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ABU DHAN DQUNSBANYA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, OTTO/IAHIIKIN

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ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF
YUSUF AZEEZ BABAGBEMI

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BY

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ABSTRACT

Educational Theatres have found a place in many Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. It is saddled with the dual responsibility of training and producing well seasoned theatre graduates. To achieve this objective, Theatre Management has an important and conspicuous role to play. This paper highlights Theatre Management process in an Educational Theatre and not only identifies its shortcomings but proffer solutions to such problems.

Introduction

The issues of organization, funding, sponsorship, planning and financing Theatre was a major concern as early as the Greek period. In fact, the reorganization and reformations of Pissistratus to the Dionysian festival, leading to theatrical performances gave details to these salient issues (Brockel 2000:42). Therefore the history of Theatre Management can be traced to the ancient Greeks. Prior to the increase of theatre activity especially towards the end of the nineteenth century business experts emerged to cope with the ever increasing demands of management. Just as in any other industry theatre needs a meeting point to finance the business and production aspects. This is where Theatre Management becomes a force to be reckoned with. Irrespective of the type of theatre that is operational, whether commercial, community, traveling, repertory or educational, the urge for sustenance is paramount. This paper intends to look at Theatre Management and its use in Educational Theatre while assessing how it can be fortified and optimally used in Educational Theatre.

Concept of Educational Theatre

Educational Theatre, is an institutionalised theatre and could be found in Universities, High Schools and Colleges. It denotes the environment in which the 'theatre is situated by reproduction and an institutional

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classroom programmes within an institution of learning' (Clifford 1972:73). Some scholars however define educational theatre as the use of theatrical activities such as role playing, dance, dramatized reading, play production and any other cultural activities. Such activities are used in an educational setting as institutional tools toward effective teaching and comprehension of educational content.

In Canada, Educational Theatre is defined as how the individual and his culture develop through dramatic actions like, children drama, creative drama and creative arts. Langley (1974:141) sees Educational Theatre as "any theatre sponsored by an educational institution". He made a distinction between Educational Theatre which indicates, educational sponsorship of a production and Educative theatre which refers to dramatic content or purpose of a special nature such as propaganda or therapy as in psycho analysis. It was not until the 20th century that Educational Theatres became broadly accepted not only as an exclusive instrument for teaching or extra curricular school activity, but as an entity that owes an obligation to campus and community audiences as well as to student participants. But how did Educational Theatre start in the Western World and Nigeria? This will be briefly explored next.

Evolution of Educational Theatre

In 1912 George Pierce Baker began his 47 workshops at Harvard University where students were encouraged to produce plays written in their playwriting classes. Thereupon, the first College Theatre Department was founded in Carnegie Institute of Technology. It continued to spread like wildfire to other institutions in New York, Iowa, Northwestern, Cornell and Yale. Right from the start the courses offered emphasized theatre practice as well as history and theory. The movement later came to Africa, specifically Nigeria, in the then University College now University of Ibadan. From there, other institutions followed suit under various names like, Theatre Arts, Performing Arts, Creative Arts and Dramatic Arts.

The sole prerogative of Educational Theatre is the training of theatre graduates.

As a subject in the curriculum, it is an art form designed for development and creativity of basic skills of

She further identifies the following as the major functions of Educational Theatre;

- Medium for appreciating cultural and creative arts.
- Improvement of participants through classes, rehearsals and practicals
- Developing skills of communication
- Expression of other arts such as music, literature, dance etc. through the mind, body and voice.
- Production of professionals and exports using the required skills as a source of livelihood.

Given these activities of the various Educational Theatre, the need arose for a proper management to coordinate all available resources to enhance good productivity. Based on this fact, Theatre Management shall be the next focus of this paper.

Theatre Management

The art of management is a common practice in everyday life. Management has found a permanent place in business, organizations industries, firms etc, irrespective of its status (whether profit or non-profit). In the Theatre Management is a comparatively new area of specialization compared to other aspects of the theatre like, history, dramatic literature; play writing etc, which have been very well documented in terms of theory and practice. However, this is not ruling out the fact that management has been with the theatre right from the early beginnings in Greece.

Often times, management and administration have been used interchangeably to mean the same thing. This is perhaps as a result of their functions that make it almost impossible to draw a clear line of demarcation between the two terms. For the purpose of this paper, management and administration shall be used to mean one and the same thing as required.

a nerve-racking business that demand the satisfaction of the artists on the one hand and satisfaction of the never satisfied audience on the other.

This gives the impression that theatre management is mainly based on human resources at the disposal of a theatre company. On the contrary. Management is not as simple as defined. It is a complex process that could be best understood as a systems theory. The definition of Griffin (1993:5) would be the most appropriate in this instance.

Management is a set of activities (including planning and decision making, organising, leading and controlling) directed at an organization's resources (human, financial, physical and information) with the aim of achieving organisational goals in an efficient and effective manner.

This is a broad and more encompassing working definition of management that is operational in the theatre. Theatre management deals with policies and execution, towards the achievement of organisational goals and objectives. It is result oriented and all managers are involved in the judicious use of resources at their disposal such as, material, money and machines, known as the '3ms' in management. In some cases, management serves as a tool through which effective administration can be achieved. This is possible when all the elements of management such as personnel, capital and material are properly manipulated to achieve desired result. In a nut shell Theatre Management can be taken to be that aspect of theatre that culminates the efforts of personnel (both artistic and administrative) and that of physical resources, to attain the goals of the theatre company organization. In relation to effective and efficient management in an Educational setting, one needs to point out that it must go through a process. The next section of this paper will look at the relationship between Theatre Management process and Educational Theatre.

Factors Affecting Management Functions in Educational Theatre

The head of management in the Theatre is known as a Theatre Manager. The ideal Theatre Manager does not necessarily need a degree in Arts, Administration or background in Economics. The ideal theatre manager is one which embodies an idea and realizes it. The process of managing educational theatre involves the following:

Planning

- Organising
- Staffing
- Leadership
- Controlling

Planning – This is perhaps the first stage of Theatre Management that needs proper consideration. Planning is the process of analyzing the theatre business in a logical functional manner that will yield organized result. It is required therefore that the manager be of least an amateur in theatre practices, either through formal or informal training. Planning could be done on long-range, medium range or short range terms, depending on the aims and objectives of the theatre organization. Planning involves, selecting the best course of action from alternatives. Planning must as a matter of fact spell out the goals of the theatre determining its status as a non-profit oriented venture.

Organising – After developing a working plan the theatre manager organizes people and coordinate other necessary resources to execute the plan. This is the stage where the organogram chart is well defined and spelt out to aid easy and proper functioning of theatre activities such as, job definition, departmentalization, authority, roles, control etc. It makes it very easy to run the theatre, avoiding totally, or minimizing conflicts to the barest minimum.

Staffing – This is the employment or recruitment of people with the right qualifications to perform specific roles at given times to aid overall productivity. Knowing the policies of Educational Theatre it is important to hire the most suited people to carry them out. The University or College management is directly in charge of recruitment of staff in Educational Theatre based on qualifications. The size of Educational Theatre determines its staff strength and requirements. The

... OF SCIENCE OF LEADERSHIP...
... of knowledge, talents and abilities determines the quality of productivity in the turn out of students and performance.
Leadership – "Leading is the art of processes used to get people to work together to advance the interests of the organization" (Griffin 1993:10). It involves a number of different activities like motivating people to behave in certain ways, influence of leadership qualities, interpersonal relations and communication. It is these set of activities that a Theatre Manager brings together to raise a formidable team of workers. Theatre is primarily team work, without which attainment of goals becomes an arduous task. Leadership in theatre management creates a favourable and conducive environment for all departments and their heads.

Controlling – "Control is the regulation of organizational activities to facilitate goal attainment" (Griffin 1993:44). This is the art of monitoring or pivoting Educational Theatre towards its goals. The major goal of Educational Theatre is to produce well trained students in the various theatre practices. As the theatre moves towards this goal, management must monitor its progress. It must make sure that the theatre is performing in a way as to arrive at its destination. In clear terms, control performs the following functions

- a) Establishing Standards
- b) Measuring Performance
- c) Comparing performances with standards
- d) Evaluation and action

All the above listed help the theatre to amend, maintain or change certain aspects of operation as they affect productivity. The process of managing the Educational Theatre will surely generate some problems and there will be always be factors that will impinge on Theatre Management in Educational Theatres. What are those factors and how can they be controlled in order to optimize Theatre Management in Educational Theatres? This is what will be discussed next.

Factors affecting Theatre Management in Educational Theatre

Over time it has been discovered that management of educational theatre is impaired by certain factors. These factors have become a clog

of the theatre in achieving set goals and objectives. Some of such factors will be discussed below.

Funding - This is a major set back in the level of achievement of management in an educational theatre. As customary of all tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the government is the main source and pillar of financial support and sustenance. So, institutions depend on government funding through subventions, statutory allocations, grants and subsidy for existence. In recent times, it has been discovered that such funding is at times delayed, reduced or not given at all. In situations where they are released, it is hardly enough to run the affair of the institution. It has come to a stage where departments are not even included in monthly or yearly allocations due to other pressing issues. Educational theatre therefore finds it almost impossible to meet with managerial demands in running the theatre effectively. The planning is often affected and so execution of programmes is far from realization.

Staffing - Since it is the sole prerogative of the institution to recruit members of staff for the departments, there have often been cases of wrong or inadequate staffing. More so, there is restriction as to the number of staff in each department. This has made it difficult for educational theatre to have the required number of staff in each unit. What is operational is over loading of the present staff with responsibilities that are often way out of their areas of specialization. In such cases, effective theatre management in educational theatre is a far cry since there is inappropriate or lack of staff strength.

Facilities - The overriding economic stance of the country as a whole has affected every sphere, of the economy. The impact is also felt in educational theatres where there are inadequate facilities which is expected to be the materials to work with. Basics, such as theatre buildings, media studio, transportation scheme etc are not available. Theatre management is therefore incapacitated in areas such as, regular seasonal play productions, traveling theatre experience, studio management and others. This also affects the students' level of artistic competence even after completing their studies.

Institutional Policy - Educational Theatre is one out of the many units of an Institution. Therefore it must as a matter of compulsion comply with the overall goals of the mother Institution. However, there are

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certain policies that are sometimes made by the management team of the Institutions that turn out to be unfavourable to Educational Theatre, especially in the area of management. Certain decisions taken with regards to staff operations, constant change academic calendar, admission of students etc, have in most cases affected Theatre Management adversely.

Suggestions

Having highlighted the above deterrents in Managing an Educational Theatre, it is imperative that possible solutions be proposed to improve and re-vitalise Theatre management in an Educational Theatre. It is not enough to wait endlessly for institutional support alone; Educational Theatres should rise up to the challenge of seeking other alternatives to finance. This is the time to look inwards and make use of ever opening or opportunities that present itself. Means of achieving this include Parents Teachers forum, students' commitment, Alumni contributions, affiliations with Non Government Organisations (NGOs) etc. There could be also collaboration between private sector or other institutions. In this case both parties perform some significant roles to each other. For instance, as the private sector provides funds for Educational Theatre on the other hand promotes her products or services and enhances her public image.

Consequently, institutions should be lucid in taking decisions that affect Educational Theatres. Theatre Departments should not be totally neglected to survive on their own. They should also be given a freedom to operate effectively within the institution. This is not ruling out the fact that there could be Institutional checks and balances from time to time.

Also, there is the need for proper and adequate staffing in Educational Theatres. Specialists in the different areas of the theatre should be recruited. More so, the interview team should include knowledgeable and competent persons who are vast in the practise of the theatre to avoid recruiting wrong staff. This will ensure that students are well grounded in arts of the theatre.

Irrespective of the economical crunch, it is very necessary to have facilities on ground to work with. It becomes impossible to plan and

execute programmes successfully without the needed tools. There are situations where the meagre money available is spent hiring or renting equipments or theatre personnels. This would be curbed with the provision of materials bearing in mind that the end result of theatre management is targeted at good productivity. In this regard, the government should wake up to its responsibilities and improve the educational Sector.

Conclusion

The place of Theatre Management in an Educational Theatre need not be over-emphasised any more. It is an integral aspect that actually determines the extent of achievement of objectives. With full implementation of the processes of Theatre Management which forms the skeletal frame work that other factors build on, Educational Theatre will certainly live up to expectation. It is also hoped that the major problems like funding, staffing, Institutional Policy and lack of facilities, will be addressed with time. This could be achieved by making use of the suggested solutions as highlighted in the paper.

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