

FACTORS AFFECTING THE AVAILABILITY OF PERSONNEL IN THEATRE - ARTS

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Abstract

Regardless of the mode of production prevailing in any country, success or failure of efforts to provide the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing for the population largely depends on how well the working population has been trained in relevant skills and employed in ways that are both socially and personally rewarding. Theatre Arts as an entertainment industry is faced with lack of trained manpower as a result of lack of interest, personnel, lack of fund, facilities, apathy, etc. This paper looks at the factors inhibiting manpower availability in Theatre Arts, and offers solutions.

Introduction

Nigeria realizing the importance of manpower and its role in modern society, has emphasized its development. To achieve this quest, Nigeria has decided to establish schools - from primary to universities, to boost manpower development. Her programmes and policies are well formulated, but the implementation has been faulty, thereby giving the authorities a lot of concern. This faulty nature of implementation has resulted in poor manpower turn-out and unemployment. The situation is more serious in the sciences and technological aspects of manpower development.

Manpower or labour force is that part of a nation's population that works for pay or is actively seeking work. It produces most of the nation's goods and services, and its size and productivity help to determine that nation's economic growth (The World Book Encyclopedia. Vol. 12:2)

According to Okorafor and Nwankwo (1986:116), manpower development may be defined as the complexity of processes which aim at transforming human beings so that they can contribute more effectively to economic and social progress. This is a process of enhancing labour productivity. From the following, two complementary aspects of manpower development can be identified. One is concerned with the acquisition of skills and knowledge, while the second relates to the motivation of people to apply the acquired knowledge and skills more effectively.

This second ingredient of manpower development refers to the environment of manpower development. This refers to the political, social and economic arrangements in society, which affect not only the capacity to contribute maximally to social and economic progress.

Manpower skills are like building blocks. They lend structural support to the growth and efficiency of industry. The growth and organisational efficiency of UAC has developed from this conviction. It is reflected in the over W5 million invested in manpower development over the past five years - an investment that becomes increasingly meaningful as new and advanced technologies challenge the business horizon. Planning and vocational education touch every phase of UAC's operation ranging from marketing management through the whole gamut of business and industrial activity to on the job training within its division... UAC's substantial investment in developing the skills of its people is a continuous process in its search for improved organisational efficiency. This is based on the belief that human skills must always be the key to viability and survival inside the country which the organisation is and serves (Econotrack, 1984:9). From the above, it can then be seen that manpower development is not restricted to any particular sphere of human endeavour but all spheres.

According to Okore (1986:127), manpower development is the key to providing the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing for the population as the working population has been trained in relevant skills and employed in ways that are both socially and personally rewarding.

Manpower development brings about specialization which on its own produces efficiency and high productivity in goods and services in all spheres of human life. That is why we now have highly skilled Doctors, Pharmacists, Teachers, Engineers, Builders, Agriculturists, Actors/Actresses etc. Without manpower development, there will not be these specialists looking after our food production, shelter, health, clothing etc.

In this wise, Ocheakiti (2002) opines that the only element to growth and development in any society is through its manpower development, which makes it easier for people to live independently.

To him people are more content when they are employed where they are most suitable and comfortable.

According to Okunrotifa (1978) in Agaba (1996), national endowment of material resources

by itself no longer determines a country's economic development. But the availability of national resources must be supported with appropriate manpower capability in order to achieve the accelerated economic development of a nation.

This is to say that it is not the availability of material resources that makes a nation en-individual great or rich or wealthy, but the skills of its citizens that tap these resources.

The Role of Theatre in Society

Theatre is in the entertainment sector of a nation's life, and therefore is a socially based industry. The theatre is a means of performing and presenting plays/drama and other social activities to the people for the purpose of bringing changes in their lives (Elaigwu, 2001). To him these changes could be the purging of emotions from doing what the performer suffers to comic relief. It is an industry that tries to project life, as it should be, not as it is and proffers solutions to society's problems.

According to Akor (2001), the Yoruba theatre in the 60s and later were meant to preserve their culture, history and maintain discipline in the areas of jurisdiction. This is why most of their plays/drama are based on their deity, history and culture.

The theatre when managed well brings religious, moral and national development. There have been religious disturbances in the country, and the present moral decay, which has not helped the nation to move forward, but through theatre all these could be overcome for fast growth and development in the nation (Isa, 2001).

To Okoliko (2002) the theatre could be used as an avenue for enhancing rural development for rapid development of the countryside and preventing rural-urban drift and reduce crime rates in the cities. These and more could be achieved through the use of the tenets of theatre.

Theatre is also used to create awareness and conscientize the people and spur them to action. These according to him were used in Kenya and most of the East African countries to project the wrongs of colonialism and subsequent independence.

According to Okoliko (2003) theatre used as a tool for self-reliance. These are in areas of Education, Politics, Health, Economy, Housing, Food production etc, where the nation and individual will benefit to reduce the rate of dependency and its disadvantages.

To Nave (2001), theatre is a means through which to uphold the tenets of our developing democracy, as the country is afflicted with a plethora of social ills such as bribery, corruption, nepotism, drug trafficking and money laundering. The Nigerian youth too, revel in such corrupt practices like examination malpractices, cultism, religious and students' riots etc. All these can be corrected through the proper use of the theatre, which tries to project the normal life of the people.

Akor (2001) in Okoliko (2002), says the theatre is an avenue for conscientization and mobilizing people and it is through mobilizing people that communities energies are identified harnessed and effectively utilized for stability, rural development and nation building.

Kafewo (2002:123) sees theatre as the interpreter of a people's myth and history to make comments on contemporary political issues in the society, and there for an indispensable aspect of a nation's life. He therefore, sees history as a weapon in the hands of the historian of what he saw, heard and or did.

The theatre can only serve the society in the above capacities and more, if its manpower needs are met to spur it to action, without which it will be dormant.

Problems of Manpower Development in Theatre

Ocheakiti (2002) states that the greatest problem that confronts any organization is that of inadequate, or no funding at all, by those responsible for it. Government which is the greatest funder of any organisation is saddled with more responsibilities than it can handle with her revenue falling in foreign exchange has had a negative influence on the theatre. To him individuals and multinational who should help out are more interested on quick turnover over their capital than long-term deposit and therefore don't invest in the theatre as an industry.

Again, people have a poor attitude and interest towards theatre as an art. They see any one aspiring to practice in the theatre as a dancer or drummer, who has not future. This has discouraged many would be theatre sponsors and practitioners alike. Most people who went to study theatre - arts, were looked down upon as drop outs, as those that started theatre in Nigeria had nothing financially throughout their lives.

Theatre, to make it functional needs a number of facilities like arenas, roads, offices,

electricity etc. In Nigeria for instance, these facilities are lacking and most places are in poor state. These have discouraged people from taking up employment in the sector, thereby creating manpower problems. Ocheakiti (2002) says that where some of these facilities are provided, there is lack of maintenance and with time decay. The national theatre at Igamu-Lagos for lack of proper care is about to be privatized by the Federal Government and this doesn't speak well of the theatre industry.

There is lack of commitment on the part of practitioners themselves in the theatre industry, as they believe finding themselves in the industry as a last resort after trying other sectors without success. Okoliko (2002) believes this lack of interest is as a result of poor orientation about theatre and public apathy towards the sector and those involved in it.

Another inhibiting factor to theatre practice is lack of textbooks and other instructional materials to consult. The sector lacks these things because it is the least written about and researches carried out are more in other humanities than the theatre. Books are few and the subject poorly taught by the few teachers available. In the process of producing teachers and practitioners in the sector, half-baked ones that know next to nothing have been trained and these poor training have brought down the morale and interest of the practitioners (Akor, 2001). In other cases, there are many would be interested persons that have never in their lives heard of theatre as an art.

Corruption has eaten so deep into the fabric of the nation, that any money meant for anything is either not used for it or the project is shoddily done. This has militated against manpower development and utilization in the theatre. Nave (2001) sees official corruption as being responsible for the decay in infrastructure in the country, and says that the only way to eradicate it is through moral rejuvenation.

Suggestions/Recommendations

For effective theatre practice in Nigeria the inhibiting factors responsible slowing down it should be removed.

To Okoliko (2003) the government, non - governmental and individuals should provide enough fund for the upliftment of the sector. This money should be used in training, building theatre arenas and providing other facilities. Again, if corruption is eradicated or reduced money meant for theatre will not be diverted for other purpose or to private pockets, but used for what it is meant for.

1. People should change their attitudes to theatre and those wishing to go into its practice encouraged.
2. Instructional materials especially books should be provided by either importing or through aid by countries that have. This will go a long way in reducing shortages of textbooks.
3. Aid and grants should be given to those people who are interested in pursuing careers in the theatre. This will increase the personnel needed this sector.

If these and many more are done, it will go a long way in reducing lack of manpower in theatre and the arts.

Conclusion

The paper has carefully looked at manpower as the main stream of any nation's development, not the availability of material resources, rather the skills involved in extraction, the lack of manpower in theatre practice as - lack of funding, corruption, apathy, lack of interest, instructional materials etc. and other solutions.

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