

A Brief Historical Account of Theatre in education in Nigeria.

- Cyprian Ajudua.

INTRODUCTION.

When you first come in contact with the term, Theatre in education the first thing that comes to your mind, is teaching people about play performance. Though such an idea is shallow since it does not fully define what Theatre in education is.

Theatre in education is an act of educating people or interested persons through various dramatic plays (Play of the infant.) But this is unlike the theatre setting, where an audience or audiences go to the theatre to see a performance. The difference between Theatre in education and theatre performance is that Theatre in education is a performance or activity that allows participants to pick roles freely without any hindrance while in theatre performance, participants are assigned roles by the director, who makes them go under strict conventions for the play to be fleshed out.

A SURVEY ON THE HISTORY OF THEATRE IN EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.

Theatre in education begins from infancy when a child involves in dramatic play (Free play of the infant.) The child either plays alone or with other children.

This kind of informal education helps to develop the children psychologically. It has been observed that if a child does not involve in dramatic play when he was young, he must certainly do it, even as an adult.

According to 'Onyia' , Theatre in education is an education of the growing child, starting at an early age and every adult in the village would be expected to play the role of the teacher/facilitator in helping, instructing, teaching, advising and rewarding every child in the village.

But in our present age, theatre in education might be likely traced to the University of Ibadan. There, it was introduced as an academic curriculum, where it was been taught and practiced. The students, after being taught the theory, take this theory in class to practice with students in primary or secondary schools.

Nevertheless, it is quite disheartening to know that Theatre in education is not well developed in Nigeria. It is an underfunded sector, which discourages the few theatre educators in Nigeria from working in the field.

Moreover, through various private and government productions, some professional theatre artists still find a way to create theatre (mostly for entertainment purposes) because it is still lucrative in a way. In those cases, they can be a source of revenue, which will be gotten from ticket sales, sponsorships from the private or government sectors and others.

However, this is not the fault of theatre educators because the procedure of theatre in education in secondary schools might be very difficult if there is not enough funding. After all, theatre in education's primary objective is to teach, and not to entertain. Therefore, in absence of funding, these theatre in education instructors go back to professional theatres to work for them.

In this part of the world, particularly in Nigeria, the usefulness of drama as an instructional tool has not been well explored to its fullest. The only time you see teachers engage in the dramatic activity is when the school is having a social activity such as Party for graduation, Christmas or Easter celebration where Bible stories are acted out.

According to 'Umukoro', "It is at best, an exploratory drama that takes the individual child involved on a voyage of self-discovery through the free but creative process of self-expression.

In developed countries, theatre in education/educational drama is a basic instructional tool in their educational system, particularly elementary schools. This has given rise to the various television stations that have been dedicated to instructional programs for children in different subject areas. It is through this means that the child can find himself, to discover his personality, his potentialities and limitations.

Although, most basic school teachers usually acknowledge the value of drama but they are reluctant to incorporate it into their classrooms. The reasons for this might not be farfetched, the Nigerian basic school curriculum is usually loaded with little or no time for dramatic activities. Also, they might have the perception that drama is for talented children rather than a useful teaching tool that works for everyone or that drama is complex and they don't have the skill to apply it as a teaching tool.

CONCLUSION

Learning is always a social process, a joint, and collaborative effort of students with teachers cannot be transferred to a passive receiver. Therefore, learning cannot be separated from its social context.

Nevertheless, I desire a world where theatre in education will finally have its rightful position as a recognized and important form and career. This mindset will hopefully lead to more theatre in education being included in Nigeria's secondary school curriculum.

If only people knew the extent to which programs like this benefit the life of an average Nigerian child, they could then understand the importance of arts in education.

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