

Strengthening the Teaching of Theatre Arts Programme in Nigerian Colleges of Education: A Review of Theatre-In-Education (TiE)

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Abstract

Education system in Nigeria has witnessed a lot of changes and innovation toward improving quality teaching and learning processes. The Nigeria Certificate in Education Minimum Standards 2020 Edition, designed by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is the revised edition of the curriculum. The curriculum served as the most recent course outline for theatre arts programme in Nigeria Colleges of Education. In recent times Nigeria gives much preference to youths training in employable skills. Therefore, Theatre Arts programme in Nigeria encompasses some courses that make it more entrepreneurial in practice among which is TiE. As a result, this paper made an attempt to strengthen the placement of TiE in the curriculum within the confines of the course title: THA 212 Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education. Also, the paper pays attention to TiE and it's relevant in the area of entrepreneurial skills suitability and beyond. These were elements critical that should be strengthened.

Keywords: Theatre Arts, Children's Theatre, Drama in Education, Theatre-in-Education, Placement.

Introduction

Theatre Arts curriculum in recent times, undergoes structural changes which strengthen its philosophy and introduced theatre arts double major programme with distribution of courses and credits unit. While, among other things the philosophy upholds that theatre is life recurrent happenings that seeks meaning of existence with the same passion and skills from the trails of great philosophers. This provides man with all learning capacity to explore, wonder and reflect. Also, theatre served as a meeting point of all the arts such as music, dance, drama, painting, sculpture and there is need to learn and teach it. As a result, the teaching and learning of theatre arts in Colleges of Education is targeted toward providing among others entrepreneurial skills for self-sufficiency and inculcate into students the spirit of national development.

Theatre Arts is an independent programme under the revised 2020 edition of Minimum Standards for Arts and Social Science Education. The National Certificate in Education Curriculum which is popularly known as the Minimum Standards for Colleges of Education (MSCE) is a product of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) in Nigeria. The Commission was established by Decree No. 3 of 1989, amended by Act No. 12 of 1993 to regulate the production of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) teachers for Basic Education. Its mandate includes, inter alia, laying down of Minimum Standards for all

programmes of teacher knowledge, practice, engagement and pedagogical skills that are child centred.

In order to realise the mandate of the commission, Argungu (2000) opined that curriculum contents should be flexible and balance to meet the dynamic nature of the society. This means that theatre arts curriculum must be relevant and balance in terms of course prioritisation placement. It is against the above background that this paper made an attempt to strengthen the placement of Theatre-in-Education (TiE) in the curriculum within the confines of the course title: THA 212 Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education.

Theatre Arts Programme in Nigeria Colleges of Education

Theatre Arts programme in Nigeria Colleges of Education is designed to introduce students to the nature, concepts and approaches to the study of theatre arts. Theatre Arts study has different areas of specialization that makes it a lucrative discipline ranging from education, information, entertainment and providing employable skills.

The objectives of the theatre arts programme according to the Nigeria Certificate in Education Minimum Standards for Arts and Social Sciences 2020 edition are designed to

- a. Inculcate artistic and academic excellence in the students;
- b. Teach and help the students to create plays and other theatrical genre through collective and individual creations.
- c. Inculcate in our students the spirit of utilizing theatre for rural development;
- d. Prepare qualified personnel to teach creative arts in our primary and junior secondary schools under the UBE 1-9 system of Education.
- e. Develop an outreach programme into our communities and schools. This is done through the organization of Community Theatre Projects and Performing Arts Festivals for primary and post-primary institutions; and
- f. Train students to develop an appreciation and understanding of theatrical developments in Nigeria and elsewhere towards enhancing national unity, and using theatre for national development.

The course outline for theatre arts education programme for single and double major includes a wide range of issues and topics of concerns to individual skills development that cover courses such as:

- Selected Topics in Theatre History
- Acting and Speech Training
- Principles of Directing
- Introduction to Drama and Theatre
- Introduction to Theatre Management and Administration
- Theatre Methodology I & II
- Fundamentals of Music and Dance
- Introduction to Technical Theatre
- Theatre Workshop I, II & III (Separately)
- Introduction to Mass Communication

- Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education
- Introduction to Playwriting
- Community Theatre
- Studies in Dramatic Literature
- Nigerian Drama in English
- Theatre Research Methods
- Introduction to Electronic Media
- Directing Theories and Practice
- Studies in Film Making
- Entrepreneurship in Theatre

In addition, Theatre arts students (THA students) are to take additional General Studies in Education Courses (GSE). Alongside these courses, every student is required to do teaching practice (TP) and write a project in Theatre Arts or Education as part of the graduation requirements. Theatre Arts as a single major course could be combined with any one of the following subjects: English, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Music, French, Cultural and Creative Arts, Social Studies, Islamic Religion Studies, Christian Religion Studies, and Special Education. Theatre Arts as a double major programme cannot be combined with any other teaching subject.

Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education

On a clear term, THA 212 and Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education refer to a course code and title. It's a theatre arts programme course of study designed in the minimum standards for the Nigeria Federal Colleges of Education students. The theatre art Course Outline for single and double major programme is designed to teach students the THA 212 course in company with other courses. It is NCE II First Semester Course for both single and double major programmes. The slight difference is, for single major programme the Course is compulsory 1 Credits Unit and 3 Credits Unit for double major programme. The course is designed for all students pursuing NCE Theatre Arts programme in any Federal College of Education across Nigeria. It is necessary to know and understand that the Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education can be further explained in their isolated forms such as:

Children's Theatre: This form of theatre is not always based on a specific curriculum particular topic and it is commonly tag as theatre by the children. It often bring children's story to life rather than having an educational focus and is aimed at children less than 12 years old.

Drama in Education: DiE as popularly known is the term applied to the practice and use of drama in the classroom. It has educational goals and serves as a method for teaching. The method of drama in education among elementary school courses can be said to be a method which has applicable properties for all kind of course from mathematics education to social education, from language education to multicultural education.

On the other hand, Theatre-in-Education (TiE) is the name given to a particular kind of theatre, practiced by professional drama companies, or TiE teams, which work specifically

in educational projects to be devised at schools. This form of theatre is commonly tag theatre for and with children.

The above is an attempt to clarify the three separate theatre forms and to be precise is to throw light on the two different theatre forms bound into one to designate the course title: THA 212 Children's Theatre/ Drama in education. It is pertinent to emphasize here that Children's Theatre and Drama in Education are two separate forms of theatre with different concepts as described above. The course THA 212: Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education contain the following topics.

- What is Drama in Education?
- What is Children's Theatre?
- Children's Play
- Learning through Play
- Creativity and imagination through observation and participation
- Sources of ideas for creating a children's play
- Audience, setting, characterization, the idea of prologue, epilogue and stage directions
- Mask and make-up
- Developmental stages of a child
- The role of drama and theatre in the development of a child
- Practical exercises
- Theatre-in-Education (TiE) Drama in Education (DiE)
- Puppetry, masquerade and dance

The above provision is made to enable the students to distinguish the roles, functions and modus operandi among the following theatre forms: Drama in Education, Children's Theatre, Theatre-in-Education (TiE) and Drama in Education (DiE). The provision will enlighten students on Children's play, learning through play and audience, setting, characterization, the idea of prologue, epilogue, stage directions including the role of drama and theatre in the development of a child. Also, they will be taught on sources of ideas for creating children's play, Masks and make-up, Development stages of child, practical exercises, puppetry, masquerade and dance.

The National Commission for Colleges of Education like other tertiary institutions regulatory bodies in Nigeria had developed theatre arts programme curriculum to some extent. Though, there is still need to address the lacuna that is associated with improper placement of TiE within the confines of the course title: THA 212 Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education, these were elements critical that should be strengthened for effective teaching of theatre arts.

Theatre-in-Education Placement

The focus here is to note that the two theatre forms Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education including Theatre-in-Education (TiE) are full fledging theatre practices that enjoy separate scope and experiences each. However, the designation here suggests that TiE is taught

alongside other topics from the main course title. This implies that TiE, operates within the confines of THA 212 Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education as a mere topic. At this point, attempt is being made to describe the placement of TiE within the confines of THA 212 Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education from the minimum standards.

With regard to the placement of TiE, one major concern here is that perhaps whichever perspectives we may view the course title; it is obvious to say that there is emphasis on the prioritisation of Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education to a large extent than the rest of the other topics especially TiE. This reality will no doubt lead to negligence of the potentials of TiE entrepreneurial skills aspect by leaving TiE in a state of contemplation as to whether to be teach or not.

It is against this misplacement that this paper deems fit to consolidate in terms of relevance and prioritization in course/topics placement to ensure balance. This will further strengthen improper placement of TiE in THA curriculum. However, the perception that it is appropriate for TiE to be teach in company with other topics as component in THA 212 is misplaced priority. This has a serious implication for the teaching and learning of theatre arts in Colleges of Education which is design to target toward providing among others entrepreneurial skills for self-sufficiency and inculcate into students the spirit of national development.

Therefore, since emphasis is on skills acquisition for self-sufficiency and national development, THA education curriculum content in Nigeria must be flexible enough to ensure balance in course/ topic relevance and prioritization. Operating on this perception of the curriculum, employable skills among THA students can be valued and encouraged. Also, enable learners to explore TiE which is similarly a form of theatre that is mostly a full blown Educational Project with high dose of entrepreneurial skills for self-sufficiency and national development. Theatre-in-Education utilizes various theatre forms which are predominantly employable skills oriented such as puppetries, music, dance, role-play, storytelling and drama, among others to improve learning activities and promote self-sufficiency among students for national development.

To a large extent the chances of individual to gain highly employable skills to become self employed largely flourished in TiE. Therefore, the THA curriculum should emphasize more on topics with characteristics of entrepreneurial skills for self-sufficiency. This, in essence, means that TiE should be made a full fledge course in company with other topics such as Drama, Dance, Music, Circus, Comedy, Storytelling, Role play, Puppetry etc. It is only by so doing that functional entrepreneurial skills are met and classrooms are regarded as theatre and skills acquisition centre for retrying out ideas and skills until desired results are made possible.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that TiE is a misplaced priority in the Nigeria Certificate in Education Minimum Standards 2020 Edition in terms of course prioritization placement. Also, Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education has been over-emphasized at the expense of other

topics mainly TiE. This has shortcomings and limitation in the sense that there is lacuna for the attainment of the programme objectives. This has implication for the teaching and learning of theatre arts in Colleges of Education which is design to target toward providing among others entrepreneurial skills for self-sufficiency and inculcate into students the spirit of national development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with a view to strengthen the misplacement of TiE in the Nigeria Certificate in Education Minimum Standards 2020 Edition.

1. Since (TiE) is full fledge theatre practice that enjoys separate scope and experience with high dose of entrepreneurial skills for self-sufficiency and national development. Therefore, for the attainment of the THA programme objectives. TiE should be made a full fledge course separate from THA 212 Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education.
2. The course THA 212 Children's Theatre/ Drama in Education is overloaded with too many topics and less credit unit especially for single major programme. TiE cannot be effectively taught without adequate time.
3. Schools should be saddled with the responsibility for ensuring that teachers adhere to explore the potentials of TiE to avoid negligence in teaching entrepreneurial skills for self-sufficiency and inculcate into students the spirit of national development.

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