

THEATRE ARTS AND ADULT EDUCATION FOR CHARACTER AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA.

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Abstract

The quest for development has become a global phenomenon. Africa, going by the concept of development which is a term associated with advancement of situation will be said to be retrogressing instead. This paper contended that theatre arts and adult education are capable of bringing about development in Africa. The major problem of backwardness in Africa is lack of character and skills development on the part of leadership and followership. Theatre arts and adult education will instill in citizens of Africa the requisite skills, attitude and knowledge that will make them profitable to themselves and the society at large. This discipline if properly applied will make citizens self – employed as well as impact skills and attitude necessary for maximizing of resources (human and materials). The paper further highlighted some gainful employment that youth and adults can be engaged in that will bring about social change and economic self – reliance in Africa with effective theatre arts and adult education programmes. Finally, the paper recommended among others that African leaders should learn to lead by examples and put in more actions and less of talking

Keywords: Theatre Arts, Adult Education, Character, Skills Development and Self-Reliance

It is widely believed that most countries in Africa when measured in terms of money and personnel will be considered as less developed economically and politically. The reason been that these countries are inhibited by social vices, such as, low per capita income, poverty and heavy dependence on the developed nations for their economic survival.

Despite the fact that Africa is relatively rich in natural resources, development strategies pursued in the continent have not always been in harmony with the objective of ensuring decent level of environmental equality. Over five decades of political independence, most African countries have witnessed serious socio-economic, political and environmental crisis (Kaniaru, 1998). The continent is in this quagmire because African leaders according to Koranteng – Pipim (2013) have all too often betrayed the people they lead, because they see leadership as an opportunity to exercise unchecked or autocratic power and amass wealth for themselves, their families and cronies.

This is so because some African leaders lack morale and character which is very necessary to regulate and lubricate the activities in the society. These include the beliefs and standards by which people judge what is important, worthwhile and good. Morality and character helps to create values and what is right and what is wrong in the society.

Adult education and theatre arts especially the participatory theatre can be a credible method in sensitization of the people especially those in the rural areas, on how to create wealth for themselves. And be able to sustain such medium of wealth creation that will bring about sustainable development in Africa. The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger remains a largely unachieved goal in Africa and this problem or target has continued to eat the fabric of the continent of Africa. At this juncture, Africa needs the drive that will become an efficient avenue for planning and executing such plans that will lead to qualitative growth in political, social and economic aspects of the continent.

With proper skills and development plan in place, it means that the populace can decide on what to do by themselves without depending on anybody. Acquired skill means to achieve self-employment in order to ensure economic survival in a depressed economy like that of Africa. This paper is looking at theatre arts and adults education as capable of bringing about development in Africa if properly applied.

Theatre Arts

The word theatre is often interchangeably used as drama. The fact is that theatre is not inherent in drama only, rather it encompasses the words and action of our everyday activities. Etymologically, theatre is developed from a Greek word “theatron” which means “a place of seeing”. By this, theatre can be seen as a structure, it involves activities. It is composed of many elements such as playwriting, directing acting, song, dance, criticism, management and other aspect known as technical dimensions, such as set, lighting, costume, make up, sound etc. According to Brockett (1968) the theatre is the most complex of the arts, since it requires many creators- the actor, the playwright, the director, the scene designer, the costumer, the light designer, the choreographer, the musician. The complexity has led many to call the theatre a mixed art since it usually combines the written word of the literary artist. The theatre is a composite art

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comprising a group of creative arts appropriately labeled arts of the theatre.... Theatre is a formal dramatic presentation before a live audience. (Umukoro, 2002).

According to Ukala (2006) theatre arts comprise seven major aspects: dramatic, speech, music, dance, visual ,media and management aspects. As a discipline, therefore, theatre arts engrafts unto itself some of the contents and techniques of several other disciplines, such as English language, literature, including orature, mass communication, history, physics, especially in relation to light, colour and sound – architecture, fine and applied arts, the social science, engineering – especially electrical and electronic. The practice of theatre arts is more effective when there is a combination of the technologies of theatre arts with those of other disciplines related to it. The whole essence of theatre is to inform, enlighten and educate. It is also a means of entertainment and relaxation for the society. Looking at the extreme dynamism of theatre arts Clifford (1972) in Akinwale (2007) gives a sound summary of the functions of theatre arts in the society . Theatre, because it reflects nature and human behaviour has at times led the way in prompting new revolutionary philosophies, economic theories and social reform. It has shown man, moral evils in human attitudes and behaviour. It has chastised human conducts, moral degeneration, religious hypocrisy and political injustice and has helped in isolating personal mental disorder and in teaching psychological theories. It has appeared as a teacher communicator, philosopher, historian, social worker, literacy critic and moralist. Akinwale further stressed that this quotation shows not only the dynamism of theatre arts but its authenticity in the area of education. It has been a teacher teaching the audience either in the live theatre or the electronic media, certain information and situation that might be hidden in society.

Adult Education

Adult education deals with basic educational needs, ideology and needs and desires for improving the quality of life of man, so most discipline have definite contribution to make the discipline of adult education. Adult education is a discipline within the field of education, just as economic is a discipline within physical science. (Okedara, 1981). Adult education as a discipline is as old as mankind. According to Egenti (2012) adult education in practices is as old as the first adult that inhabited the earth just as Adam and Eve who were thrown out of the garden of Eden learnt to cope and help themselves.

Adult education as a discipline for study started at about the middle of 19th century, because there was a need to educated adult aside from children's education. This realization has been in existence but was not organized and took no specific form. There was awareness that adults receive instruction but the content was not clearly defined. According to Ebohon, (2012) adult education is a process where men and women under organized activities with the aim of bringing about changes in

information, knowledge or skills appreciation and attitudes for the purpose of identifying and meeting personal or community needs. Adult education has no limit; one is never too big or too old to go through the process. Adult education in the widest sense is any kind of education for people who are old enough to work, vote and marry, who have completed the cycle of continuous education commenced in childhood. Or for those who have not gone to school at all. They may want to make up for limited schooling, may or not have while they were young. It could be to learn the basic skills of trades or professions to master new working process. Adult education helps them to understand themselves and their world better and to act in the light of their understanding so as to develop talents and skills – intellectual, aesthetic, physical or practical. Adult education can be classified as follows: adult literacy education, liberal education, extra – moral education, mass education, workers’ education, life-long education, out of school education and informal education. Adult education is voluntary in nature, the participant embarks on studying because he want to study not because he must study. The adult learns because he did not want the social, political, economic, moral and intellectual decadence to overwhelm him if he refuses to learn new things or improve his knowledge. Daji, Turaki and Babandina (2012) posited that the society is never static, the society continues in complex dynamic growth and changes in society pose numerous problems as growth in population, new technological inventions, shortage of living accommodations and urban development.... Hence adult education could be seen as making continuous provisions for all the people within a society so as to make them up to date in their knowledge and skills, refine their thoughts and make them understand issues and fully be in control of their destinies.

Development in Africa

Banjo (1980) defined development as progress, improvement or advancement. On the other hand development is seen as a process of helping someone to make progress or succeed. Progress here means making advancement in all ramifications. Therefore development in Africa will mean a process of helping to make progress positively. Development in Africa is about promoting better living by improving social conditions of life in the field of education, health, unemployment opportunities to all, political participation e.t.c

According to Kaniaru (1998) Africa is very large continent located in the tropics and has an area of 27, 961, 000 sq km. The continent has a diversity of climatic conditions and marked features and a range of natural resources. However, in spite of the fact that most countries in Africa gained political independence more than fifty years ago, most of them, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, are facing serious economic, social, political and environmental crises. According to Boon (1996) some of the critical problems that contribute to hinder economic development in Africa are; Ineffective policies for addressing the African economic crisis; Obsolete laws and in capacity in enforcing them; Inappropriate land system; Lack of broad –based

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development; Declining agricultural production; Inappropriate production techniques in agriculture, livestock minimizing and industry; Impacts of demographic changes and population pressure; Resources outflow from Africa; High dependency on primary commodities; Declining commodity prices and unfair international trade practices; The huge external debt burden; High costs of dealing with trans – national corporation; Inadequate education and lack of information flow. The above mentioned crisis is staring Africa on the face because from the on-set African leaders have not been able to develop the human capital resources and to expose these human capital resources to a wide range of activities and opportunities that are available in his environment. Its' the lack of vision that leads many African leaders to kill good idea, that would have bettered the lots of Africans. Koranteng – Pipim (2013) posited that without vision, sight is blind. Leaders need foresight and insight. Foresight provide the scope of vision. Insight discerns the perspective.

At the time of independence, African leaders did not succeed in changing the status quo left by colonial administrations. Colonial institutions found their aspiration in the independence constitutions as well as other legal and institutional arrangements in most African countries. Environmental considerations were divorced from economic development imitative and this resulted in grave environmental problems: endemic disease and epidemics, deforestation and desertification, severe and long period of drought shortage of water and fuel in particular fuel wood pest infestation and invasion floods and general environmental degradation. (Kaniaru 1998). Internal political instability and trans-border conflicts, with their consequent destabilizing effect such as mass population movements and increasing number of refugees, have further exacerbated the existing difficulties faced by Africa. So far, Africa is still grappling with her development plans because our leaders lack vision and character.

Character and Skills Development

Characters are all the qualities and features that make a person or group of people stand out positively in the society. While skills are the abilities of a person or group of persons to do something well. Skill is the ability to do, it is having the tactics through training, experience and knowledge to be able to do. An individual with a developed skill find it easy to solve problems, lead a group through team work exercise, give critical feedback, motivate fellow employees and set examples for the rest of the workforce.

In the development of character and skill in Africa. Persons with good moral up –bring can effectively develop skills he or she can use for gainful employment. If Africa must grow, countries in Africa must invest heavily on character and skills development. This is what can open the gates to a viable economy and sustained development. Character and skills development are frameworks through which Africans can develop their personal skills, knowledge and abilities. It can be formally

and informally done. Skills development in particular involves training the discovered potentials of an individual for personal and professional growth so as to increase knowledge, capability and positive work attitude. According to Sani (2012) acquisition of skills makes an individual self – reliant, it also equips the recipient with both the general education and techniques of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sections of the economic and social life.

On the aspect of character development African leaders should beginning to look at the younger generations how they can develop in them the standard of judgment for recognizing, respecting and demanding quality while rejecting that which is bad and shoddy, students should be taught values which should include fairness, honesty, justice and respect for others. In the words of Undiyaundeye (2007) good and bad is considered to be observable in ones conduct or character through action or activation of knowledge or values in the model of human behavior.

The Role of Theatre Arts and Adult Education in Character and Skills Development in Africa

People make impact in the environment through how they live. Living a sustainable way means leaving more of things we all need to share like water, energy, clean air, food, shelter and forest for the future generations. The above can be achieved if almost everyone in Africa is self – reliant rather than looking for elusive white collar jobs. The economic downturn in Africa today has brought with it a high unemployment rate. A developed theatre arts and adult education programme is the sure way out for self- reliance which can give birth to and on the long run sustain African's economic growth and development. Africans leaders should draw up a plan of action that will make them make some sacrifice today in order to secure a better future for the continent. Theater arts and adult education are two serious disciplines that can bring people together to thoroughly discuss and define their wants and plans and act together with the aim of improving the quality of their lives. Under adult education all kinds of activities are organized for persons who no longer attends school, as well for those who have never been to school. Those working and those looking for jobs, adult education is open to all, because it has further integrated life long education which take place throughout the life span of a man so as to up-date his skills and knowledge to cope with advances in technology, communication and other fast changing socio-political and economic activities.

Education is very necessary for man in order to articulate himself and achieve fullness and survival. The concept of education therefore, suggests development of valuable knowledge and skills in a society. These numerous adults in Africa have to be trained to help them occupy certain fields of development for their survival. Theatre arts is an all encompassing discipline that teaches practicals arts and participants learn to design costumes, constructs sets, playwriting and management. This is the only

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discipline that helps to develop man cognitively psychomotor – wise and affectively. Theatre provides a remarkable service by way of providing the much needed impetus through dramatic performance to lives up the atmosphere for useful food for thought that brings about change. According to Ebohon (2012) one of the major value of the theatre is to make its practitioners economically viable and independent. Theatre has serve as a great employer of labour, thereby engaging the youths which will make them self – reliance. In the area of job creation the interdependent workings of the various arts comprising the theatre will go a long way to occupy the jobless youths roaming the streets of the continent of Africa. In the words of Tanner (1995) participation in theatre activities will stimulate your creative abilities, allowing you to develop inner resources that lead to an enrich life, which is so necessary in our world of cold science and hard facts. Tanner’s argument is that the involvement of practicals, demands responsible commitment as one works towards a creative goal in the process one develops qualities that promote maturity, teamwork, cooperation and dependability is one reason of judgment which aids the appreciation of past and present times.

A quick look at what theatre artist can become on their own in the society as a discipline that propagates self – reliance are so numerous. The various elements which go into theatre production are usually provided by separate personnel. Apart from the actors, there are: set designer, lighting designer, costume designer, make- up artist etc. a trained lighting man can become an electrician working in the areas of repairing electrical gadgets and wiring of houses, as well as training others in these days of entrepreneurship education. A costume designer became a fashion creator or a garment maker considering the fact today that African designs are selling all over the world. Make- up artists can become a beautician, using the knowledge of theatre practice to give beauty treatment to the face and body of their clients. A set and stage designer can metamorphose into becoming furniture makers and an interior decoration experts. An actor can become a motivational speaker as well as speech expert. An actor can become. A script writer can become a creative writer and live on his/her published works in an ideal situation. The sound designer can also become a discographer. The list goes on and on. Today, modern or contemporary periods have indeed made issues very simple as a fact continuous search for new technology brings new innovations, readily prepared practitioners for the task ahead of African to create employment for themselves and be self – productive. This is where adult education comes in, to create awareness for those in the rural areas that they can still be useful to themselves. Adult education as the name implies is an education for grown-up men and women who are above eighteen years and it includes all activities with an educational purpose, carried on by people, in the ordinary business of life that use only part of their energy to acquire intellectual equipment. This type of education is aimed at giving new orientation to the outlook of adults to suit the dynamic world. It helps in developing their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional

qualifications or turn them to a new direction and bring about change in their attitudes or behaviour.

Conclusion

For Africa to become developed, it is very clear that an effective adult education and theatre arts programmes as a way of educating and preparing the populace will be a gateway to capacity building that will lead to economic growth and development. There's nothing wrong with the African mind. The problem is the mindset. It is not a lack of resources, but a deficit of resourcefulness. The continent is not merely in need of more educated minds, but also for more transformed minds. The truth is that the problem is with the African heart. The African heart needs transformation. That is the only way Africa can become developed and the development sustained. African leader should be ready to develop the continent from a mind renewal point. As an independent entity leaders of Africa should be able to act and produce independent thought. Africa problem had been that of over dependency on their colonial master even when they claim to have power of sovereignty.

Recommendations

In the light of employing theatre arts and adult education for character and skills development in Africa, the following recommendations are proffered.

- Africa leader must look for a way out to tackling illiteracy, because it is imperative factor for other challenges in Africa, including poverty, disease, environmental degradation etc.
- Massive adult literacy programmes must be invested heavily on; Africa is suffering today because the leaders lacked foresight decades back to embark on adult education programmes. There should be a robust education re-entry system. The school system should develop mechanisms to encourage drop-outs to return to the classroom.
- Theatre should be encouraged in all the local communities in Africa. The fact is that one of the major values of the theatre is to make its practitioners economically viable and independent. It is more or less like a catalyst that sets other activities in motion.
- African leaders should learn to lead by examples and put in more action and less of talking.

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