is also their responsibility for making sure that customers are well taken care off. His job is also part of the marketing department of the theatre, and may be responsible for maximising revenue from the sales of tickets. He may be expected to provide a comprehensive data base analysis and other information to support the marketing objectives of the theatre, such as sales information, audience profiling and identifying audience trends.

The responsibilities of the box office treasurer include managing box office staff and ensuring they are appropriately trained to manage box office systems, sales, banking rates, reporting and evaluation of sales and system management. A box treasurer is expected to have an excellent proven customer care skills and experience with computerised box office systems. He may also be expected to have sales and marketing skills and experience. More importantly, he is responsible for the care of the foyer and front of house generally, making sure marketing and promotional materials are displayed effectively, and health and safety rules adhered to. He is as well responsible for the sales of other items and services, such as memberships, programmes, merchandise, or refreshments, including pre-performance meals. Langley posits that, “because most seasoned theatre goers have had negative experiences at the box office, treasurers should be closely supervised in regard to customer relations. They should be good salespeople who are also honest, efficient, courteous and well groomed” (366). The foregoing suggests that treasurers are expected to ensure that customers are well taken care of under the supervision of the box office Manager, especially as the box office is also the general reception and its staff may need to deal with enquiries from other members of staff, assist with organisation of interviews and the delivery and dispatch of goods.

From the above, it is obvious to note that in theatre production, the box office treasurer plays a multiple administrative roles. Most importantly, he controls the box office staff. He assists the theatre manager and the production manager in the planning of the business activities of the theatre. He does this through his supervision of the staff under him and the control of the audience at the box office. No wonder Ohiri notes that, “the box office treasurer qualifies as one of the managers of the theatre and theatre’s productions” (104). By this assertion, it is imperative to note that Box Office Treasurer

may also be addressed as box office manager. The box office treasurer maintains order, contributes to human and financial management of the theatre in order to ensure accountability and financial progress. The staff that assists him in this capacity; the assistant treasurers, season ticket treasurers, mail order treasurers, groups sales treasurers, and the agency treasurers. These are the staff that takes orders from the box office treasurer while he enforces the rules of the box office.

Langley maintains that, “Treasurers’ duties depend on the size of the box office staff and the type of theatre in which it functions. In all cases, one person should be appointed as the box office manager, ticket manager or head treasurer, to be directly responsible to the business manager or general manager” (367). He further states that,

At least two treasurers should be employed in all but the smallest operations and should share responsibilities related to mail orders, telephone orders and information, customer window service, ticket counting, and box office statement computation. Box office hours should fit the convenience of potential customers, and treasurers should give their full concentration to their work. While no box office business should be carried out of the box office, so too, no other business should be carried into the box office.

Treasurers must be responsible for keeping the box office clean and well organised because maintenance personnel should never be allowed into the room. Treasurers should also keep themselves well informed about productions so they can provide accurate information to the public. It is never advisable to be vague or dishonest about answering such questions as: Is it appropriate for children? Is it a comedy? Is it risqué? And as mentioned, copies of all press releases, brochures and advertisements should be given to the box office – customer comment, questions or complaints about such material will come to the box office, not to the press office. And the house manager or the stage manager should provide the box office with exact curtain times and intermission times (367-8).

The duties of a Box Office Treasurer are many, and vary in relation to the stages of a theatre production. John Clifford explained them as follows:

Pre-rehearsal Stage:

- Revising the box office procedures and policies in readiness for forthcoming productions.
- Renovating the box office and making sure that all necessary structures are on ground.
- Employing new staff if necessary.
- Training new staff on procedures for selling tickets and running the box office.

Early Rehearsals:

- Attending production meetings.
- Submitting a budget for the printing of tickets.
- Contacting previous Season's patrons.
- Establishing a sales campaign.
- Setting up the box office.
- Assigning personnel to run the box office.
- Bringing in and racking of the tickets.
- Pulling complementary tickets and house seats.
- Filling mail orders.
- Obtaining sufficient change.

Performance Stage:

- Opening the box office – even outside the theatre's location if necessary.
- Selling tickets.
- Preparing a box office report at the end of each day.
- Submitting the box office report, money, stubs and season ticket coupons (if any) to the business manager at the end of each day (in Ohiri).

Post Production:

- Boxing and filling the stubs and other deadwoods.
- Preparing and sharing the final box office report for the run of the play.

The Theatre Ticket

A theatre ticket is a rental agreement that guarantees whatever is printed on it will be delivered. Should a theatre be unable to furnish what is promised on the ticket, it must offer a refund. The two types of tickets are reserved ticket and unreserved, or general admission tickets. Unless the theatre prints tickets by its own computer, all tickets should be ordered from a bonded ticket printer. They should be numbered by an automatic printer rather than by hand from 1 to the capacity number of seats in the house. Most reserved tickets come in a standard size (they should fit easily into a wallet) and should include the following information:

- a) Name and address of the theatre
- b) Performance date
- c) Seat number
- d) Row number
- e) Section (orchestra, balcony, and so on)
- f) Performance day (Monday, Tuesday, and so on)
- g) Curtain time
- h) Aisle number (optional)
- i) Title of production (optional)
- j) 'No refund or exchanges' (optional but good practice)
- k) 'Programme subject to change' (optional but good practice).

When ordering tickets, all such information should only be submitted to the printer in writing. The first reserved seats are ordered from a ticket printing company, the theatre should send a detailed floor plan of the auditorium, clearly showing every seat in the house and indicating seat numbers, rows, sections, and aisles. This is known as a ticket manifest. It is retained by the printer to simplify future orders. The printer sends a confirmatory ticket-order report to the theatre before tickets are printed, to provide a final check against incorrect information. All tickets should be notched or perforated to permit easy and uniform tearing by ticket takers, and all vital information should appear twice on each ticket, so that both the stub retained by the customer and that retained by the theatre tell the whole story.

Accounting for the Ticket

Before each performance the ticket taker should be provided with an empty, locked box into which all the stubs from customers' tickets can be deposited. The longer portion of the ticket should be placed in the box, the shorter given back to the customer. If there are different price categories for tickets, the stub box might have different slots and compartments for each. This will help to save time later when the stubs are counted.

Box Office Statements

A box office statement is a financial report that shows the final accounting of tickets and income for a particular performance. Copies of the statement are usually submitted to the producer, the business manager, the accountant, and anyone who is receiving a percentage of box office receipts (playwright, star, and director, or their representatives). Obviously, the information on statements is confidential.

Box Office Auditing

An audit of the box office should be conducted at the end of each production or season and any other time a notable discrepancy appears between the numbers of tickets missing and the amount of income. The audit should be conducted or at least supervised by the accountant and not by the business manager or the treasurers. Essentially, an audit involves counting all the unsold tickets on hand, then making up a box office statement showing income-to-date for all future performances" (105-107). If all these modalities are adopted and properly managed, no doubt, the theatre should be having good box office returns in order to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's economic growth.

Recommendations

To proffer solution to some of the challenges of box office management in the Arts Theatre, a strict measure should be put in place to check mate students from gate crashing. Box office tickets should be authenticated to avoid forgery, as some fraudulent members of the audience may cultivated the habit of forging theatre tickets. For smooth running of the theatre business, the University Authority should provide and maintain the theatre facilities such as the foyer, the ticket booth, the lobby, the stores, the lounge,

the lavatory, the lighting booth and others, especially, as unavailability of the facilities affects box office returns, and the standard of teaching/learning in educational arts theatre. Government and the University authority should provide a bigger theatre structure with modern facilities so as to meet up with 21st century standard. For effective and efficient performance, the box office personnel should be made to undergo proper training. This will enable theatre staff to improve in the job. Finally, this study recommends the immediate need to review the administrative structure and policies of the Arts Theatre. If the above recommendations are properly put in place, box office will help to improve the Nigeria's economic growth.

Conclusion

In concluding this paper, it could be said that the bureaucratic nature of the University Authority delays subvention for maintenance of the Arts Theatre. Although, educational theatre is not profit-oriented, money is needed to run and maintain the house. To get rid of the low economic status of the educational arts theatre, the theatre management staff needs to devise means of gathering revenue internally to assist itself in taking care of the immediate needs by putting up productions and organizing shows. Since the primary objective of the box office is to gain good audience patronage, it is therefore, advisable for the box office personnel to be humane and cheerful to the audience so as to generate sufficient funds for the theatre. The box office manager is expected to see that money is generated from theatrical production, and genuine accounting done through the help of the business manager and box office personnel.

Finally, the finding of this paper, among others, is the scanty nature of the organizational structure of the Arts Theatre; it means that there are organs or arms that ought to be included. Positions for Scenic Designer, Costume/Make-up Officers, Property Officers, and Lighting Designer are missing. There are also some non- artistic Organs missing such as Publicity, House Management, and Box Office Management etc. The importance of these organs cannot be neglected. Adherence to the above solutions will help to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's economic growth.

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OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF CREATING PROPER SCENOGRAPHIC ENVIRONMENTS FOR THEATRE PRODUCTIONS IN THE FACE OF POOR FUNDING

Martins Uze E. TUGBOKOROWEI, PhD

Department of Theatre Arts
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria
Email: martinstugbos11@gmail.com

Abstract

Theatre as a performance can be looked at from both utilitarian and aesthetic perspectives. In the same vein, the scenographic component of theatre performance can also be viewed against its utilitarian and aesthetic considerations. With regards to how effective theatre is in passing across its message to the audience, the utilitarian aspect of it invariably stands uppermost. But even as the utility of a theatrical performance predominates, we cannot do away with the aesthetic. Indeed, the aesthetic feel of a performance and the elements that go into its making go a long way in conditioning how the audience receive the performance. The aesthetic quality of a performance particularly, but also the utilitarian aspect of it, depends on how much funding it receives. This is the focus of this essay. How does funding, or lack of it, affect the scenographic input to a theatre production? Beyond that, in a period of recession as we are currently faced with in Nigeria, how does the scenic designer execute his/her art and craft to ensure that the proper scenographic environment that adequately reflects the utilitarian and aesthetic dimensions is created for a theatre performance given that funding is invariably a challenge in the world of theatre practice that we find ourselves today? These are the issues investigated in this essay using the analytical research method and the findings indicate that with clear focus on the task at hand, the scenographer can overcome the challenge of poor funding that besets theatre production.

Introduction

Theatre is a world-wide phenomenon. By this we mean that theatre finds expression in every culture or society in the world. This is irrespective of the culture or society's level of development or lack of it. In these different cultures and societies that make up the world, we also find expressed different kinds of theatrical art, or what some scholars would prefer to call performing or performance arts. While we acknowledge the fact that the terms theatre arts, performing arts or performance arts may be given different interpretations by different scholars, what is without contention is the fact that they all have to do with the process of an individual or a group of persons engaged in the act of enacting a sequence of activities in a pre-determined or haphazard manner, consciously

or unconsciously before another individual or group of persons. In this wise, theatre or performance can come about either as an instinctive/natural or a self-conscious/planned activity.

Richard Schechner gives a wide interpretation to the term theatre and calls it performance. In the book *Performance Theory*, Schechner argues that theatre is just a strand in the wider phenomenon called performance. According to Schechner, performance is the all-embracing term, and that,

Theatre is only one node ... that reaches from the ritualisations of animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life – greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on – through to play, sports, theatre, dance, ceremonies, rites, and performances of great magnitude (xiii).

While the breaking down of performance into this number of joints and the assertion that, theatre is just one of the nodes in performance are open to contestation, we cannot deny the reality that, indeed, theatre, or performance, finds expression in a number of activities that man engages in as human beings. This theatrical or performance quality of the activity can be conscious or unconscious.

So long as theatre, or performance, is to exist, it follows that a number of elements would need to come together to make the theatrical performance a reality. This is irrespective of the different situations that may give rise to the performance or the situations under which it is performed. This is because performance, in whatever form, is a collaborative endeavour as different elements contributed by different persons would need to come together and fuse, as it were, to bring into existence a new product that bears, of course, the imprints of the disparate elements that have been merged in the new entity.

Moving away from the anthropological and sociological view of performance, and looking at performance as something enacted by a group of actors on stage before members of the audience sitting in an auditorium, we notice that the same archetypal principles apply: different persons would need to contribute different elements, fuse them together and come up with a new product, a product that inevitably would have the signposts of the different elements with which it was made. In the modern world that we find ourselves, these elements cost money to acquire. This means that for theatre to occur, money would need to be spent to source for and bring the different elements together. And this is where the problem lies because money is an ever scarce and ever vanishing resource. This is more so in an environment where the economy is not so strong, or indeed in recession.

Scenography and Play Production

The place of scenography in the play production process cannot be denied. This is because every theatrical activity must take place within a given scenographic environment, scenic environment, locale, setting, scenery or whatever name the scholar or designer chooses to call it. And this background may be elaborate or scanty. The

scenography is a defining element in theatre production because, in many cases, it introduces the audience to the performance and determines how the audience reacts to what is enacted in it. Parker, Wolf and Block inform us that the scenic background combines with other visual elements, which also blend with the literary and other production ingredients to achieve what they call the “total visual and aural effect of a dramatic production” (10). This is a unified total package that is presented before the audience.

What has been the place of the scenic environment down the ages? Some scholars would have us believe that the scenic environment is relatively new in theatrical presentation. Indeed, as Edward Wright says:

In our present day theatre we have come to take for granted the elaborate and detailed scenery, the appropriate costumes, and the lighting ... one does not often realise that these embellishments are all comparatively new, and that for hundreds of years the script and the actors were considered to be the only real essentials in the theatre (150).

On the contrary, the scenography does not necessarily have to retain such embellishments to be effective. We do not share the view also that these “embellishments” are “comparatively new”, because they have been part of theatre productions down the ages. Perhaps the point we can agree with is the fact that components of scenography are taken for granted. To the point that a scenography does not necessarily have to be embellished to make meaning and be effective, Frank Whiting says:

... if we think of scenery in its larger sense, as the background against, upon, and in which a play is produced, there is no escape. In this larger sense all the non-scenery plays do have scenery. Actors cannot act in a vacuum. An environment of some sort is inevitable (290).

Edwin Wilson supports this view by saying, “the theatre experience does not occur in a visual vacuum ... always present are the visual images of scenery” (333). This shows that it is where the play is performed as defined by the scenography that matters and not whatever embellishments that may be attached to it. The scenography, in whatever shape and or level of sophistication, is the locale of the production. But if we are to take a historical look at the development of the scenic environment down the ages, we would notice that this environment had served different and several purposes from one epoch to the other. In the growth of theatre from Ancient Greece to the present age, Edward Wright gives us a concise history of what the scenography meant to different people. He says:

The scenic background can be traced to a hut that stood at the rear of the Greek playing area. This small building was used by the actors to make the changes necessary to impersonate other characters. Its basic purpose

was concealment. When this structure was enlarged and decorated, especially by the Romans, the second purpose of scenery came into existence: decoration. During the Middle Ages, when theatre existed primarily in the Catholic church, the various stations of the church served as stages, and the third element of mood came into the picture. With the coming of perspective in the art of painting a fourth purpose was born – that of suggesting the locale of the action. Only within ... our own realistic theatre, has the effort to portray place been a factor (150).

This long quote has been made to show that scenography is not a “modern” invention or addition to the theatre production process. Indeed, one can extend the argument by saying that even from pre-historic times when man lived in hunting and gathering tribes, when “sympathetic magic” dictated how performances were enacted, scenography was present even if it was done and used in an unconscious manner. After all, even in those primitive performances, it was necessary to prepare the environment of the enactment to acquire some semblance of where the original action being re-enacted was believed to have occurred. The place of scenography in the play production process, therefore, cannot be denied. This is because a given as it has always been there, and would always be there, even though as its structure and characteristics may change from age to age.

Funding and the Theatre

It goes without saying that funding is required if a theatrical exercise is to be engaged in. Theatre, being like other human endeavours, requires funds to be actualised. Of course, the characteristics of the producing company and the nature of the performance to be mounted would determine the kind of funding to be sourced or to be provided.

Theatre companies come in various shapes and with different characteristics. From a broad perspective, we can delineate the profit making and the not-for-profit theatres. Going beyond that, we have the strictly commercial, partly commercial, community and educational theatres among others. These different theatres require different levels of funding in order to execute their mandates. The question to ask is: is funding for the theatre adequate? A straight forward answer would be, NO. Of course some theatre companies are able to source for some kind of sponsorship, grant or advertisement that may help to ameliorate the effect of dearth of funds. On a general note, however, funding is hardly ever adequate. Scholars and practitioners have continued to bemoan the sorry state of the theatre as far as funding is concerned. Sam Ukala, for example, in his essay, “Two Decades of Directing Educational Theatre: The Problem of Funding”, paints a gloomy picture as far as the funding of the theatre is concerned. He chronicles his experiences at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (former Bendel State University) and Delta State University, Abraka. Ukala argues that there is some discrimination against the arts by official policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria which translates into discrimination in admission quota, in provision of facilities and in funding. And this is a policy that university administrators are eager to

implement, according to Ukala. Given this situation, theatre productions in the universities would invariably suffer.

Theatre does not reside only in the universities. Indeed, so much theatrical engagement takes place outside of the four walls of university campuses although it is safe to argue that in Nigeria of today, the universities and other tertiary institutions seem to be the heart of theatre practice. Be that as it may, the theatre that is engaged in outside the university campus also suffers the same fate. This, essentially, is occasioned by unfavourable government policies, the downturn in the economy, security concerns and general apathy towards the theatre, among others. As a result, it is almost impossible to get sponsors for theatrical performances, and the producers may not be able to charge reasonable fees that would ensure a break even and possibly the garnering of some profit. Thus the funding situation for Nigerian theatre is rather gloomy.

It would not be right to assume that the sad picture of poor funding of the theatre that we have presented is a peculiarly Nigerian problem. The contrary is the case as it is more or less a global problem even though many countries have put machinery in place to address it. Vincent Diakpomrere makes reference to Jide Malomo, Muyiwa Awodiya, Stephen Langley, Thomas Wolf and Lawrence Stern, who “have separately and consistently maintained that a major challenge facing the arts, globally, is sponsorship. The funding of the arts has at no time in history been satisfactory” (60-61). Diakpomrere further argues that in the United States of America and Europe, arts sponsorship or grants-in-aid are in place and well oiled, and so there is some amelioration of the problem of funding. However, he says, the problem still very much exists because the maintenance of theatre troupes and the presentation of well packaged productions require enormous capital outlay (61).

The above view is strengthened by a report released by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands. In a study conducted for the Ministry between 2011 and 2013, which findings are captured in *Culture at a Glance 2013*, it is reported that public funding for the arts and culture sector fell by about 9% on the average. Of this, the report says, the performing arts and visual arts felt the pains more as their funding fell by about 42% and 33% respectively (87). If such phenomenal drop in public funding for the theatre can occur in a clime that has a robust culture of art funding and sponsorship, with its attendant consequences, it can best be imagined what the situation would be in a country like Nigeria where there are no such clear-cut policies, and where the perception of the arts (theatre particularly) is that of bare tolerance, apart from when it is engaged for receptions and civic ceremonies.

This unpalatable situation with funding for the theatre in Nigeria is not necessarily because of the absence of policies and general government grandstanding by way of pronouncements. Rather, it has to do with the lack of will to effectively implement policies and statements, and the lack of institutional framework to ensure proper funding and sustenance of the theatre. There are ministries in charge of arts and culture at the federal and state levels of government. Also, we have the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) at the federal level in addition to State Councils for Arts and Culture in all the states of the federation. But these are devoted more to performances at ceremonies and civic receptions, and the hosting/attendance of cultural

jamborees. Worthy of note also is the *Cultural Policy for Nigeria*, which contains a lot of ideas and that proposes a number of institutions that should ensure the promotion, funding and sustenance of theatre in Nigeria. Sadly, these lofty ideas are still glued to the pages of the policy, and thus theatre continues to suffer from poor funding in Nigeria.

The golden era of theatre patronage and funding in Nigeria can be traced to activities of the defunct Nigeria International Bank (NIB) in the early 1990s which perhaps drew inspiration from the *Cultural Policy for Nigeria* and took it upon itself to devote huge resources to the sponsorship of one Nigerian theatre masterpiece every year. Apart from the NIB initiative, a few other organisations/institutions have also contributed their quota to the sponsorship of theatre in Nigeria. These include, but not limited to the Delta State Directorate for Arts and Culture, with Richard Mofe-Damijo then as Honourable Commissioner, who generously sponsored performances by the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Delta State Chapter, The People's Theatre and other troupes for two years consecutively (2010 and 2011); The MTN Foundation and Heritage Bank, among other organisations, have also at one time or the other sponsored theatre productions. These interventions have, however, not been statutory or sustained like the NIB sponsorship was. Theatre funding and sponsorship have, thus, not benefited from sustained intervention, whether from the public sector or private sector in Nigeria. Nnamdi Mbara attributes the current poor state of the theatre in Nigeria, among other things, to institutional deficiencies, the erroneous belief that theatre is cheap, lack of political will on the part of government, and inadequate funding. These attitudes and situations, according to Mbara, are worsened by the global economic downturn (136-137). Given this bleak scenario, the theatre in Nigeria continues to suffer.

Funding, Scenography and the Performance

Just as funding is crucial to the successful realisation of a theatre production, different aspects of a production invariably suffer if the funding for the production is inadequate. The place and significance of scenography in the play production process cannot be over emphasised. The scenery creates the environment in or against which the actions of a play are enacted. It follows, therefore, that a scenic background, in whatever shape and with whatever characteristics, must be created for a performance. Given the demands of the play, and a whole lot of other considerations, the scenographer designs the scenography and translates that design into a physical entity on stage to be used by the actors. In the course of making the design and bringing it to actuality, the designer must have at the back of his mind the kind of funding available or that is being expected, in addition to other factors. This consideration of funding is on a case-by-case basis. This is why Vincent Diakpomrere says, "for every theatrical encounter or experience, a new budget is required" (61). This means that the designer must consider each design project on its own terms and work towards actualising it.

Considering each design project on its own terms, however, does not mean the designer would simply focus on what the design entails without bearing in mind how it impacts on other aspects of the production or how those other aspects impact on it, particularly with regards to the amount of money available for the production. In the

face of poor funding, the scenographic aspect of the theatre invariably suffers. Ernest Agoba, in “Ideology, Design Concepts and the Need for Integrated African scenic Forms”, while discussing how the scenic artist fits into the equation as far as creating works that tie in with certain postulations, says that,

In most instances, his entire efforts in creative visualisation and scenic rendition are totally encumbered by the monetary demands of loyally envisioning and creating exclusive scenic forms for plays fecundated by ideology (148).

The argument by Agoba on the difficulty of creating designs for productions tailored to specific ideological postulates because of poor funding is applicable to scenographic design generally, whether it is tied to specific ideology or not.

The issue then is not that of the ideology that labels the design but the inadequacy of funds. This is why when Charles Nwadiuwe, in “Art and Attitude ...”, identifies some factors that militate against the practice of good scenic design in Nigeria, he does not hesitate to name funding as a prime suspect. Other factors, according to Nwadiuwe, are the inexperience of some designers and state of theatre architecture, among others (97-99). This view is echoed by Dapo Adelugba, who laments in an interview with Sunday Ododo that, “unfortunately, at the Arts Theatre, we do not yet have the money or the facilities to really do technologically inspired productions” (142). All these point to the fact that the inadequacy of funds can have some adverse effects on the scenography created for play productions.

This writer had a personal experience of how funds, and the lack of it, can impact the scenography of a performance. In 2002, the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Delta State Chapter in conjunction with the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, secured funding to the tune of two hundred and fifty thousand naira (₦250,000) for the production of “Harvest of Ghosts”, a visual theatre production co-written by Sam Ukala and Bob Frith and directed by Sam Ukala with this writer as Designer/Technical Director. This was for the International Convention of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), hosted by Delta State in Asaba. Based on the funding received, designs were made for the different aspects of the production and plans made to procure other things that would make the production a huge success. As things would happen, the National Executive Council of ANA ran to the state chapter that it had run out of funds. In addition to monies previously expended by the state chapter, it had to cough out one hundred thousand naira (₦100,000) again from the grant given by the Delta State University authorities. This drastically reduced the money available for the production and, therefore, strategic meetings were held to massively alter the designs and materials for the production while still maintaining the basic essence behind it. Even though the production did not turn out as lavish as was envisaged, it still came out successful. But that was due to a lot of improvising and the use of some unconventional materials to achieve what was intended.

Overcoming the Challenges

There is no doubt that funding is a big problem with theatre productions globally, but particularly in Nigeria. Consequently, the scenographic aspects of performances, just like other departments, suffer some form of neglect. What then should be the way out? Do scenographers simply bemoan their fate and resign themselves to the vicissitudes that poor funding throw at them? As the popular saying in the theatre goes: “the show must go on”. Therefore, scenographers ought to look for ingenious ways to overcome the challenge of inadequacy in funding that attends theatre productions. The problems that beset the scenographer in the theatre generally, but particularly in the Nigerian setting, are legion. In addition to the problem of the inadequacy of funds, we also have delay in the release of the meagre amount budgeted; delay in bringing the scenographer aboard the play production process; lack of understanding by some directors and other production personnel of what the scenographer and scenography contribute to a production; and outright disdain for the work of the scenographer by other production collaborators.

In the face of all of this, the scenographer has to look for ways to ensure that the scenography designed and built for a particular play meets the demands of the play in performance, accentuates the performance and communicates the message of the play to the audience. To be able to do this, the designer needs to think outside of the box, be creative and think of ingenious ways to actualise the scenographic design within the limits of the available scarce resources. This point is stressed by Charles Nwadiuwe, in “Acting and Scene Design”, that,

The creativity and success of the scene designer are measured by his ability to utilise available resources to provide a suitable living environment for the play’s characters and enhance the actor’s art (245).

This runs against the grain of the quarrel that Ernest Agoba, in his essay, “Concept Multiplicity and Indeterminacy...”, picks with some scene designers. In the essay, Agoba argues that the Nigerian scenic designer is stupefied and confused by the multiplicity of scenic styles that can attend a performance. He says that as a result of this confusing constellation before him, the Nigerian scenic designer distances himself and degenerates into “complete passivity” (168) in his art and craft and thus finds solace in over simplification of scenic design efforts. Using several productions, Agoba postulates that the referenced designers shied away from embracing any style of design but rather chose to use “make shift” (169) materials to actualise the scenic environments for the productions. This is a step which, in his view, betrays their indeterminacy and lack of commitment to pursue scenographic practice at a level that would be at par with international standards. However, Agoba contradicts himself when he makes reference to certain styles that were apparent in the designs (166-187). A discussion of this contradiction is, however, not the focus of this essay. What is of importance to us, from Agoba’s essay, and given the thrust of this paper, is his identification of finance as a major factor for Nigerian scenic designers adopting certain styles for their designs. If Nigerian scenographers are not ingenious and creative in the face of scarce resources,

how then are they able to create scenographies that reflect these design styles and be functional to the productions they serve?

Scenic designers must impress it on directors and persons in charge of funds that the money budgeted for the scenography of a production needs to be released quite early. It is bad enough that the fund is inadequate. To delay it in such a manner that it becomes almost useless does not help the course of the designer. This point is decried by Molinta Enendu as he says that,

In most university theatres, the money available for the purchase or hiring of materials and equipment is either not sufficient or is very belatedly released in relation to the rigid deadlines, to be meaningfully utilised (136).

There is, therefore, the need to impress it on the handlers of production money to be a little bit quicker in dispensing cash to the various departments of the production. One way to enhance this process is to also make directors understand that the scenographer in fact ought to start working even before rehearsals commence, rather than the annoying but common practice of bringing in the scenographer sometimes very close to opening night, believing that, somehow, magic can be worked to have a workable and meaningful scenography on stage before the play opens to the public. The above situation may arise because quite a number of theatre practitioners, including directors unfortunately, are confused as to the place of the scenic designer and the scenography in the overall scheme of a production. This situation needs to change.

Scenographers also need to change their mindset. Scenographers in the developing world need to understand that the ideal may not always be available. With this disposition of mind, they would see limitations, such as poor funding, to the actualisation of scenographic designs not as obstacles but as challenges that should be surmounted; as opportunities to showcase their skills and their understanding of the art and craft of scenography. This is possibly why Vincent Diakpomrere posits that, "... where finances are low, theatre work can be very challenging, tedious and perhaps innovative" (61). Innovativeness helps the scenographer to overcome the challenges of poor funding. This is in tandem with the admonition of Charles Nwadiuwe in "Acting and Scene Design" that, the limitations imposed by the inadequacy of a number of the elements of production "... should be seen as a challenge and not a hindrance to creativity" (252). The attitude adopted to confront these limiting factors would, of course, determine whether the scenographer succeeds or not.

Having adopted a positive mindset to confront the limiting factors, the scenographer needs to look for ways to make designs that are achievable and that would bring the production to life. The scenographer thus needs to be able to experiment and improvise. The experimentation should be with different ideas that can bring the production to fruition, scenography wise, and with different materials that can bring the ideas to life. In this wise, the scenographer's mind should be open to improvising with different materials, particularly bearing in mind that the real thing may not be available. In the absence of the ideal, therefore, the scenic designer ought to be able to improvise

with whatever materials that are within reach so long as the use of such materials do not compromise the integrity of the design and helps to convey the performance to the audience. It was such improvisation in the production of Femi Osofisan's *Red is the Freedom Road* as directed by Austine Anigala and designed by Hilary Ararile at the Delta State University Theatre Arts Studio that Ernest Agoba looked at critically in "Concept Multiplicity and Indeterminacy ..." (169); but which, in the considered view of this writer, was quite innovative, valid, meaningful and aesthetically pleasing.

Tied to the issue of experimentation and improvisation is the need for scenic designers to strive towards using inexpensive materials as much as is permissible. Theatre thrives on make believe and the scenography is usually at some distance remove from the audience. This affords the scenographer the leeway to use inexpensive material that looks like the real thing. If well utilised, and because of the distance of the scenery from the audience, the audience can be "fooled" into believing that, the "cheap" thing it sees on stage is actually the real component of the actual scenography. This way, the scenographer would be showcasing his/her creativity by solving a scenographic challenge with the limited resources available, and helping the audience to understand and follow the actions of the play through the scenography so created.

Very critically too, scenic designers should pursue simplification as much as is possible. Audiences come to the theatre not to watch a cinema performance but to be engaged theatrically in a make believe world populated by persons pretending to be some other persons which they know is not real. That is why they willingly suspend their disbelief. Such disbelief that is willingly suspended does not apply to the actors and their dialogue/actions alone, but also to other elements of production, including the scenography. Armed with this knowledge, scenographers should rather give primacy to the functionality of the scenery and embellish it with supportive elements of beauty within the limits of available funds. To refer to an instance earlier mentioned, this was the principle adopted for the production of "Harvest of Ghosts" in 2002 for which this writer was scenographer/technical director. We need to stress here that the mere fact of allowing simplification drive the design of the scenery for a production does not deny the scenery of its aesthetic appeal. Scenery can be simple but not drab or boring, simple but rich, simple but functional and highly aesthetically captivating. Indeed, this has been the trend for some time, essentially on the strength of the paucity of funds and other situations necessary for ideal theatre engagement. Taiwo Adeyemi's submission on this is quite apposite:

Generally, in recent times, high cost of production, the needs [*sic*] for more creativity as well as technological development have influenced scenographic form and style. Designers all over the campuses now tend to prefer the suggestive, the abstracted, the symbolic scenery to the realistic. The former are easier to build, easier to paint, lighter and easier to shift and transport. This calls for selectivity, simplicity and consistency (119).

This is the way to go as far as overcoming the challenge of funding with regards to the creation of scenographic environments for productions is concerned.

Conclusion

This essay has tried to x-ray the problem of poor funding and its impact on theatre production. Looking at the issue from a global perspective, it was discovered that the problem reverberates across different climes, even as we must agree that the Nigerian strain of the problem is particularly excruciating and debilitating. Poor funding does not only affect the play production process as a whole but impacts very negatively on the scenographic aspect of play production, ostensibly due mainly to certain biases that attend that component of the theatre ensemble.

Critically considering these challenges, the scenographer needs to reach outside the norm, be inventive and seek for ways to design and bring to life scenic environments that are not only functional, but that move the action of the play forward, make the dialogue and actions of the characters meaningful to the audience, and that are also aesthetically pleasing. That way, the scenographer would not only create a work of art, but would contribute significantly to the efforts aimed at ensuring the continuous survival and relevance of the theatre in a world filled with an almost infinite variety of competitors and distractions. It is a noble task that the scenographer, in conjunction with other artists in the theatre, must execute with a deep sense of responsibility.

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LIGHTING-BASED STAGE-SCREEN INTERSECTION PERFORMANCES AS PANACEA FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN NIGERIA

Ofora EMEKA

Department of Theatre & Film Studies
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Email: oforaemeka@gmail.com

Abstract

Lighting design as practiced in today's theatre, started as illumination of communal events; organised and financed by the community, state, churches or wealthy citizens. Initially, attendance was mandatory and cost free to citizens and members. However, financial patronage was withdrawn from the theatre by these benevolent donors in the sixteenth century when Elizabeth 1 of England prohibited the theatre from staging plays with religious and political themes. Thus, the theatre was forced to become a commercial enterprise and theatre blossomed once more. However, economic recessions have combined with other factors to cause drastic reductions in gate-takings and the live theatre dwindled again especially in Nigeria. Therefore, the aim of this study is to revive public live performance once more through lighting-based stage-screen intersection performances. Thus, the researcher's objectives include evolving lighting-based stage-screen intersection performances that will make live performances attractive to the audience amidst strong competition from the electronic media. To assess the potentials of the lighting-based stage-screen intersection performances as panacea for economic recovery, the experimental interview and impact analysis approaches of mixed method of research are used. The researcher experimented the lighting-based stage-screen intersection performances at the Mbari Cultural Centre, Owerri. The research findings reveal that today, most Nigerian audiences are unwilling to patronising theatre events, unless they are sure of the quality. There is need therefore to save the theatre from the present as well as future economic hazards through lighting-based stage-screen intersection performances. This approach can pave way for new ideas to be accommodated in stage lighting performances. Hence, the paper concluded that the adoption of this new lighting approach will not only help to entertain the audience well, but will also help to blend with the electronic postmodern performance culture.

Introduction

Light is crucial to human existence. It occupies central position in all human affairs. In fact, it is of fundamental importance as it enables the visibility of things around human environment. The importance of light as a factor that is responsible for seeing,

underscores its adoption by the theatre as an element in the making of dramatic events. Its roles include both enhancing the development of the theatre and as well as the sustenance of its values. According to Robert Cohen, “light is the basic condition for theatrical appearance” mainly because “without light nothing can be seen” (5). This implies that the contributions of other artists of the theatre, like the actor, playwright, director, set and costume designers, etc., must require light to make them visible and appreciated. It is at this time that their impact in the repositioning of the theatre for onward economic vibrancy could be felt.

The fluid nature of the modern stage lighting has remained the bane for its ability to render various services to the theatre other than the usual and all-known function of illumination. Stage lighting can play vital roles in the areas of creating mood and atmosphere, emphasising and subordinating visual elements and, above all, blending the entire stage picture for the overall interest of understandability. Milly Baranger speaks in the affirmative as he traces the early use of light in the theatre for dramatic effects. He informs that in the staging of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, “the story of the king’s return at the close of the Trojan War begins with a watchman standing atop the place to watch for beacons shining from distance mountaintops that will signal Agamemnon’s return to Argos” (264).

The above indicates that stage lighting can as well be used to communicate to influence audience’s perception and sensibilities. Nigerian theatres in particular need this and other kind of innovative lighting strategies. This makes more sense even now that the country is undergoing through economic recession because it has the capability to build audience confidence once more in a live stage performance, especially since the audience is the major financier of the theatre businesses in Nigeria. We see innovative stage lighting as the key to the progress of the theatre because it has over the years established its capability to inspire experimentation of new methods of presenting plays in the theatre. Stanton and Banham, as cited by Duro Oni, speak in this regard and said that, “stage lighting, particularly...since the first use of electricity in the theatre, has had a profound effect upon staging, scenery, style of production and acting, and even upon the shape of the theatre building itself” (76). Many of such methods have in the past demonstrated the ability to attract positive responses of the audience and by so doing improved the economic and social well-being of the theatre.

Record of this can be traced back to the classical societies. The classical cities of Greece, Rome and Middle ages were very popular and well known for their taste for strict adherences to the lighting and religious cultures of the period. These cities maintained close similarity in their cultural and religious festivals. Those of their festivals were dedicated to the worship of various deities. The Greek ritual festival for instance, was performed for the glorification of the god, Dionysus. During those days, religious ritual festivals were considered theatrical because theatrical elements were infused in them. Lighting was not then as it is today, it was not considered vital and indispensable element of those ritual theatres.

The classical festival and medieval theatres were regarded as communal happenings, where every member of the community was a stakeholder; therefore its funding was less cumbersome because most of the costs incurred for staging were borne

by the state, churches and/or wealthy individuals in the society. Stage lighting benefited immensely from this arrangement because not only that it enjoyed large audience participation, sufficient fund was made available to cater for all lighting production expenses. It has been observed for instance that lighting production cost in the Greek and Roman theatres were benevolently incurred by the state while that of the medieval theatre was borne by the church and wealthy individuals. It is possible, therefore, that the waiver granted to the audience on gate-fee in those early theatre practice days was partly because the money for mounting the productions were drawn from public fund.

Theatre became a total commercial venture in the mid-16th century; Queen Elizabeth 1 ascended the throne in England and with the intention to restore normalcy in her kingdom, passed a decree, which prohibited the theatre from staging plays with religious and political themes. The effect was that the sponsors of the theatre who have been using the medium to propagate their variant ideologies were as a result of this development made to withdraw their financial patronages and thus forced the theatre to become a commercial enterprise. “Rather than remaining occasional (part of a religious festivals), officially supported, and free, the theatre became continuous, self-supporting and sufficiently entertaining to keep a paying public coming back” (Brockett and Ball 100). This was possibly part of the reasons that brought about the introduction of indoor performances, which the professional theatre practitioners used to control access and collect entrance fees. However, the adoption of the alternative means of free sponsorship advanced and reinvigorated the theatre and made it to blossom once more.

The adoption of the theatre as a full commercial venture however, instigated persistent oppositions to the activities of the theatre. The first of its kind was the dangerous advances made by the guilds of England in about the late 16th century. The guilds of England initially accepted and approved the theatre as a worthy leisure activities but later rejected it after the theatre was commercialised as it could not find reason to justify it as a means of livelihood. This eventually resulted in the dangerous advances towards strangulating the revenue sources so that the theatre will die a natural death and thus stop the actors from “corrupting” the society (Brockett and Ball 100).

Today, the challenges being encountered in the theatre are no longer connected with social relevance and values, but some other kinds of hindrances. In the contemporary Nigeria, for instance, economic recessions have combined with other factors to cause drastic reduction in gate-taking. This constitutes a big problem because it has the capacity to cause the industry to dwindle dangerously. This study is therefore a designed attempt to contribute in the efforts toward reviving live stage performance in Nigeria in a way that will guarantee economic self-sustenance. It intends to achieve this through lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance strategy. Though the proposed performance is live performance, unlike most stage performances in the recent past, its aesthetics are to a large extent dependent on lighting. Its major point of departure however is the utilisation of lighting to intersect both the stage and the screen media in a single performance. To intersect is to meet at a point; therefore, as a mathematical term, intersection as the point or sect of points means where two or more lines or plane surfaces cross each other. It is the relation of two or more classes which includes parts of the other to result in a set of elements common to both. The study

basically aims at introducing Intersection Performance Techniques (IPT), as a technical stage performance approach for enhancing the survival of the live theatre in the economically traumatised Nigerian society.

Lighting-based screen-stage performance through intersection performance technique is therefore, a radicalised stage performance approach aimed at a more effective realisation of performance objectives in Nigerian theatre practice to make live theatre relevant to the realities of our time. It emphasises a set of techniques that utilise potentials of both the stage and media to put the directors' message across. The study, therefore, attempts to find answers to the following questions:

- a) What is the indicator that the Nigerian live stage is on the declining lane?
- b) What are the factors responsible for the consistent decline of live stage in Nigeria?
- c) How has this affected the economic state of the Nigerian live stage?
- d) How can the lighting address the dwindling fortunes of live stage in Nigeria?

Theatre Business and Economic Recession

Business activities and standard of living have been conceived as strong indicators of economic vibrancy in any economy. It permits easy circulation of money into different hands, groups of businesses, cooperate enterprises for consequent meaningful development. Therefore, any action that leads to stoppage or slow down activities in businesses will consequently spell doom to the economy since such will no longer allow people easy access to cash for transactions. This kind of situation leads to economic recession. Simply put, economic recession is drop in production of goods and services, poor turnover and inflation.

The present condition in Nigeria aptly fits into the description of economic recession. The *World Book Encyclopaedia* defines *economic recession* as, "a period of temporary economic setback or decline during which trade and industrial activities are reduced". It explains that, it is "generally identified by a fall in GDP in two successive quarters" (231). Similarly, The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) sees economic recession as, "a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in a real gross domestic product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production and wholesale-retail sales" (EduCacInfor.com). Economic recession is generally characterised by:

- a) High inflation: this will cause a general rise in price of goods and services, leading to low purchasing power;
- b) Accumulation of debt servicing, especially foreign debts;
- c) High interest rate: this usually discourages investors from investing in the country;
- d) Fall in aggregate demand; and
- e) Mass unemployment.

Judging from the above indices, it becomes sufficiently clear that Nigeria is currently undergoing economic recession. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) foreshadowed this situation years back and declares that, “Nigeria economy has plunged into recession. The economy will not regain stability until late 2017” (Soludo 12). Economic recession in Nigeria was induced by multiple factors as articulated and discussed by economic analysts yet the consciousness and awareness was not adequately publicised. Even though, the situation traumatised the theatre and other businesses, theatre if adequately utilised could have helped to raise the awareness so that individuals, organisations and government will be at alert and re-strategise.

Another analyst, Emmanuel Noko, highlights four principal factors which he said are responsible for the economic disaster in Nigeria today. He identifies poor economic planning as one of those factors. He posits that the policy to eliminate dollar purchase privileges for importers of certain items into the country by devaluing the home currency is a miscalculation on the side of government. Such a policy which permitted banks to sell dollars at an official rate of N315 created opportunities for businesses in the hands of privileged and highly placed individuals who purchase dollar at N315 from the banks and resell at the parallel market rate of N480. According to Noko, the huge profit made from this venture adds towards widening the gap between the rich and the poor and by so doing worsen the economy because majority of the people live in abject poverty while only few individuals enjoy good life. In line with the position of Noko, Emmanuel Ebo and Canice Nwosu assert that, most economic downturn occurring in any economy is usually caused by some anomalous policies of the government which usually manifest in unemployment, high inflation and ravaging poverty in general (41).

Noko also identifies high inflation rate as yet another factor that precipitated economic recession in Nigeria. He believes that the banning of certain essential agricultural products such as rice, without first putting in place an alternative measure that can mitigate the effects and the policy to remove fuel subsidy alongside the banning of agricultural products culminated to high inflation rate where prices of almost all household items skyrocketed. The case of high bank interest rate on loans and other draconian policies were considered by Noko as major contributors to low investment and economic depression. He regrets that this happened within the season where investment in the country recorded very low growth. Noko observes finally that high taxation policy operating in the country also has negative implications on businesses operation. Small business outfits including theatre business hardly survive under high taxation conditions.

The present economic recession in the country has contributed to the low theatre activities in our live theatres. The unprofessional attitude of most theatre producers in Nigeria to lighting productions has also help to aggravate the already traumatic economic situations affecting the live theatre. Some practitioners think that lighting is an applied art to stage performance, those producers often treat lighting with gross neglect. Duro Oni conscientiously condemns the avariciousness with which most Nigerian theatre producers apply the theories of ‘Empty Space’ and the ‘Poor Theatre’, in most productions on the Nigerian stage. According to him, “they virtually perform their plays

in the moulds espoused by Brook and Grotowski and almost disregard the technical elements of production” (qtd in Nwadike 31). However, Robert Cohen maintains that lighting plays very vital roles in theatre performances; so, should not be disregarded. Though he acknowledges that the actor and the play scripts are very central to the theatrical experience, Cohen further observes that no matter their pivotal importance, they are incapable of full expression in and by themselves (5). The allusion here therefore is that light is still required to reveal their status.

We need to be reminded at this point that light is not all about illumination. According to Michael Gillette, “if illumination were the only function of stage lighting... you could hang a bank of fluorescent lights over the stage and forget all about the dimmers, control boards, cables and instruments” (1). Gillette is alluding to the fact that stage lighting is capable of creating other possibilities in the theatre through proper design. Design is “a process and a craft for creating an artistic result” (Gillette 4). It was conceived as a revolt to the passive use of light in the early days of the theatre and the very need to introduce innovativeness in the modern stage lighting practice.

Most lighting theorists are of the view that the introduction of design into the practice of lighting has affected the live theatre in positive ways. The views of Stanton and Banham are apposite in this regard. According to them, design and innovative lighting “...has had a profound effect upon staging, scenery, style of production and acting, and even upon the shape of the theatre building itself” (qtd in Oni 76). It is regrettable, therefore, that the opportunities availed by design and improved modern technologies have not been fully exploited by Nigerian theatres whereas such benefits have been harnessed over the years and used extensively to expand the frontiers of stage performances in the Western world.

One can assert that the retrogressive tendencies of the Nigerian live theatres whereby the theatre is constantly in search of the audience and not the other way round as it used to be, is an unhealthy development that results out of rigidity and non-willingness of the practitioners to embrace the prevalent postmodern digital technology-driven performance which is achieved through lighting and design. This is why all the efforts that have been made in the past by some committed Nigerian theatre scholars to address the economic ailing situations of the live theatres have not yielded much result. For instance, Rasheed Musa, from a study of the past and present states of the performances in order to determine the level of progress observes that the contemporary stage performance is retrogressing badly. He attributes this to the dysfunctional attitude of theatre workers who he said have not shown much commitment towards improving the theatre. He suggests that attitudinal changes of the theatre workers, especially the younger ones will add positively in the sustenance of theatre practice in Nigeria (16).

Innocent Ohiri also shares the opinion of Rasheed Musa that something seriously needs to be done to resuscitate the deteriorating state of the Nigerian theatre. Having discovered through series of investigations that gate-takings in our stage performances have reduced greatly to the extent that they can no longer cater for future productions in the theatre, Ohiri suggests that to sustain theatrical activities in the country, funds should be sought from agencies and cooperate organisations to support stage performances (146). In as much as these and other related postulations are quite

scholarly and innovative, they have not really addressed the reoccurring incidence of poor audience turn up and low economic returns to the live theatres in Nigeria. In one of his studies, Duro Oni advises that the downward movement of live theatres in Nigeria can be addressed by “repackaging of theatrical productions by paying more attention to the design and technological aspects of production” (75).

This study, therefore, aims to revive live stage performances in Nigeria through lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance. The evolving of lighting based stage-screen Intersection performances is hoped to be used amidst strong competition from the electronic media, to win the minds of the audience back to the theatre again. The researcher also intends to assess its viability as a means for economic recovering. This is because lighting as an amalgam of art and technology is believed to be capable of creating avenues for the improvement of the theatre. Molinta Enendu also alludes to this when he states that,

Aesthetic and foundation of theatre production are rooted in the arts, technology is only for supportive and complementary roles which enhance and broaden human capacities, imaginations and creativity (qtd in Ejike 40).

Lighting-Based Stage-Screen Intersection Performance as Panacea for Economic Recovery

To give a definition, in the general case, *Wikipedia* informs that the intersection multiplicity was the major concern of André Weil's book, *Foundations of Algebraic Geometry*. Bartel Leendert van der Waerden's works around 1920s had already addressed the question; in the Italian school of algebraic geometry the ideas were well known, but foundational questions were not addressed in the same spirit. However, its application by other disciplines started with the works of Kimberley William Crenshaw an American civil rights advocate, in 1989 who in her study about Black feminism in America, describes *intersectionality*, as overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. Crenshaw argues that the experience of being a Black woman cannot be understood in terms of being black and of being a woman considered independently, but must include the interactions, which frequently reinforce each other. She therefore noted that the classical conceptualisation of oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, and so on, within the society, do not act independently of each other, rather these forms of operation interrelate to create a system of operation that reflects the convergence of multiple forms of discrimination. Crenshaw identifies gender, race, social class, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, mental and physical illness and disabilities, etc. as forms of identity that can intersect.

The theory proposes that all aspects of one's identity need to be examined as simultaneously interacting with each other and affecting one's privilege and perception in society. The idea is that these facets of identity cannot simply be observed separately. Intersectional theory therefore provides an insight into how multiple systems of oppression interrelate and are interactive. While William Crenshaw conceptualises this theory to address the poignant social injustice and violence that is being meted against

Black American women, intersectional theory is used in this study to provide basis for the intermingling of video film sequence and live actions in a stage performance through intersection performance technique. This is to make stage performance attractive to the contemporary audience known for their high sense of aesthetics, with the intention of addressing perennial economic and related problems in Nigerian.

This new production culture inspires the desire to “make the representation of place in the theatre as transformable as it is in film and television” (Brockett and Ball 233). This is to ensure that the theatre can address issues regarding to changes in artistic taste and audience perception demand on the need for consistent rapid change of time, place and focus between scenes in a live theatre performance as being practiced in film and television. The impressive need also was to encourage experimentation with lighting-based screen-stage intersection performance, a practice that encourages combination of elements from several media and utilisation of the electronic culture.

Though there is a thin dividing line between multimedia and intersection performance technique, they are both electronic culture friendly. Multimedia, though older than intersection performance technique, dwells more on combination of media like the Brechtian theatre; intersection performance technique focuses on intersection of media. It is improvement on theatre technology of the time to support the realisations of the great imaginations about lighting. It was at the time of the Czech Scenographer, Josef Svoboda (1920-2002), however, that the vision of Adolph Appia and his contemporaries were brought to bear in the theatre. Tapping from the ideas of his predecessors, Josef Svoboda, who in 1958 used his works: *Polyekran* (multiple screens) and *Laterna Magika*, to demonstrate the possibility to incorporate elements from other media particularly the television, into his stage design experimentation “to show the theatre world what could be accomplished with light” (Parker, Wolf and Block 394). Oren Parker, Craig Wolf and Dick Block explain further that, in the theatre at Prague, Svoboda experimented extensively with low-voltage light sources thereby demonstrate the ability to “suspend electrostatically charged particles in the air to act as reflectors of light” (394). Svoboda achieved this by relying heavily on imaginative use of projection surfaces. Brockett and Ball comment on the functionality of multimedia production in the theatre. According to them, the notable

Feature of multimedia productions has been the liberal use of projected images frequently several shown simultaneously on a number of screens. The images may be fragments of the same picture, or each may be unlike the others. All are chosen for their appropriateness to the mood or theme of the piece; some may suggest comparisons between the dramatic events and those of other times and places (424).

The images projected on multiple screens serve as scenic background of a performance. They provide audience with the choice of projected pictures to watch. This early experimentation endeavours later instigated new ways of thinking about stage lighting design in Western theatres.

In the Nigerian scene however, multimedia technology production approach is still at the incubation stage. Charles Nwadigwé tells us that the works of Dexter Lyndersay, Sunbo Marinho, Duro Oni, and *Molinta Enendu* (emphasis mine) are quite remarkable, as pioneer works that inspired interest in the use of multimedia production in the Nigerian stage (30). Like other places of the world where it has been practiced, multimedia technology production in the Nigerian theatre tends to bridge the existing gap between live and electronic performances; usually through the combination of elements of the both media to address peculiar performance challenges. In 1998, for instance, Molinta Enendu executed the design for the production of J. P. Clark's *The Raft*, with multimedia technology. With the use of sophisticated special lighting gadgets like the strobe lights and other special effects lights such as clouds and thunder storm, Enendu deployed the means of projection techniques to project all the created effects against the backdrop surface of the stage and was able to simulate the notion of a sailing raft on a sea (Enendu 32). Solomon Ejeke confirms that, Enendu "relied heavily on (multimedia) technology for the effective realisation of the thematic concepts... of the play" (40).

About a year after (in 1999), Duro Oni did a work in which he also relied on multimedia technology in the actualisation of his production concept. It was in the stage production of Biyi Bandele's stage adaptation of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* that Oni, using multimedia technology, substituted stage sets with stage lighting in the creation of scenic environment in which the dramatic presentation took place. However, in this and other related cases, the use of multimedia technology production in the Nigerian theatre has not extended beyond the creation of patterns that serve as scenic background. Duro Oni even confirms this thus:

...the scene-by-scene analysis of *Things Fall Apart* attempts to demonstrate the effectiveness of utilising stage lighting as an alternative to the use of stage set in establishing spatio-temporal relationship in a dramatic presentation.... This further corroborates, in practical terms, our proposition of the exigencies and expediency (in material and aesthetic terms) of substituting or diminishing the use of stage sets, through the use of lighting in the creation of a dramatic environment (149).

The aforementioned multimedia production experimentations were carried out in Nigeria over 18 years ago. Not only that, there has been lack of continuity in the application of multimedia production technique to improve our live theatres, but also that the experimentations of the multimedia production that have so far been demonstrated in the theatre did not capture and address dramaturgical issues, which in the opinion of this paper has been bulging down the progress line of economic successes of the theatre. Consequently, this study, which received inspiration from those early works, engages in further research to determine other possibilities that will help address the current and future problems of live theatres in Nigeria. The study, therefore,

proposes lighting-based stage-screen intersection performances as a viable method to restore the vibrancy of live theatre practice in Nigeria.

Lighting-based stage-screen intersection performances can permit the possibility to juxtapose video film footages in an onstage live performance. The aim is to enable the stage performance to realise in action some fascinating and thought provoking scenes in the Nigerian theatre, which hitherto have been very difficult to achieve and/or give adequate representation perhaps due to lack of appropriate technical means for their effective realisation. For example, scenes like dream sequences, automobile crashing, actions in pathways and farmyards, flashback and memory recalls, etc. have not been represented well in the Nigerian stages to enable them portray their full intended meanings.

According to Joel A. Fanyan, the present manner those aspects of the performance are played “seriously lacks in aesthetics for audience appreciation of the art” (105). The flashback scenes, in particular, which constitute the focus of this paper, have often been played in a way that denies plausibility even in this present digital age that believes much in empirical evidences. The practice of “freeze and unfreeze” technique for instance, in an attempt to actualise flashback segment of a performance in our live theatres, is quite unrealistic in appearance. The position of this paper is that any method in our productions that does not help to transfer the message of the performance to the audience very correctly, should be replaced with the technology of the stage lighting for easy, plausible and effective actualisation without going into some unnecessary fakery. This is because by trying to create an illusion that would be difficult for audience to accept is an attempt to destroy the real illusion and to destroy the image upon which the foot of the theatre is strongly fixed. For this reason, lighting-based stage-screen intersection approach that can permit the projection of video record of such actions onto the stage for proper dramatisation is conceived as a better replacement of the old method. The adoption of lighting-based stage-screen intersection performances will introduction more meaningful, acceptable and realisable method that will enable flashbacks and other related ‘nagging’ scenes in the Nigerian stage performances to be acted independently but brought to the stage to intermingle with live stage actions through digital technology powered lighting. After all, Drew Campbell was very apt to have noticed quite early that, “society is becoming increasingly oriented toward movies and television” that “it often works to think about stage lighting in terms borrowed from those media” (71).

Synopsis of the Experimentation Play: *Silhouettes*

Tony Duruaku’s play, *Silhouettes*, addresses issues of succession and leadership in Amadike community. The face-off between Nwaeze, a man with inordinate ambition to become the next Eze in the community and Obialor, the custodian of the Royal Stool, who insists that things be done the right way, brings one to the knowledge of the past and the surrounding events involved in Ezeship succession in Amadike community. Amadike of the old was incessantly attacked, oppressed and chastised by Abobo Community. This nearly led to the wiping off the town out of existence. In order to prevent this, the people made a pact with the Apelle, a more powerful community to

protect the borders of Amadike land against the people of Abobo. This was agreed upon based on the condition that the child of the union between the Eze of Amadike and an Apelle woman shall be producing the Eze of the land for generations. The two communities further agreed to deploy a mystic man of Egwenga community to reside within and among the people of Amadike to ensure full compliance to this and to also protect the Eze Stool from any form of aggression and insurgence.

This arrangement grew overtime in the land of Amadike until the time of Nwaeze who desires to become the Eze of the people and perhaps because of his affluence wants the status quo be reversed. But it took the courage of Obialor, a descendant of the mystic man from Egwenga, to insist that the old order in Ezeship selection be maintained because though Nwaeze being a son of the Royal Household, does not belong to the ruling line because his mother is not an Apelle woman. However, Nwaeze was able to manoeuvre his way to get people to approve for a plebiscite to decide whether or not to reverse the old rule of Ezeship succession in the land. But having lost in the referendum, Nwaeze resorts to assassin squad arrangement to eliminate Obialor and his family for their involvement in making him lose in the election. But before he could realise this plan, Odejimjim, the community police invades his house on a crime of incest with her cousin, Ugonna and made away with him to an evil forest.

Realising Flashback Actions in the Performance of *Silhouettes*

It is important to note that the realisation of this script by the playwright heavily depended on the application of flashback technique. Thus, in the stage production, the paradigmatic case of this study, many flashback scenes featured. The dramatisation of one of such flashback scenes will be highlighted in this study to showcase how the researcher used lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance to solve dramatisation problems of flashback scenes in the Nigerian stage. In the performance of the play, Obialor, the custodian of the Eze Stool in Amadike community was seen received Nwaeze and Maduka who visited him in his house. The visit was meant to appeal to Obialor to give support to the ambition of Nwaeze to become the next Eze in Amadike community. But Obialor who has remained unchanged in his earlier stance, insisted that the old order in the selection of new Eze for the people must be sustained. His response, which incidentally does not support Nwaeze's ambition, ignited a quarrel between Obialor and his visitors. The disturbances attracted the attention of Nwanyioma, Obialor's wife and her son, Chidi from the inner room to calm the situation:



Pix.1: Obialor and his visitor in serious argument.



Pix.2: Intervention by Nwanyioma and Chidi

At the exit of the visitors, Nwanyioma appealed to Obialor to consider discarding the old order and allow Nwaeze to have what he is asking, for the sake of his life and his family. But Chidi later picked this up with his mother. In a private discussion with his mother, Chidi disparages the advice of his mother to Obialor his father.



Pix.3: Chidi, reproving his mother for her advice to Obialor his father.

He admonishes his mother for saying that his father should relinquish his role as the custodian of the Eze Stool in order to allow Nwaeze to achieve his selfish ambition. Trying to recall the mind of his mother about the situation that instigated the role his father is currently playing in the community, Chidi declares as thus:

What! Break the custom that was established nearly two hundred years ago? Have you forgotten the reason for the peculiar Stool ascension in this town? How it happened? Do you propose to move us back over 200 years? Refresh your memory (*Silhouettes* 10).

This statement by Chidi was the main prompter that instigated the application of lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance because it insinuates the action of a flashback in the performance. Before now, flashback scenes in Nigerian stage productions have not been presented very well. This result has been that implied meanings have not often been communicated effectively to the audience. In such situations, it is either that the flashback actions are just attended in-passing or where attempts are made to dramatise them, freezing technique is usually applied. Freezing technique involves freezing of actions in a performance where they are not needed. It is often used when two scenes are presented side by side in the same stage. Usually dual stage method is applied. This implied that when an action is going on in one area of the stage, actors in the other area come to a complete freeze where they assume a dead posture, moving no limb or muscles. They also look away from the other scene so that the audience will believe that they are not part of the on-going action. This method has been fraught with inadequacy. It is believed to be representing a type of illusion that will be difficult for an audience to accept.

With the application of lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance production, the researcher was able to contend with the deficiency in the dramatisation of flashback scenes in the Nigerian stage. In the case of this study, the flashback scene that is demonstrated here opened with Dibia Ukama examining Amanna, the sick prince in the presence of King Amadi and his two wives:



Pix.4: Dibia Ukama and members to the royal house attending to the sick Amanna

The tension that gripped the palace is on the account that the herbs of Dibia Ukama have not proved effective in the healing of Amanna. The other reason is about the delay in the arrival of the “Shrouded Figure”, a Dibia from another community who is hoped that will heal Amanna. When the woman of “Shrouds” finally came, she healed Amanna and in the process revealed that Amanna’s sickness was caused by the poison by Nwanyimma. Nwanyimma admitted this and said she did that because Amauda her child, who is the first son of King Amadi and who by tradition should inherit the throne was denied the right. She blamed this on the husband and alleged that he ceded the throne to Amanna in order to please Obidiya, his favourite wife.



Pix.5: The King raging over Nwanyimma’s evil deed. Pix.6: Nwanyimma blaming her action on the King

Defying all explanations proffered as the reason for ceding the throne to Amanna including the explanation from her son Amauda, that Amanna’s choice for the throne was because his mother is from Apelle, Nwanyimma conspires within her to cause havoc in the kingdom. She grabbed a sword, advancing to stab the King but was at this time caught into the powers of the “Shrouded Figure”, which made her to collapse and die.



Pix.6: Cross actions of Nwanyimma in her attempt to kill King Amadi and how she met her end

Beneficial Effects of Lighting-Based Stage-Screen Intersection Performance Production

Before the use of intersection lighting performance in this production, the old lighting method of the stage was being used. This was until when Chidi, through his speech as indicated in Pix No. 3, called up for a flashback dramatisation. The use of lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance method to dramatised the flashback scene was based on the inability of the old lighting method to give befitting dramatisation to the scene. Lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance production is an electro-technology lighting approach of the postmodern theatre. Its application in a performance requires that actions of the scene needing its usage, be first designed and dramatised independently with production elements of other media. The dramatised piece is to be stored in a clip for easy retrievable for future uses. In this performance, the researcher observed the rules accordingly in the design of the flashback scenes for this performance. Using Intersection Performance Technique (IPT), the researcher intersected the documented performance of the flashback to intermingle with the on live actions of the stage thereby creating a merger of performances of different media in a

single live performance. Compared to the old performance method of the stage, the lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance inspired a new dynamism in the dramatisation of a flashback scene in the Nigerian stage. In the first place, it enabled the researcher to accommodate the eight characters involved in the scene and enabled them to dramatised their roles uninhibited. This was not the case with the old method.

The effect created in Pix No. 7 below during the healing process of Amanna is another merit of this new lighting approach, which also attests to its potentials for the improvement that is being canvassed for economic rejuvenation of the Nigerian live stage.



Pix.7: the Dibia dragging away columns of the poison from the body of Amanna

The use of this new lighting approach facilitated the researcher's ability to create the above aesthetic effect, where the poison that was transmitted in Amanna by Nwanyimma was removed from him. With this method, the poison, which was dragged away from Amanna was conspicuous before audience in the form of columns of white particles. This particular effect gratifies the audience and helped to sustain their interest in a stage performance. Another effect created in the performance, which also helped to sustain audience interest was the vivification of the mystic powers that was used by the woman of the "Shroud" to trap down Nwanyimma.



Pix.8:Nwanyimma attempting to stab King Amadi

In the pictures displayed above, Nwanyimma made frantic efforts to stab King Amadi with a sword she grabbed from the floor but was constrained by the “Shrouded Figure” who intercepted her with a mystic staff in her hand. She pointed the staff in the direction of Nwanyimma; using the staff, she disgorges conspicuous particle-like mystic powers, which blinded Nwanyimma, penetrates into the brain and made her to slump and die.

The black and white background created in the performance portrayed the message that the flashback actions are mere recollection of lost memories. It means that it is not happening in the present. Thus, the clarity of the original idea has been washed. This explains why black and white colour background is used in representing actions in the scene. To support this, the researcher returned light to the stage actions after the onscreen demonstration where Chidi and Nwanyiomma resumed their actions



Pix.9: Chidi and his mother

Chidi is heard saying this to the mother:

Those are the facts mama, Nwanyimma had poisoned Amanna, the heir to the throne so that, her son would ascend the throne at Eze Amadi's death. There was no known cure for the poison given to Amanna. But the woman of the "Shrouds" absorbed the poison from his system (*Silhouettes* 16).

Methodology

The research method used in this study was mixed research method, whereby qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied. Data for qualitative method was collected using interview model whereby selected Nigerian lighting designers were interviewed. Data for quantitative method was collected, using survey approach, which involved the use of the questionnaire model in collecting data from members of the audience who watched the performance.

Data Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis

The collected data are presented on a table and analysed using simple percentages. A total of 102 audience members who watched the performance formed the population of the study. The sampling technique adopted by the researcher is the purposive sampling technique. This is because the researcher had to look for certain characteristics that must be represented. Using this technique, a sample size of 62 respondents was drawn from the population and copies of questionnaires distributed to them. Out of the

questionnaires distributed, 54 were returned but only 50 were properly filled. Thus, this analysis was based on the 50 copies of the questionnaires that were properly filled and returned.

Research Question Two: What are the factors responsible for the consistent decline of the live stage in Nigeria?

Table 1 Responses on the causes of the decline of the Nigerian stage.

S/N	Question Item	Respondents	Response	Freq. of Response	
1	Influences of the screen media, insecurity, poor performance method of the stage etc, have been acclaimed to be the cause of the deterioration of the live stage in Nigeria. Do you agree?	50	Yes	45	90%
			No	1	2%
			No idea	4	8%
			Total	50	100%
2	Which of the factors among these do you think is the major cause for the decline of the live stage in Nigeria?		Activities of the screen media?	15	30%
			Poor performance approach of the stage?	31	62%
			Insecurity?	4	8%
			Total	50	100%

Responses from table 1 show that influences from activities of the screen media, insecurity problem in the country, method of play dramatisation adopted by the stage, etc., are among the factors that are causing the decline of the live theatre in Nigeria. From the results of the first questionnaire of the table, 45 (90%) respondents said yes, 1 (2%) respondent did not agree; while 4 (8%) respondents could not make meaning from the question. But amongst these identified influences, it was further gathered that performance style of the stage is the major factor that is driving the audience away from the stage activities. This is ascertained from the responses to the second questionnaire of the table 1, where 31 (62%) respondents responded in the affirmative. Only 19 (38%) respondents believe that the problem is caused by insecurity and activities of the screen media.

Research Question Three: How has this affected the economic state of the Nigerian stage?

Table 2: Responses on the effect of poor performance method on economic situation of the Nigerian stage

S/N	Question Item	Respondents	Response		Freq. of Response
1	Could it be said that your non-regular participation in the stage activities is caused by the performance method of the stage?	50	Yes	40	80%
			No	10	20%
			Can't explain	0	0%
			Total	50	100%
2	Given an alternative approach to performance method, would your interest be restored to the stage?	50	Yes	40	80%
			No	3	6%
			May be	7	14%
			Total	50	100%

Results from table 2 indicate that 40 (80%) respondents are willing to return to the theatre if there is an improvement in the performance method of the stage. 3 (6%) respondent indicates complete loss of interest in the stage activities, whereas, 7 (14%) respondents are indecisive. Based on this response, economic situation of the Nigerian stage can be improved if the audience patronage is restored to the stage. This can be possible if the performance method of the stage is improved.

Research Question Four: How can the lighting address the dwindling fortunes of the live stage in Nigeria?

Table 3 Responses on the effect of lighting in the revival of the Nigerian stage.

S/N	Question Item	Respondents	Response		Freq. of Response
1	Is this your first time to watch stage-screen performance in the Nigerian stage?	50	Yes	48	96%
			No	0	0%
			Can't remember	2	4%
			Total	50	100%
2	How will you describe the lighting method used in this performance?	50	Good	47	94%
			Fair	3	6%
			Not good	0	0%
			Total	50	100%
3	Would you want the stage to adopt this type of lighting for dramatisation of flashback scenes and related 'obstinate' scenes of the Nigerian stage?	50	Yes	49	98%
			No	0	0%
			May be	1	2%
			Total	50	100%

			Total	50	100%
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The responses in table 3, in which 49 (98%) respondents approved the lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance productions and would want it to be continuously used as a lighting method of the Nigerian stage, as against only 1 (2%) respondent who is indecisive in his decision, shows that lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance method is effective in addressing dramatisation problems of flashback scenes and other ‘nagging’ scenes of the Nigerian stage.

Analysing Responses from Interview with Respondents

The interview was targeted at lighting designers of the Nigerian stage. Thus, Alani Nasiru and Alphonsus Orisareme were selected and interviewed by the researcher. The researcher’s choice of these designers was motivated by their verse knowledge on the subject of discussion in this paper. The interview was meant to ascertain opinions of these designers regarding the declining status of the Nigerian stage and the possibility of using lighting approach to address this problem.

When asked if the progress level of the stage in Nigeria today is commensurable with what was obtained in the past, the interviewee (Alani Nasiru in particular) responded that productions in terms of play creation and the realization of plays on stage have reduced terribly over the years in the Nigerian stage. He cited that during the days of Duro Ladipo, Hubert Ogunde, Wole Soyinka, Zulu Sofola, Ola Rotimi, and Wale Ogunyemi, among others, quality plays were written and performed regularly for members of the public who were very enthusiastic about stage performances. When asked about the factors responsible for the consistent decline in the activities of the stage in Nigeria, the interviewees pointed out that despite the rising of social insecurity, the activities of the video film in Nigeria and other related malignant factors, performance method of the stage and the recent parlous economic situation in the country have persistently threatened the well-being of the stage in Nigeria. They noted in particular that the effect of the retrogressing economy is witnessed in the rising cost of production with the result that producers rarely mount productions. When asked the possibility for lighting to address the problem of the live stage in Nigeria, the response received was that the potentials of lighting lean heavily on the growing technology; a lighting that takes advantage of technology can offer numerous possibilities for artistic explorations. They further noted that the present state of lighting in our educational theatres in particular, needs to be improved to allow room for meaningful changes in performance to evolve. In a follow up question on the possibility of transfer of technology from other media to the stage to boost the lighting performance, the response from Orisareme indicates that there is the need to have a change of emphasis in performance pattern of the stage. He said that the primordial method of production in our theatres should be improved upon to accommodate the prevalent technology of the time. He emphasised the need to upgrade our lighting system for it to function effectively so that it can assist the stage to actualise certain scenes of the stage that depend on electro-digital lighting approach to be dramatised. These amplify the point that, the present performance

approaches of the stage need to be reviewed and improved upon to encourage economic growth of the stage.

Conclusion

This paper examined one of the perennial causes of the recent decline in the Nigerian live theatres. It observed that the manner, in which stories are dramatised in the Nigerian stage, does not encourage audience participation in the stage. This situation has been worsened by the current retrogression in the Nigerian economy, which has made production cost to skyrocket abnormally. The study observes that the funding of theatre can be improved by attracting huge patronage of performances even in the midst of the recession, if the performance method of the stage can be improved. The result available in the study shows that lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance production is an effective method to reinstate audience support to the live stage in Nigeria. This is discovered to have lean on its ability to achieve effective dramatisation of flashback scenes and other “obstinate” but fascinating scenes of the Nigerian stage. Thus, the study recommended for the adoption and subsequent use of lighting-based stage-screen intersection performance production by lighting designers on the Nigerian stage. This is to facilitate attempts to bring back the interest of the audience to the stage and thus, improve the economy of the Nigerian stage. The study, therefore, concludes that the survival problem of the Nigerian stage can be addressed by relying on effective lighting for the stage.

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