

THE THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT (TfD) FACILITATOR: AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

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ABSTRACT: Theatre for Development projects have been carried out all over the world for a couple of years now. The success stories of some of these projects are overwhelming. In Africa, mention can be made of the Laedza Batanani Popular Theatre, the Maratholi Travelling Theatre, the Kamirithu Popular Theatre, the Osagyefo Players, and many others. Despite the successes achieved by these movements, their facilitators have not been given the needed recognition. These projects do not come up by themselves, they are borne from the ideas and thinking of facilitators who take these concepts to cause a change in the life of humanity. This paper appraises the work of such Theatre for Development facilitators thereby giving them the needed recognition as community and social development agents.

KEY WORDS: Facilitator, Theatre for Development, participation, community change, facilitation, change agents.

I. INTRODUCTION

Following the end to colonialism in various part of Africa, theatre practitioners began to encourage the re-creation of local culture and other entertainments forms. They looked back to a time before colonialism when Africans believed in fully developed systems, ideologies and ways of learning that stood on their own and were reinforced by indigenous dramatic forms. This process of rediscovery brought to birth the notion of local arts or theatre and development. The place of theatre in development has been a long standing debate, however the Theatre for Development (TfD) as an engagement art has been used with varying degrees of success in most developing countries.

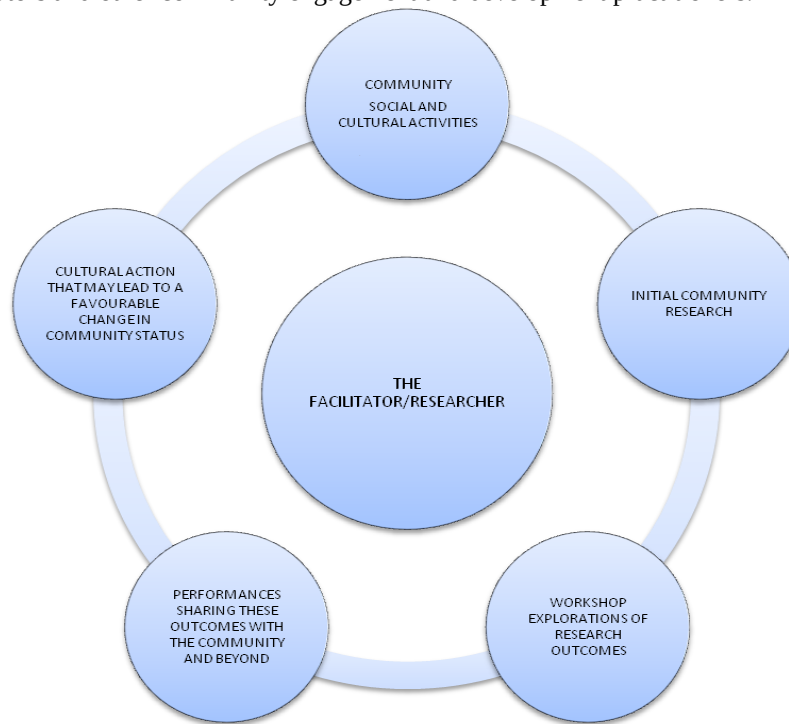
In most part of Africa, Theatre for Development (TfD) has become one of the means of engaging oppressed communities to find their voice against their oppression. It has become the platform for community dialogue towards self determination and development. Theatre for Development (TfD) simply means theatre used in the service of development. Prentki (1998) describes the Theatre for Development (TfD) pedagogy as a tool available to the development agencies which pursue the goals of self development and improved quality of life of all people whose material conditions leave them vulnerable to predatory forces both natural and human. Theatre for Development (TfD) does not only present people the chance of seeing their own cosmology through which they gain empowerment but also serves as a method through which they can analyse their lives and adjusts accordingly (Scollen, 2008). One of the fundamental guiding principles of Theatre for Development is the notion of **participation**. As stated earlier, the focus of TfD should be on creating theatre that projects issues of interest for the working community.

The concept of theatre for Development is about working with communities using theatre as the engagement tool. As a concept or pedagogy for community work, it requires the dedicated practitioners to see it flourished as a community working tool. Community development is a shared process but must have '**someone**' to create the platform which may lead to such development process. It is the **facilitator** who creates the appropriate environment to begin the process of awareness, attitudinal change which finally results in development. Freire (1972) asserts that development is not something that is given but evolves through the collective action and reflection of all members of the community. The person who instigates such action with **participatory theatre** as his

working tool is whom this paper refers to as the Theatre for Development (TfD) facilitator. The facilitator's work in bringing community members together on a common platform to share ideas on development process is the core idea behind this paper.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study is built on the framework of Participatory Performance Practice, which is mostly used by Theatre for Development facilitators and other community engagement and development practitioners.



Credit: Evans Asante

The framework is built around the facilitator who in some instances also becomes the researcher. As indicated on the diagram, the first stage or level of a PPP approach begins with a community looking inwards at their own lives, social and cultural. The act of looking into one's social and cultural values is research on its own. This is represented in the second slot which is initial community research. Typically, this would lead to a clarified and critical understanding of local issues. A performance may be created to share new perspectives with the rest of the community and this cultural action may well foster some change in local attitude, behaviour or circumstance. Such a change, local and plain, builds confidence and opens up public debate. It also paves the way for further and bolder changes and social action on broader and more penetrating issues.

The next stage is where local performers may move to look outwards with the community, addressing neighbours who share the same conditions and also those makers of policy who hold power over their daily lives. The final stage is where there is a cultural and social action to find possible solutions and interventions to issues discovered. The whole process is cyclical; revolving around the works of the facilitator.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the years, theatre for development has been used as an avenue for addressing several social ills especially in Africa. The Theatre for Development approach has been used to address social problems like HIV/AIDS, hunger eradication, sanitation, teenage pregnancy, conflict resolution, child labour, quality education and many others. In Ghana, since its introduction in the early 1980s, a lot of projects have been undertaken using this approach. These project do not spring up by themselves, they are borne from the ideas and thinking of 'some people' who take this concept to cause change in the life of humanity. If Theatre for Development (TfD) has been accepted and described by several community based practitioners as a tool for social change, then the people who carry out such activities could be described as **Change Agents**. This study appraises the work of such Theatre for

Development facilitators in the community development process thereby giving them the needed recognition as partners in community and social development.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are

1. To find out key roles of the Theatre for Development facilitator in community development process.
2. To project the Theatre for Development facilitator as a key partner in community development.

V. METHODOLOGY

Five (5) Tfd projects were purposively sampled from different communities in the Central regions of Ghana. The impact of the chosen projects were accessed and measured. There were series of interviews with the facilitators and the role they played in carrying out the various projects. There was also textual analysis of the projects reports from the facilitators.

In assessing the impact and relevance of the various projects, community-based research was carried out. Field observations and informal interviews were adopted to gather the data for the community-based study.

VI. RELATED LITERATURE

THEATRE AND THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development is a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems they are facing as a people. This means of problem solving in the community requires the participation of all community members. In most cases, the development agenda is initiated by members within the communities, however, some communities require *outsiders* to prompt them of the powers they wield as a people to begin the development process. Once such process are initiated by outsiders, it requires the blessings and support of community members to realise a full cycle. The primary objective of community development is an improved community life.

As a concept, community development builds the capacity of the community to address issues and to take advantage of opportunities to find common grounds and to balance competing interest of community members (Salhi, 1998). Community Development does not just happen; it requires a conscientious effort to make it happen. It takes catalyst to propel the wheel of community development. Due to its participatory nature, it requires an engagement tool which presents community members a common platform to operate. In community development, the community requires a common language which will facilitate open communication about difficult, sensitive and classified topics, which will eventually improve the overall functioning of the development process. Community theatre offers development practitioners with this option. Theatre has been proposed as an effective community engagement tool for rural development and awareness creation (Asante, 2016). In the area of community development, theatre has been used extensively yet many are those who still do not see the actual connection between theatre and development. During the colonial times, colonial governments used theatre as a propaganda tool for disseminating development policies (Byam, 1999). They used it to disseminate information and messages on immunization, sanitation and proper farming practices. Mda (1993) has also stressed on how development practitioners used theatre in conscientising rural folks in particular about development interventions and other political issues in the Southern part of Africa. People are the centre of every development process; so once these people are well conscientised on the process, they become part of it and give their full support for the development process. The instances of theatre being used in communities for development communication purposes have persisted even till now. (Mwansa, 2004) writes that; theatre is still used in educating people on gender equality, HIV and other health related issues in most in sub-Saharan Africa. Theatre has been used in creating several educational programmes meant towards achieving developmental goals in several communities in Ghana. Mluma (1991) believes that theatre serves as a mode of expression where the people can voice out their developmental needs. They also become active participants in the development process through participatory theatre. Through this mode, the issues are presented to the community folks and they are called to action to address such issues. The element of participation which theatre presents empowers the community to work as a group to achieve common goals. According to Taylor (2003), theatre in the community has become a major medium for social action, for reflection and transformation. Theatre can exert powerful influence over the emotional condition of the audience; and it is this emotional appeal that pushes the audience to react to the development messages presented to them. Facilitated theatre is very useful for major organisations and cultural change in several communities. Facilitated community theatre has been used to explore the relationship between the skills and capacities of a community and how the

community members use such skills. Participating communities in participatory theatre learn new skills and behaviors on shared basis.

THE CONCEPT OF THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Theatre for Development (TfD) is a community based medium which employs the peoples own indigenous art forms like drum, songs, dance etc in order to enhance the dramatic presentation process and immense a force of attraction. TfD is a popular art form that is aimed at developing an individual and his/her community.

Espkamp (2006) defines Theatre for Development as “a learning strategy in which theatre is used to encourage communities to express their own concerns and think about the causes of their problems and possible solutions”. Here theatre and for this matter popular theatre which is the people’s theatre is used to encourage individuals in communities to come together and try to solve their own problems. One cannot forget about the mutuality that such a strategy brings in a community. When communities come together in the spirit of entertainment coupled with development, they achieve two things at the same time that is entertainment and development.

It is seen as a cultural means of communication that can help a community to work together. (Macrovdatus) The indigenous people in the community are always the target of most Theatre for Development project. Individuals or communities with a strong sense of identity are provided the means of using theatre to analyse their own way of living through dialogue and performances. Theatre for Development (TfD) as a way to sharpen the contradiction as a way to sharpen the contradictions in our societies. It allows us to communicate about what we want to transform. The presence of this idea of communication (dialogue) eliminates the conception of imposition by community development workers.

Pammenter (1999) goes on further to say that TfD has its roots in the best of dialogical education that helps a community to identify different perspective and purposes around change. Theatre for Development in this sense simply helps communities find out what they truly are and what they want to change. Theatre for Development is a cultural action for change. A cultural action is an intervention in the community by the use of the people’s way of living (culture). Theatre for Development is a tool in the wider development process. Unlike other development approaches, TfD takes the people’s way of living as a major factor of the development process. Using Cultural action as a development process causes a renewal in a community’s way of living because it builds on the local ability of the people by using their story-telling, singing and dancing. Theatre for Development therefore does not only develop the physical structures of a community but also the social and religious life of the community. Theatre for Development as a continuous process means, TfD as an approach to Development does not end until its purposes have been achieved. This approach to development has it own way of evaluation and impact assessment. This is why TfD is said to be a holistic approach to development. Theatre for Development is a performative approach to discussing issues, forging alliances and community cohesion which contributes to community development (Oga Abah 2000). Theatre for Development in this instance is seen as a community and social art for instigating participation which is aimed at causing a change.

THE THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT FACILITATOR

A facilitator is someone who helps a group of people understand their common objectives and assists them to plan to achieve them without taking a particular position in the discussion (Hunter, Bailey, & Taylor, 1995). This could mean someone in a community whose role it is to make it easier for the community and the people in it to accomplish goals and projects which improve the community in some manner. Such a person might provide information and guidance about how to conduct meetings, how to gain consensus, how to apply for grants, and - in general - how to empower the community. Some people go into other people’s community to triggers a course for development perhaps because the members lack education or knowledge about how to get things done. Facilitation plays key role in community development as asserts by Frank and Smith (1999). Theatre for Development as has been explained extensively above is a community based development approach. *Who then is a Theatre for Development facilitator?*

Like any other community facilitator, the TfD facilitator is someone who begins a community development process using the TfD approach as his or her main development tool. The TfD facilitator must be well vested in all the various methodologies and processes that go into TfD as a community based approach. The TfD facilitator is someone who coordinates and undertakes the role of working at the grass roots/ basis to bring the various target groups, individual and institutions to participate in the TfD processes. It means corresponding with such institutions and the individual, seeking their permission to launch the TfD programme and ensuring that the community members are involved in the exercise directly and indirectly. The TfD facilitator must be positive, flexible, committed and patience. A good facilitator is almost always able to bring all stakeholders in the community together irrespective of their differences. In the early phases of the process of, a good TfD facilitator will focus on creating

an environment of trust in which people build rapport and begin to develop shared understanding of the reality of their situation. A good facilitator focuses on the process of group dynamics, rather than the task or outcome. This is to ensure that participation is 'active' rather than 'passive'. It is not sufficient for participants just to show up and do not make any meaningful contributions. The TfD facilitator is a teacher, a development catalyst, process expert, a learner, leader and a servant.

VII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The project, *Teenage Pregnancy and Youth Empowerment* at Gomoa Adzintem on 18th February 2020, sought to sensitize and bring about attitudinal change, and youth empowerment in Gomoa Adzintem community and its environs. Gomoa Adzintem is a community in Gomoa East District in the Central region of Ghana where Teenage Pregnancy and Youth Unemployment are dominant issues impeding development. Per the observations and interactions of stakeholders of Gomoa Adzintem, it was realized that Teenage Pregnancy and Youth Unemployment were issues which needed immediate attention. It was further discovered that most teenagers stay with their grandparents who in one way or the other, are not able to control the teenagers hence contributing to the factors of teenage pregnancy. Most of these grandparents also expressed the bitterness of not getting the desired respect from their grandchildren thereby leaving the children to also do what pleases them.

Most of the teenagers expressed the fact that they did not get the financial support to meet most of their basic needs. And in an attempt to satisfy their basic needs, most of the teenagers get introduced to early sexual activities in an exchange for money to meet their basic needs. After a stay in the communities it was recorded that the attitude of the children had changed tremendously because the children saw the student facilitators as role models and thus emulating them was worthwhile. The facilitators included Bernard Hemans, Philis yemetey, Sarah Tutu, Anelina Boakye, Miriam Layeh. Again personal entrepreneurship skills exposed the youth to acquiring some earnings.

The chief of the town in an interview spoke about the fact that although he had not seen any new pregnancy in town, he had realized that the number of teenagers who used to be in town at certain late hours had drastically reduced. The head mistress of the basic school also expressed her joy at seeing the facilitators during an evaluation period. She added that although it needed some time for any massive change to be seen, some of the students had approached her and after engaging them in conversations, she realized that they had paid heed to the message in the drama and had been much more aware of the issue of teenage pregnancy and were trying so hard to make education their priority for a brighter future. The children keep echoing their role model knowledge and how much they kept on referring to the issues in the drama anytime they were together.



Figure 1: A view of the facilitators in an interview with an 18 year old teenage mother (Source: Miriam Laryea 2020)



Figure 2: A view of a facilitator in a conversation with a JHS student at the basic school
(Source: Daniel 2020)

Gyangyanadze, a farming community located in winneba also served as a field for collecting data and assessing the facilitator as a change agent. After facilitators lived in Gyangyanadzie community for six weeks, and observing critically it was discovered that Gyangyanadzie community had sanitation problems such as bad smells from waste, stagnant waters, open defecation, improper disposal of waste sand weaning and dirty compound or environment, from the above mention, improper disposal is the dominant factor that impede development in the community. It was discovered that Some of the community members still go to work without a proper disposal of their waste. Some also sweep their compound directly into the bush around them, instead of them gathering and disposing it properly. Looking at the percentage of people who properly dispose their waste is: 30% and those who do not equaled 70%. Indigenes in Gyangyanadzie see proper disposal of waste as a want and not an obligation.





Figure 4: Head of Department of Theatre presenting the dustbin to the community. (Source: Mantel Dartey, 2021).

Few weeks after the project, a follow up was done to Gyangyanadze community to find the outcome of the whole project. The chief and opinion leaders expressed their gratitude for a causing a change in the mindset of the people towards sanitation. Upon getting to the town it was observed that the community was looking very clean and the youth had just returned from a cleanup exercise, something the community had witnessed in a while ago. It was observed that various dustbins distributed to them at the various vantage point where dumping of waste could be easily and readily executed.



Figure 5: One of the dustbin donated by the facilitators at Gyangyanadze. (Source: Harriet Dadzie, 2021).



Figure 6: Facilitators at evaluation at Gyangyanadze at a clean environment. (Source: Selina, 2021).

A critical observation and discussions with the community members and opinion leaders of the Gomoa Assin community, A farming community in central region revealed that, self medication is one of the dominant problem and has really caused a lot of dangers to the people of the community.

It is important to state that the people of Gomoa Assin engage in self medication due to the hardship that has bedeviled the people, high level of illiteracy, availability of local herbs around in terms of their geographical surroundings and the negative perception tag to the use of the Community Health Base Planning Service (CHPS) CLINIC. Self-medication has become a common practice in the community despite its negative effects on the people



Figure 1: A view of the CHPs Compound.(Source: Dennis Asante Yeboah 2019)



Figure 8: A view of the Hospital scene in the Drama. (Source: Jeremy Olympio 2019)

An evaluation was carried-out to get knowledge on the impact of the project. An interaction between the supervisors and members of the community revealed that the presence of the facilitators had changed the perception of the people on the need to visit the hospital when sick and self-medicate. Most of the parents and children who participated actively in the intervention said they now understand very well the negative effects of Self-Medication and the dangers associated with it. Traditional authorities and the opinion leaders asked facilitators to organize more of such programs to address issues in the community such as Teenage pregnancy, Malaria and many others. One major indicator in the community thus the Nurses in the community had promised to introduce such medium in their scope of work to enhance effective change in their various jurisdictions. The district supervisor of the community health base planning services (CHPs) compound said the impact of the project has really been felt and gradually the community members are visiting them whenever they see some signs of ill health.

Mention can be made of Gomoa Pomadze TFD project. A theatre for development project conducted on 11th March 2012. Pomadze is a community which is located in Central Region, Gomoa West to be precise. It is about two kilometers drive from Winneba Junction. Their mother language is Gomoa, but due to their interaction with their neighboring communities, they have learnt to speak Fanti, Twi, English and Effutu. The problem identified in Pomadze was the poor habit of savings. It was noticed that majority of the people are not saving and the few that saved risked their money in the hands of a man who comes on his own concurrence to take money from them. The money he takes does not yield interest for the people but rather, some amount is deducted by the Susu collector as his income for keeping the money. This line of saving money is very risky as the Susu collector can run away with the money or may be attacked by armed robbers. If the unexpected happens, it means that the money one has suffered for has gone down the drain. The development agent used drama to create awareness, at the post discussion forum a micro finance agency oriented the populace on the importance of savings. The play was titled *Tomorrow Starts Today*. The play was about a woman who gets duped by a man who collects money from the people of the community on his own accord. She vexes her anger on everyone who comes her way. A lady gets into contact with her and advises her to stop saving with the man because it is very risky. Her husband goes to see his friend for a loan who in turn directs him to his wife. They go to see his wife and surprisingly, they get to know the secret of their booming business is savings. They quickly agree to save with their bank and apply for a loan to expand their business. This play was written to communicate to the community.

After the performance, the master of ceremony initiated the discussion. The personnel from MicroFin Plus, Mr. Ishmael Okyere shared a few thoughts about how necessary it is for one to save money and the benefit that can be derived from saving. He said he, his board members and team of workers are ready to help the people of

Pomadze and Asebu develop the habit of patronizing the current trend of saving. He urged the people to desist from saving with people who do not have any linkage with a recognized bank. He cited examples from the performance. By ending, he said that if the people can change their behavioral pattern towards saving, majority of their problems will be solved. One of the elders of Pomadze said he has critically observed and analyzed the situation. His finding is such that the people of Asebu and Pomadze are not saving because they feel the bank is for the rich and educated. He advised his people on the issue and concluded that one should not be embarrassed or humiliated because he is an illiterate or poor, but they should note that the rich are rich now because they saved the little they had.

The issue of rehabilitation in the Ghanaian Prison is one of the functions that needs a critical and vivid watch since its failure has become a major problem in our prisons lately. The Winneba Local Prisons produces lots of recidivist (a convicted criminal who re-offends, especially repeatedly) due to its inadequacy to accomplish the reform and rehabilitation objective of the prison service. Over there, most inmate are packed in there unbothered as if in a 'warehouse'. This has led to most inmates coming back to the prisons for the same reasons that brought them there earlier after serving their previous jail terms because the reform and rehabilitation objectives were not adequately applied during their previous stay which turns to expose them to their previous crimes.

Again, lack of resources and funds from co-operate organizations, stakeholders and the government are major factors that contributes to the inadequate application of the rehabilitation and reform objectives of the Prison Service. In the case, the Winneba Local Prison lacks funds to support and aid them get enough tools, equipment and infrastructures in order to execute and manage a well-structured rehabilitation plan for inmates in the prison. All the above mentioned factors have greatly played a role in developing the rehabilitation and reform objectives of the Ghana Prison Service especially the Winneba Local Prison. The researcher therefore believe these problems must be immediately dealt with in order to improve the status and conditions at the Winneba Local Prison to make the inmates better people, not recidivist. This aided facilitators to finally use an intervention on the 12th of February 2019.



Figure 9: Scenes from the performance (Source Eugene 2019)



Figure 10: An Inmate being advised by the officer to use the skills obtained to work after serving a jail term.
(Source : Eugene 2019)



Figure 11: Skill training (Beads on slippers making) by facilitators and inmates (Source Edith Duah 2019)



Figure 13: Presentation of Items made by Inmates (Source Eugene 2019)

VIII. CONCLUSION

It is the facilitator who first of all conceives the idea of what he/she wants to do as a change agent. They do not impose their preconceived ideas of change on the community he/she intends to embark on a project, but rather, with persuasion and dialogue, they come together to work for the needed change. The facilitator is also committed to knowing whether the community is ready to accept the change or not. The facilitators must let the community know it is their project or initiative and also make sure he/she leaves behind structures that will help the community sustain the project when they eventually leave the community to guarantee the sustenance of the project.

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