



# Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 09, Issue 01, 2020: 06-15

Article Received: 25-12-2019

Accepted: 12-01-2020

Available Online: 21-01-2020

ISSN: 2167-9045 (Print), 2167-9053 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18533/journal.v9i1.1822>

## Applied Drama: Reflection on the Practice and the Question

**Bashiru Akande Lasisi (phd)<sup>1</sup>**

### ABSTRACT

The drama has been variously utilised for entertainment, education, social engineering and therapy among others. The drive towards multidisciplinary has also endeared drama to scholars and practitioners in education and social sciences who practice Applied drama. Most studies conducted on applied drama examines its usefulness in solving social and developmental issues with limited attention paid to interrogating the concept itself. It is the objective of this paper, therefore, to interrogate the concept of Applied drama in order to determine its departure or otherwise from previous pragmatic usage of drama for social engineering.

The taxonomy of previous attempts at using drama for non-aesthetic purposes was conducted and compared with applied drama. Practical application to utilise drama for social and development purposes by a Nigerian Non-Governmental Organisation, Creative Actors Initiative for Development (CRAID) was also examined to determine whether they fall within the purview of Applied Drama. Data were subjected to critical analysis.

Infotainment, Edutainment, Enter-Educate, Theatre for Development, Political Theatre, Agitation Propaganda and Psychodrama are various ways through which drama has been deployed to interface with society. Applied drama is not radically different from these previous concepts in its purpose and operation.

Applied drama is a mutation of previous pragmatic usage of drama for social engineering.

The use of drama for the non-aesthetic purpose will outlive the concept of Applied Drama as it did the previous concepts.

**Keywords:** Applied Drama, Drama for social and development issues, Drama and development in Nigeria. Creative Actors Initiative for Development (CRAID)

This is an open access article under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

### 1. Introduction

Applied drama and applied theatre are the concepts used in describing the use of drama and theatre to perform social function in a non-traditional way and outside the theatre's comfort zone. It is a tool in the hands of professional drama and theatre practitioners and non-professional particularly

<sup>1</sup>Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Phone: +234-8033884648

those in the education and social science disciplines to interrogate, analyse and empower people in different parts of the world. It is different things to different people as it is used interchangeably with community theatre in some quarters (Prendergast & Saxton, 2013), an interactive theatre or drama and theatre in education. Balfour, 2009:348 sums up this varied usage and description by referring to it as an umbrella title with many contradictions and many commonalities about the use of drama for things other than entertainment and in a non-traditional manner. The priority agenda of applied drama is to engender development and making learning and exchange of information and ideas whether in a formal or an informal educational setting easy and fun-filled and to Kovacs, 2014 more effective. Coaker, 2017 mentioned Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed that emanated from Brazil, Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre from Germany, J.L. Moreno's Psychodrama and Sociometry from America as well as Jerry Grotowski's poor theatre which originated from Italy as predecessors of applied drama and theatre. A quick look at this list shows that it is a combination of both theatre and non-theatre practitioners.

Proponents, practitioners and sympathisers of applied drama that spread across the world have demystified the technicality of drama in order to make it possible for the non-initiates to utilise it as a veritable tool to engender change and development. It is also an attempt aimed at "building stages everywhere" (Holzman, 2017) and ensure that people in different communities have access to appropriate information through dramatic enactment. It is the drama which reflects the reality of their situations and constructively engage them throughout the process of making development happen. The popularity of applied drama has also made it attract criticism from different quarters. Many believed that it is a step in the right direction for drama and theatre practitioners who are interested in interfacing with societies to use drama but frown at the incursion of non-professionals in this direction. Such critics are interested in finding out how creative is applied drama in the hands of non-professional dramatist. This question is apposite because "creative thoughts and intellectual ideas rule the world because they are the developmental cogs in the wheel of human progress". (Umukoro, 2012). However, others believed that it is not only training that is required to make applied drama to be a creative venture in the hands of non-professionals as other things can also contribute to its effectiveness. People with intuitive vision, strong organisational and analytical skills can achieve a lot with applied drama towards facilitating even growth and development for the people. Another argument is on the need to separate drama from what is dramatic. While all drama can be dramatic, not all dramatic events and happenings are drama. Thus, an appropriate definition of drama will illuminate this tiny borderline.

Our aim here is to contribute to the evolving discourse surrounding applied drama. However, we are not interested in joining the debate of whether it is an effective tool in the hands of non-professionals but look at more fundamental question of what differentiate applied drama from previous concepts that try to ensure social relevance of drama. In conducting this comparison, we will examine the *raison-detre* and ultimate objectives of applied drama and its predecessors. We will equally look at the operational similarities and differences. We will conclude by analysing practical examples of the use of drama for social and development issues by a Nigerian based non-governmental organisation named Creative Actors Initiative for Development (CRAID) to sum up our comparative analysis.

## **2. Applied drama**

We are now in a borderless world where it is difficult to demarcate as the gulf between geographical spaces easily gets bridged with free flow of communication from one parts of the world to another. The cultural identity is increasingly becoming difficult to define due to cultural interaction and assimilation while disciplines are also fast becoming difficult to delineate due to constant review of the principles behind them and how these principles are fast changing in the face of emerging reality and new thinking. We are in a world where things are no longer what they used to be and what is now will definitely be different from what will be in the nearest future. Questions are constantly being asked on existing body of knowledge. Doubts are now being cast on what was hitherto regarded as facts and scholars now have their hands full with finding answers to hitherto unanswered questions. As chameleon changes its colours, disciplines have been changing their various apparels and taken on new ones either borrowed or stolen from other disciplines. Disciplines now take up new features not hitherto peculiar to them.

We are now in the world of interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary with give and take as the thrust of various discipline related engagements. Drama or play performance is not left out of this metamorphosis as it keeps changing over the ages from its ritual/religion origin through entertainment, education, social enquiry to social engineering political change and development-focused. We are now in a world of endless problems and possibilities which demands multi-sectoral approach. Drama or play performance has consistently enjoyed this romance either as a victim or the aggressor. This is because of its strategic importance, utility and effectiveness in contributing significantly to various human endeavours. Lois Holzman, 2017:50 while analysing Vygotsky's three types of plays which include the free play, the gameplay, and theatrical play or performance noted that all the three types are significant for lifelong developmental learning. Applied drama on the other hand tends to combine these three types like a one-stop shop for drama aimed at fostering development.

In the same vein, applied drama or applied theatre as it is being referred to in some quarters is a theatre without border. Any time a theatrical presentation is done outside the theatre's 'natural habitat'; in places traditionally designated for performances, it is considered as an applied drama or theatre. Whenever the focus of a dramatic or theatrical enactment shifts to social concern in places where drama rarely take place before, then applied drama is born. This means that two things are germane to the practice of applied drama: the place of performance and social commitment of such presentation. It is equally important to note that "applied drama is multi-disciplinary and involves links with other research disciplines and agencies in the humanities, social sciences, and wellness and health. The focus is on the usage of theatre to educate and to grapple with complex social issues" Steinhardt (2015). It is used in the field of ecological understanding Wright (2011), teacher training Jack Shu (2011), social and political change (Prentik and Pammenter (2014) and environmental impact assessment (Freeman and Frija (2014). It is also used for social rehabilitation in refugee camps (Skeiker, 2011) among others.

Applied drama is drama conducted in community, facility or school setting among others; far away from the traditional performance space for drama and theatre. What Nicholson (2005) referred to as "conventional mainstream theatre institution". It became very popular in the 1990s and it attempts to swallow both its predecessors and contemporaries like the Guerrilla theatre, Wallace Bacon's initiated and Turner-Schechner popularised Performance Studies, Schechner's Environmental theatre, August Boal's Theatre for Development (TfD), Moreno's drama therapy and John Hopkins University Centre for Communication Program (JHUCCP) Enter-Educate concept. Since its introduction in the 1990s, the term has been used to describe drama and theatre endeavour like theatre in education, theatre in health education, community theatre, theatre in prisons, heritage theatre, verbatim theatre and reminiscence theatre. It is a hybrid and interdisciplinary drama that facilitates effective working relationship between theatre practitioners and professionals from other disciplines particularly in health and social sciences. One would not be wrong to state that applied drama is a new concept which like many other concepts; sometimes find relevance from old and already existing concepts and practices. It is like given a dog a new name to enhance its market value. The necessity for this kind of drama/theatre has been articulated by different scholars. According to Ackroyd (2007); applied theatre is more favourable to the job market sentiment and economic growth for theatre graduates to become functional even outside the 'theatre' sphere. Nicholson (2005) sees applied theatre as theatre being motivated by the need to impact positively on the lives of the people and facilitate positive change in their lives. From many of the examples provided above, it is a truism that many people who do similar things still call them by different names. That explains the cacophony of names being projected by practitioners using drama for extension services. The question that readily comes to mind is "How do we interpret and understand the social action of other people? Do we take account in behavioural terms- of what they do, or of what the actors themselves say they are doing, or what we (the researchers) say they are doing?" (Bulmer, 1983:3 cited by Osaghae, in Olajide et. Al, 2013). We think that every practitioner has the poetic license to describe his or her work the way he or she likes. This may however pose some challenges to those practitioners who are limited in scope with regards the extensive use of drama in a multi-disciplinary setting. It also raises a question whether we can ever have a clearinghouse for myriads of contradictions and commonalities which Balfour says applied drama possess. It is in the light of the above that we want to reflect on the activities of Creative Actors

Initiative Development (CRAID) a non-governmental based organisation based in Nigerian that utilises drama to engender development.

### **3. CRAID intervention in social and development programmes**

I have been involved in the use of drama and theatre for addressing social and developmental issues since 2003 with some of my colleagues. Our interventions were in different forms and shades. Whether what we have been doing with drama and theatre since then is applied drama or not will be determined at the end of this chapter. My approach to this work is to first highlight applied drama from the perspectives of both the proponents and the practitioners, then chronicle some of what we have done in the area of using drama and theatre to address social and developmental issues and finally try and answer the question of whether what we have been doing all along is applied drama or something else. I believe that this should not only be an opportunity to chronicle what we have done in a non-traditional and non-conventional setting alone, but also to ask certain fundamental questions germane to the development and acceptability of applied drama and theatre in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world.

Sometimes in 2003, a group of Theatre Arts graduates converge in Ibadan and decided to contribute their own quota to solving social and developmental challenges facing the people in their immediate environment using drama. The group was subsequently named and known as Creative Actors Initiative for Development (CRAID). It was in the early days of HIV/AIDS when myths and misconceptions were the order of the day. It was the days when knowledge about correlation between dirty environment and illnesses was equally novel to many while majority of the people believe that it is only health professionals that can solve health related problems and challenges facing the people individually and collectively. In a one-room office, the group embarked on research on HIV/AIDS. The search was fruitful. The group was not only able to know more about HIV/AIDS pandemic then, but also know the key players in HIV/AIDS intervention at the local level as well as knowledge and information gaps that exist among the populace with regards the dynamics of the disease.

The information acquired on HIV/AIDS was utilised to develop various drama sketches to address each of the knowledge gaps as identified in some researches conducted by health practitioners and agencies responsible for the prevention and mitigation of HIV/AIDS among the people in the state. Our first task was to assist in dispelling myths and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and we had several drama sketches performed in schools, market places, motor parks and health facilities. As soon as the agencies in charge of HIV/AIDS intervention in the state became aware of our activities, they expressed their willingness to work with us and started extending invitation to the group for drama presentation in their trainings and outreach programmes. At this point in time, it was our sole responsibility to determine the content of such drama sketches. Existing literature on HIV/AIDS which have highlighted the knowledge gaps assisted us a lot in determining the contents of the drama sketches. Apart from invitation to participate in trainings and outreaches, the agency was also inviting us anytime they have meeting or technical sessions with stakeholders and policy makers. The audience is what determines what sketches to present. For instance, if the audience is that of the stakeholders, the drama sketches usually address knowledge gap on HIV/AIDS and the need for behaviour change while presentations for the policy makers usually address policy issues and the lacuna between policy statement and implementation of such statement.

Another important factor which also assisted us at that teething stage was our exposure to enter-educate concept which was made popular since the early 1980s by the John Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programs (JHUCCP). It is the use of entertainment medium whether drama, music, dances, puppetry or any form of entertainment to educate the people and move them towards positive behaviour change. We studied the modus-operandi of enter-educate and we started applying the strategy in the development of drama sketches for presentation. One major forte of enter-educate strategy is the active involvement of the target group in the design and development of the materials to be presented as well as the need for consistency in the message being passed across. With the success recorded in working in the area of HIV/AIDS, other ministries and agencies started extending their invitations to us to use drama to educate their stakeholders. Some of these ministries and agencies include the Ministry of Women Affairs, community Development and Social Welfare, Ministry

of Education, while agencies like National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (NDLEA) also showed interest and partner with us in using drama to promote their educational messages. That was how we widen our horizon from HIV/AIDS to essentially health and education related issues.

It is important to note here that our operation is not only about presenting drama sketches. In line with the enter-educate concept which encourages a multi-media approach in facilitating behaviour change, we started producing full-length community drama, radio drama as well as short video film on various issues. Our first full length community drama titled *Odun Ijesu* (Yam Festival) worth mentioning here. The play was facilitated by the World Bank supported funding through Oyo State Agency for the Control of AIDS between 2004 and 2005. However, unlike the previous experiences where we had to determine what the theme and subject matter of our drama presentation would be. We strictly followed the Enter-educate principle as approved in our proposal. The first thing we did was to go to the 3 LGAs of intervention which were Saki East, Ibarapa East and Oriire LGAs of Oyo State and conduct Participatory Community Assessment (PCA) to identify HIV/AIDS situation in the three LGAs with regards the level of knowledge of different segments of the populace like the men, women, students and out of school youths. We equally used the PCA to identify factors that promote HIV infection in the target LGAs and what could be done to address those factors. The PCA showed that the knowledge about HIV/AIDS is relatively low among all the population segments targeted and that there was low self-risk perception among the populace. Majority of the people do not know how some of the cultural practices they do contribute to HIV infection. Some of the major cultural practices that were of the utmost importance then were wife inheritance and patronising traditional herbalist and local barbers who use the same knife to circumcise many children at the same time and also use the same knife for their clients' shaving and scarification. Thus, the drama *Odun Ijesu* was aimed at addressing these problems.

### 3.1 Synopsis of *Odun Ijesu*

Olohun Iyo is the village musician; popular and admired by all. People look forward to the forthcoming new yam festival simply because they would be able to enjoy Olohun Iyo's melodious music. However, tragedy struck as the festival approaches. Olohun Iyo is sick. The sickness is attributed to the handiwork of the witches but with the help of the health workers working in the community who trace the origin of his sickness to his late brother's wife he inherited without knowing the cause of his brother's death. His brother actually died of AIDS and had infected his wife before his death. It was this new wife who infected Olohun Iyo with HIV. The health worker also confirms that his two original wives have been infected with HIV and this throws the entire community into pandemonium. The health workers then build the capacity of the community members on how to care and support Olohun Iyo and his wives that are already infected. The community rises to the occasion and provides the necessary care and support to Olohun Iyo and his wives. A few weeks to the new yam festival, Olohun Iyo is back on his feet and the hitherto gloom that had enveloped the coming festival was lifted on the day of the festival as Olohun Iyo treats his people with melodious music and make the new yam festival a very glamorous and melodious one. This play addresses the issue of wife inheritance as well as how to care and support people already infected with HIV in the community so that they can achieve their maximum potential and contribute significantly to the development of their families and communities at large.

#### 3.1.1 From sunlight to floodlight

Decisions on who to participate, the level of participation and the time as well as mode of performances were made based on the findings from the PCA conducted. Using PCA tools which include the entry tools that serve as ice-breakers, as well as analytical tools like the daily clock, historical timeline, But why, pairwise ranking, force-field analysis, community mapping and perception cap among others enable us to determine what the focus of the play should be and the most appropriate time to reach the greatest number of the populace. The odd favours an outdoor event and a night show between 8.00pm and 10.00 pm when virtually everybody including women and children would have completed household chores and dinners would have been completed. Rural people do not joke with their work both male and female. The only time they could relax is later in the day when the day's work is over. We usually achieve nothing less than 80% attendance in all the communities where we

staged those performances. Apart from that, Enter-educate concept emphasises high sense of professionalism in packaging entertainment for education purpose that was why CRAID changes its mode of performance from staging short drama sketches to a full length drama which would give members of the audience enough time to follow the story, enjoy it and identify key learning points from it. In order to achieve this, we approached the presentation strictly from professional point of view using professional cast and crew and packaging the drama in a way we would have presented it even if we are staging it in a conventional theatre setting.

Each of the nine communities where the performances took place identified the space that could be used for the presentation. It is either in the school football field or the market place. The moment the venue is identified, our technical crew would start constructing the set for the play and as we moved from one community to the other, we were moving with our flats, risers and backdrops. Apart from set construction, we also rigged our lights and threw those rural communities into array of floodlight and spotlights. Looking back at those days show how much work Laide Nasir and other members of the organisation did at that time. There was team spirit as we scrambled for flats and hammers and nails. The process of set construction and plotting of light alone usually generate its own audience even before the play proper start in the evening.

Apart from our own presentation we also give local dramatists and musicians in such communities the opportunity to showcase their talents and make the ambience a carnival-like event full of drama, singing and dancing without losing focus on the messages. We conduct 3-day trainings for selected local dramatists and musicians to be able to continue providing members of their communities with appropriate information on HIV prevention, care and support using entertainment like drama, dance and music in a relatively professional way. In terms performance structure, we usually start with question and answer sessions in order to assess the level of existing knowledge on HIV/AIDS as well as attitude to issues related to it. This is usually followed with music and dance from local dramatists and musicians who have been integrated into the entire process in order to ensure active community involvement, high sense of commitment and sustainability of the project. After the music and dance by the local dramatists and musicians which usually served as appetisers; the play proper is presented and evaluation of the messages of the play is conducted at the end of the exercise. This is done by asking community members questions about what they have learnt with regards HIV/AIDS and what steps they would take to ensure that they protect themselves as well as the others.

### **3.2 Orita Faaji (Enjoyment Junction)**

As stated earlier, we adopted multi-media approach after our exposure to the Enter-educate concept. As we used Odun Ijesu to address harmful cultural practices in the community, there was also the need to address the knowledge level of in and out of school youths as well as other members of the community. We have learnt that in facilitating behaviour and social change, there are no one-cap-fits all method. Communities have to be segmented into different units because each of these units have different information and knowledge needs and the choice of how such information should be provided differ from one target group to the other. That was why a 13-episode radio drama was developed and aired on the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) in order to meet the specific HIV/AIDS information needs of in and out of school youths as opposed to Odun Ijesu which targets people in the rural areas. The choice of radio drama became obvious during the PCA as youths identified it as the most preferred means of reaching them with health and development information. Thus the 13-episode radio drama titled Orita Faaji addresses each of the myths and misconceptions as well as knowledge gaps identified during the PCA. The radio drama also provided the opportunity to reinforce information provided in the course of the community drama.

Issues treated in the radio drama include different modes of contracting HIV, youths' vulnerability, transactional and inter-generational sex, the issue of pre-marital sex, myths and misconception about HIV/AIDS, benefit of HIV counselling and testing, value and value clarification, gender issues and peer pressure among others. Also, HIV preventive strategies as well as care and support of people living with HIV including individual, family and community care were articulated through the radio drama series.

### 3.3 Sepeleba

Sepeleba was initiated by Federal Ministry of Health. The script was also provided by the ministry in English and given to different drama related NGOs throughout the country to be able to enlighten the public about what causes malaria and how we can prevent malaria particularly the advantage of using the Long-Lasting Insecticidal-Treated Nets (LLIN). What was expected of us was to translate the drama into Yoruba language, select intervention sites in all the 33 LGAs of Oyo State, develop our itinerary and take the drama sketch round the state. After the translation, we started with rehearsals which culminated in the project launch at the State Ministry of Health Secretariat Ibadan with officials from both the Federal and State Ministry of Health in attendance. The first performance was conducted there as part of flagging-off the exercise. After the launch, the tour commenced in all the five clusters. The clusters are Ibadan metropolis, Ibadan less-city, Oyo-Ogbomoso axis, Oke-Ogun area as well as Ibarapa area. In each of the 33 LGAs, we mobilised through dance and music in markets and motor parks. After such mobilisation, the performance proper is conducted and the performance is followed with question and answer sessions. We answered questions related to the drama while the Director of Primary Health Care in the host LGA provides answers to health-related questions. The performance usually ends with distribution of LLIN to the people at a give-away price. The post-intervention evaluation shows a tremendous acceptance of treated nets and increase in its purchase and utilisation.

### 3.4 Simba's world

UNICEF Nigeria in collaboration with Federal Ministry of Education developed Family Life HIV/AIDS (FLHE) curriculum for students in the upper primary, junior and senior secondary schools in Nigeria. The curriculum is aimed at equipping them with necessary knowledge and skills needed to weather the storm during puberty and adolescence age. The curriculum deals with issues relating to self-esteem, value clarification, gender issue, personal health and hygiene, harmful traditional and cultural practices, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS among others. The curriculum has since been integrated into the school curriculum for the students in the country. However, the need to reach the youths in non-formal education sector was what necessitated the project. The agency in charge of adult and non-formal education which is National Mass-Literacy Education Commission (NMEC) requested for UNICEF support to adapt the FLHE curriculum to suit the training mode of non-formal education learners.

It was in the light of this that UNICEF requested for the adaptation of the said FLHE curriculum into radio drama for non-formal education learners. The process started with the review of the curriculum to identify major learning points in each of the topics in the curriculum. This was developed into a concept note which was submitted to UNICEF for review and approval. With the approval given, a 5-day media materials development workshop was organised by UNICEF with the aim of producing the scripts for the radio drama. Participants at the workshop include two teams of the script writers and education specialists from both the Federal Ministry of Education and NMEC. Both teams worked together to produce the synopsis for each of the thirteen episodes of Simba's World during the workshop. After the workshop, the script writers developed the synopsis into scripts. The scripts were then pilot-tested in selected non-formal education centres in Kaduna and Ibadan. After the pilot-testing, observations were made on the contributions of learners and their trainers on the contents of the script. Sensitive lines were removed and the dialogue was made to be more culturally acceptable. Audition of cast members was conducted and rehearsals subsequently followed. After the rehearsals, the radio drama was produced and submitted to UNICEF. UNICEF then engaged linguists to translate the script into twelve different languages in Nigeria.

#### 3.4.1 Synopsis of Simba's World

Simba's World is a story of an intelligent young girl in a non-formal education centre. She receives trainings on basic knowledge on adolescent reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. She uses the knowledge and skills acquired through the trainings to support her friends who encountered various adolescence related challenges including unwanted pregnancy, abortion, drug and substance abuse, issues related to peer pressure, personal health and hygiene, self-esteem and value clarification. Through Simba's intervention, myths and misconceptions were dispelled, appropriate information provided, and lives were saved. She plays the role of a friend, confidant and counsellor to her mates in

the NFE centre in particular and other youths in her community thereby articulating all the information contained in the FLHE curriculum for the benefits of the non-formal education learners across the country.

### **3.5 The Rivals**

The Rivals is a short video-film on HIV/AIDS that we produced in response to the needs for audio-visual materials to support various HIV/AIDS trainings being conducted by NGOs. This became necessary when we observed that anytime training is being conducted on HIV/AIDS, the trainers usually use video films from East and South Africa like Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Thus, we decided to produce a video-film which will feature Nigerians and be used to compliment other training materials being used by various organisations. The Rival is a story of a family with two wives and two daughters. One of the daughters suddenly becomes sick and this was attributed to witchcraft by her step mother. The pandemonium that follows this allegation and counter-allegation nearly tears the family apart but for the help of the community health worker who conducts the test for the ailing girl and discover that she contracts HIV through sharing infected knife used in circumcising a new born baby who has been hitherto infected by her infected mother. The practice of getting marks on one's arm as a sign of sharing the pain with the new born baby being circumcised was the focus of the video. Circumcisers usually use the same knife used in circumcising the child to mark the relatives who want to share in the child's pain. This is done without considering the fact that such a child could have contracted HIV from her mother who also may not know that she is infected with HIV.

## **4. The question**

As stated in the introduction section, having highlighted few of dramatic enactment conducted by CRAID in the past, I would be reluctant to consider what we have done as applied drama for the following reasons:

1. As at the time we started our projects in 2003, there was no consciousness of any concept like applied drama. Our main motivation was to piggy-back on the potential of drama in the area of public enlightenment, behaviour and social change. At first, we were merely providing information in order to bridge identified information gaps. It was only when we were exposed to the Enter-Educate concept that we re-strategise and made social and behaviour change our focus and followed the process of producing enter-educate drama in our stage, radio and video film productions.

2. In everything we have done all this while, professionalism has been our watchword and we do not compromise on this. From the review of many literature on applied drama, it is clear that you do not necessarily need to be professional to practice applied drama and there are instances where drama is presented by those who do not have practical training in any arts of the theatre. In our own case, the use of professional cast and crew is a norm and the group ensure that individuals demonstrate high sense of responsibility and professionalism in the discharge of their assigned duties. Enough time is devoted to planning and logistics and scripted play is preferred to improvisation.

3. In the area of audience involvement. Our target audience play active role in the entire process but they were not the ones saddled with the responsibility of enacting the drama. The involvement of the target population usually start at the design stage when they provide all the necessary information needed to develop the content, at the pilot testing stage where they assess the effectiveness of the content so developed, and during the implementation when they participate in the evaluation of the entire process by providing answers to questions asked at the beginning and the end of the presentation. Thus, they are involved in almost all the stages of production without necessarily being the conveyor of the message. We paid attention to details in terms of preparation, and we used multi-media approach to drive home our points.

4. In spite of the fact that the staging environment for most of our production is not the conventional theatre stage, we try as much as possible to provide the ambience of a conventional theatre. There is clearly an invisible demarcation between the audience and the performer with each knowing its role in the social engineering process. Evaluation of our projects has also demystified the notion that social consciousness and mobilisation for action could only be achieved "when people play people".



5. Another reason is that of exclusion and inclusion with regards applied drama. As Ackroyd asked; “can some forms of dramatic activity that primarily exist outside conventional mainstream theatre institutions be excluded from a notion of applied theatre?” thereby insinuating some form of exclusion in the description of applied drama. To my mind, the problem is not only that of exclusion but also that of inclusion which raises this fundamental question; can any drama that exists outside conventional theatre be referred to as applied drama? Should we expunge TfD, Community Theatre (CT), reformatory theatre, guerrilla theatre among others from our dictionary and treat works emanating from them purely as applied drama? Are we looking for a one-stop shop for these similar but yet distinct drama and theatre practices? Will a TfD practitioner prides himself as an applied dramatist? Will an enter-educate practitioner consider himself as an applied dramatist? These are questions begging for answer which may make it difficult for somebody like me to consider myself as an applied dramatist.

## 5. Conclusion

Many professional dramatists and theatre artists using drama to facilitate development and interface with society with their presentations while working with different strategies still consider themselves essentially as theatre artists. This is why I will see myself first as a theatre artist and not as an enter-educate or a TfD practitioner or an applied dramatist. I may allow others not trained in theatre, dramatic and performing arts interested in using drama for social and development purpose to pride themselves with such nomenclature. This is because there is a strong implication for professionalism in all of these. There is obviously a thin borderline between multi-disciplinary and anti-disciplinary which turns drama and theatre practice into a tool for any Tom Dick and Harry with trainings, techniques, skills and competencies sacrificed on the altar of social transformation. We can leave the pseudo-dramatists who see in drama opportunity to achieve their objectives to scramble for emblematic recognition under any guise. Dramatist can touch people’s lives and promote positive change either in a conventional or non-conventional setting. The most important factor is the extent of his social commitment to make the world a better place for all.

Apart from the issue of rebranding drama for social engineering in whatever guise it comes, the prefix of the term applied drama has also generated some controversies. One of such is Rasmussen’s (2000) sentiment that the word applied drama actually implies that it is not a pure drama, something of second-class, substandard drama. This may be so because all the technical quality of conventional drama need not present in applied drama before it could achieve its objectives. With this in mind, then it will be degrading for any professional to associate himself with a seeming derogatory nomenclature.

It is also important to note as Ackroyd rightly observed that majority of the key proponent of applied drama like Nicholson, O’Toole, and Taylor among others do not come from professional drama and theatre background but from educational background. We do not need a soothsayer to enlighten us about the potential of drama for social engineering, self-development and transformation. This is what has been achieved with both conventional and non-conventional theatre right from the time past. We need to be very cautious in jumping inside new ships made of old planks. New concepts will continue to emerge with little or no difference from those concepts they are succeeding. The most important thing is the essence of anything we are doing and not by whatever name such activity is being called. From time immemorial, conventional theatre has been and will continue to contribute to social change and human development. It is not how this is done that matters but the fact that it could be done through drama and theatre. No matter how much rhetoric we present to justify introduction of new concept, if it still panders to the old and the already known dialectic, then the introduction of such new concept to me is a mere academic cosmetic.

The policy implication of this paper is to conclude that drama and theatre practitioners as well as non-theatre practitioners using drama to inform, educate, mobilise and conscientise should not be bogged down by labelling and nomenclature. They should see various existing strategies as open field where they can pick and choose based on the peculiarity of their works and what is best under the circumstances to achieve the best result. What should determine the strategies to be used should be the nature of development issues or challenges being addressed, the location and the target beneficiaries. This may lead to meandering from politics to health to education to conflict resolution or any other developmental challenges but not necessarily losing focus because development is all-

encompassing and multi-dimensional. We cannot say because our focus is politics and we get to a community in need of health intervention and pack our bags without providing and form of intervention. The community or institutional problem should be our signpost to the best approaches. Afterall we are either theatre practitioners or development workers or both.

## References

- Ackroyd, J. (2007) Applied theatre: An exclusionary discourse? Retrieved online on 30th May, 2015 from [www.griffith.edu.au](http://www.griffith.edu.au)
- Balfour, M. (2009) The politics of intention: Looking for a theatre of little changes. *Research in drama education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*
- Coaker, J. (2017) History of applied theatre practices. Retrieved online on 14 January, 2020 at [www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)
- Freeman, B. & Frija, N. (2014) 'Finding a place beyond place in the Rouge Park project', *Applied Theatre Research* 2(1), 49-60
- Holzman, L. (2017) *Vygotsky at work and play*. Routledge. New York.
- Kovacs, G. (2014) Applied drama and theatre-drama technique in teaching English for specific purpose. Retrieved online on 12 January, 2020 at [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)
- NYU Steinhardt Department of Music and Performing Arts. Applied theatre. Retrieved online on 26th of May 2015 on the institutions' website at [www.steinhardt.nyu.edu](http://www.steinhardt.nyu.edu)
- Nicholson, H. (2005). *Applied theatre: The gift of drama*. New York: Palmgrave Macmillan
- Osaghae, E. (2013) Culture and identity as research labels: the basis of a contested social science in African culture and Identity. Vol. 1 edited by Olajide Olorunnisola, Oyebamiji Babalola, Adeyinka Aderinto and Aderemi, I. Alarape. The Postgraduate School University of Ibadan.
- O.Toole, J. (2007) Applied theatre new forms for new audiences. Keynote address at drama and theatre education conference, University of Taiwan, cited in Judith Ackroyd's *Applied theatre: An exclusionary discourse?* opcit
- Prendergast, M. & Saxton, J. (2013) *Applied drama: a facilitator's handbook for working in community*. Intellect Ltd.
- Prentik, T. & Pammenter D. (2014) Living beyond our means, meaning beyond our lives: Theatre as education for change. *Applied Theatre Research* 2(1), 7-19
- Rasmussen, B. (2000). Applied theatre and the power of play-an international viewpoint. *Applied Theatre Researcher*, no.1 cited in Acroyd, J. (2007) *applied Theatre: An exclusionary Discourse?* opcit
- Shu, J. (2011) Teacher as actor: future English teachers' training in the natural approach using drama. *Applied Theatre Researcher/ Idea Journal*. Griffith University. Issues 12.
- Skeiker, F. F. (2011) Performing orphanage experience: Applied theatre practice in a refugee camp in Jordan. *Applied Theatre Researcher/ Idea Journal*. Griffith University. Issues 12.
- Ukaegbu, V. (2004) The problem with definitions. In J. Ackroyd and J. Neelands (eds), *Drama Research*, vol. 3
- Wright, David. (2011) The pattern that connects: drama as a vehicle for ecological understanding. *Applied Theatre Researcher/ Idea Journal*. Griffith University. Issues 12.