THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT (TFD) AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: AN ACCOUNT OF THE ZANGON TAMA EXPERIENCE

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Abstract
Local Communities in Nigeria and Africa as whole are seriously faced with massive developmental challenges. These challenges are quite evident in their standards of living. More scathing is the fact that the approaches to addressing the development challenges encountered in local communities in most cases have left communities to just have an attitude of dependency on ‘expert’ knowledge and official interventions.

Keywords:
Community, Theatre for Development (TFD), Zangon Tama, Development and Participation.

INTRODUCTION
Community development actions have become pertinent in the wake of massive development differentiation which keeps widening between urban towns and local communities across the country. The situation has placed a lot of local communities at the receiving end of the down sliding state of social, economic and environmental degradations in the society. The discourse and commitment to addressing the development deficiencies encountered in local communities in most cases, have been in patterns that leave community members as ‘consumers’ and ‘beneficiaries’ of planned actions as emerging from policy...
addressing their local issues, which in many cases in the country end up in unrealized dreams. Although local communities by themselves may not be able to address the humungous developmental deficiencies that they are faced with, nevertheless their inputs to identifying, discussing, and proffering solutions as well as sustaining development goals and projects cannot be overemphasized. Thus the need to pursue local community development that empowers and gain the active collaboration and participation of the members become fundamental in the elevation of their marginalized status.

Mathie and Cunningham emphasized that:

...marshalling of locally available resources is central to the process of local empowerment. This involves deliberate effort to locate and utilize human potentials such as personal attributes and skills. It also entails building on relationships among people through social, kinship, or association networks. Empowerment rests on the principles that the recognition of strengths, gifts,
talents, and assets of individuals and communities is more likely to inspire positive actions for change than an exclusive focus on their needs and problems. (Mathie and Cunningham, 2002: 3).

The community members articulating their concerns and aspirations become less suspicious of outsiders schemes and patterns, and more importantly get motivated to harness their hidden potentials and abilities to enhancing their conditions however modest they are. Idebe further states that:

This principle is anchored on the premises that people will identify with, protect and maintain what they have worked collectively to build. It is that level of community participation that builds true sense of ownership of local development initiatives and projects. To pave the way for local community empowerment, the principle argues that the best experts on matters concerning a people are the people themselves. They know their situation better than the outside agents. Empowerment is most effective way of power decentralization that gives local communities opportunity to exploit the diverse complexities of their condition and adapt to changes as they generate their own innovations, find their own solutions, and determine their own pathways to social change and development (Idebe, 2019:3).

In the light above, this paper discusses the vital role which Theatre for Development (TFD) processes for community engagement offer local communities as they seek to explore opportunities to give significant commitment to addressing the challenges and altercations that hinder them.

**Concept of TFD**

TFD as a process explores the use of theatre and other communications tools in undertaking a participatory community research. The process usually demands active participation of the people. Abah defines TFD as “the practice by which theatre is put at the service of the disadvantaged rural and urban poor for the purposes of discussing and working out strategies for dealing with their socio-economic conditions” (Abah, 1990:17). Commenting in a similar vein, Rapheal – Ogu (2009:3) state that “theatre for development is a process of stimulating and sustaining participation with the target community along development lines, using the world of theatre to achieve real solution to practical life problems affecting the people”. The functionality of the TFD process in bringing the community to the awareness of the key role they play
in shaping their hopes and prosperous livelihood is here emphasized. The community is made to realize the potentials they have in harnessing their individual and collective energies toward addressing the numerous challenges they are faced with. Ahura (1990:55) thus gives an elaborate explanation of the concept noting that it:

...emphasizes the mass mobilization of the rural masses for the purpose of upgrading themselves intellectually and materially so that they come to a thorough understanding of themselves and their environment. By this understanding they as a group come to full knowledge of the structures that are injurious to them and those that enhance their prestige as human beings. They therefore prepare themselves to control their destiny by seeking to change the existing situation.

How TFD can be explored as an effective communication channel to bring about the needed changes in the community is here emphasized. How it allows the community to be released from bottlenecks and unfavourable political, economic and social conditions that suppresses and endangers community development; and consequently spurring them into a new experience wherein they see themselves as a collective force for sustainable development is the central focus of this form of theatre. Hence Malomo opines that TFD in theory and practice is:

...a communication strategy and process that aims at community participation that achieves sustainable development. This participatory methodology has an appeal that relates to community development, because it encourages the people themselves to take part in identifying their problems and to proffer solutions to those problems through participatory research, problem analysis, playmaking and discussion (Malomo, 2004:26)

TFD as noted by Malomo involves a given methodology that basically includes the following stages: Preliminaries, Community Research, Data Analysis, Scenario Building, Rehearsals, Performance, Post-Performance Discussions and Follow-through or Follow-up. It is however important to state that this procedure is not fixated, as it can be adjusted to suit the peculiarities of a given
TFD experience or project. This paper will therefore provide an account of the TFD process undertaken in Zangon Tama of Giwa Local Government, Kaduna State. It was facilitated by the 2010/2011 Post Graduate Students of Theatre and performing Arts, Faculty of Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The project was aimed at exploring TFD in engaging the local community so as to spur them to addressing some of the social challenges and conflicts that hampers them.

A Brief Profile of Zangon Tama

Zangon Tama is a community located in Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State. It is predominantly occupied by the Hausa speaking tribe. The community is about 15km from the Local Government Headquarters. The community is headed by an elderly man called the mai-ungwa. The name of the mai-ungwa is Yakubu Danbarau. In terms of their residence, they live mainly in mud houses with zinc roofs. The community members are mainly farmers with the planting of grains as a major farming occupation. Majority of the people in this community, practice the Christian religion; and other members of the community practice the Islamic religion.

There is no presence of any government project, a situation which has placed the community in a marginalized and deplorable condition. More so this condition has not received any meaningful or significant change as the community finds it difficult to move ahead due to the polarized experience that exists between the Christians and the Muslims of the community. It is to this end that the TFD project undertaken in a community of this kind became necessary as it was aimed at unlocking the clog that was in wheel of development of the people as well re-orientating their minds as regards their communal co-existence so as to enable them gradually transform the fate of the community.

The Zangon Tama TFD Methodology: The Preliminaries

The TFD workshop first began with a preliminary stage in which the workshop organizers discussed issues and got to organize all necessary activities that will lead to the successful realization of the community project. Contact with the community and relevant authorities were done in order to have a smooth and safe landing. At first, the community liaison officer, Mr. Mathew Myam was contacted. Having experienced a previous TFD project, he
was excited about the idea. With his help, we were able to meet key personalities in the community. He also gave us some hint on how to go about our project with the community. As it regards other logistics such as accommodation and feeding, arrangement was put in place through the efforts of the community liaison officer. The date was scheduled for the programme was 10th – 12th of June, 2011.

**The Community Research**

The community research begins as soon as those concerned (facilitators) arrives for the TFD project. For us the first point of call on arrival was the L.G headquarters to see the traditional ruler where Zangon Tama is situated. He is usually referred to as Sarkin Nasarawa. Our coordinating lecturer, Mr. Steve Daniel introduced the class to him and told him our mission. The traditional ruler thanked the group and assured them of their safety and protection in his domain.

After the warm reception of the traditional ruler, members of the class were in for some adventure as they climbed a canter to Zangon Tama. The road was untared and along the bumpy, desert-like road, the canter vehicle rode. For a while, it was like we were heading towards the deserts because of the terrain. Upon arrival, we were welcomed by a cross section of the community members. Mr. Matthew Myam who spoke on behalf of the community welcomed us and introduced the different personalities to us. This stage further helped in creating or establishing an important relationship between outsiders (facilitators) and insiders that is members of the Zangon Tama community. It helped to break the ice which existed at first instance of entering the community. Therefore a very suitable environment of partnership and participation were established amongst us and the people of the community.

It is very necessary to highlight that the essence of the project was to work with the community and to seek their active participation in the entire process. To this end the homestead approach of the TFD methodology was adopted. According to Gbilekaa (1990:32), he explained that the homestead approach:

Involves resource personnel staying with villagers as guests, sharing their experiences, eating and dialoguing with them. This method represents a process of integration and accommodation, acceptability of resource
personnel by villagers. In this way, the resource personnel come to grip with the actual realities of rural life. The brief period of stay establishes a measure of confidence and trust as the resource personnel eat their meals and partake in their day to day events.

It is important to state that the process in which the outsiders (facilitators) lived and collaborated with the insiders in the Zangon Tama Community created a sense of ownership in the people as they saw the project as their own and were ready to give all necessary support for the success of the project. This stage in the project enabled outsiders to learn some of the culture and traditions of the people of the community so as not to create a situation of alienation in the process of carrying the project. This process also enabled the facilitators to identify the channels of communication within the community. All these are necessary to achieve a participatory process.

Keeping with the idea of participatory communication research the following tools were employed for this research work which includes: Transect walk, interviews and discussions with members of the community. Transect walk is a PLA tool that is used to explore the spatial dimensions of the people's realities (Kumar, 2001). Through transect walk with some members of the community across Zangon Tama, spatial data such as land use, settlement pattern and environmental conditions were identified and people’s perception of these situations were investigated and discussed. This helped in generating an overview of Zangon Tama geographical environment and at the same time draws attention to some peculiar and unusual characteristics of the area. The following were observed during the transect walk:

i. Zangon Tama and the surrounding communities are of dispersed settlement. Virtually all the buildings in this settlement are made of mud blocks and zinc roof.

ii. Outside been a dispersed settlement, it is also a divided settlement that shows the entire members of the Christian religion living in one side of the community and in the opposite side the members of the Islam religion. This scenario already gives an indication of a polarized community whose opposite ideological beliefs has been given a physical parallel composition in terms of their settlement pattern. Further enquiry shows that the arrangement of the community in this manner is not accidental but as a result of both sides not wanting to inter-mingle among themselves.
iii. There is a serious lack of infrastructures in this locality. This is the bane of agricultural development in Nigeria. For a community where agriculture is predominant, the necessary infrastructure to aid farmers and non-farmers should be in place so as to encourage productivity. The basic infrastructures herein refer to accessible roads, public health centers, portable water sources and community schools.

iv. The community members mainly plant grain crops such as maize, millet, rice and beans. They also plant in less amount; vegetable crops and fruit crops. They are also into the rearing of animals such as goats, cows and rams. The whole family members are into the farming process.

v. The trip to this community revealed the fact that climate change is on the rise. Even before we got to the community, we discovered the devastating effect of rainstorm on gigantic trees and the land topography. The few trees available in the community are felled for economic reasons. Apart from the transect walk, there was also informal interviews and interactive sessions with the community. The interview session involved some members of the community who joined us in visiting the houses and farms of community members. The interaction was free and friendly and this gave community members a relaxed atmosphere to identify and talk about the problems and challenges of the community. Some of the challenges which they talked about include: The lack of social amenities, the problem of Youth unemployment, farming challenges, health issues, lack of public schools and the problem of disunity between the Christians and Muslims of the community. It is important to state at this point that although Zangon Tama was our central focus, we ensured that few neighbouring communities were equally visited. There were about six of them. The names of communities visited include: Nasarawa, Hayi Dan Kawo, Ungwar Ilu, Bare – Bari, Zangon Tama II. Interestingly most of these communities happen to face similar challenges faced by Zangon Tama. The essence of visiting neighbouring communities was to ensure that these communities are given some sense of consideration as regard the challenges they are equally facing. More so, it was our hope that members of these communities who faced similar challenges will honour our invitation to the community performance at Zangon Tama. This we believe will provide them vital lessons which they can put into practice in their own respective communities.
The employment of these methodological tools were very important because it helped in painting a real picture of the communities’ problems, causes, and perhaps way forward. In absolving and connecting different members of the community in the research process the participatory research allowed for an unbiased and objective elicitation of information and yielded the needed awareness creation of the communities.

Research Analysis
This stage of the TFD work involved discussion of research findings. This was done with the aim of developing drama skit on the major issues brought in from the community research. While analyzing all the findings we made during the community research, it was agreed that the performance should be all encompassing. In other words, the performance should include both the community and the facilitators. In this way, it was taught that we shall engage more participation and properly address issues gotten from the field. While discussing with members of the community on how we could address these problems, religious conflict and the problem of education was top most on the minds of members of the community present. They wanted the problems of religious differences and lack of co-operation that they experience among them to be attended to, with our visitation. One of the members of the community youth group by name Lazarus noted that the most challenging issue in their community is the problem of religious disunity and that is what we must centre on because if we do this we must have hit the nail on the head. His suggestion received a wide support by the community members who also spoke in the same light. However, another by name Abubakar stood up to say that although he is aware that there is disunity he feels that the issue of unfairness to one another in the community needs to be more addressed. On his part Ahmed said that the school fees they are paying in the missionary school is too high and that he sees this as a way of extortion. He imagined why they should be paying the sum of 4000 naira yearly in a community of their kind. This he sees as a way of exploitation from the Christian community.

Knowing how sensitive the aspect of religious conflict and opposite opinions on issues of this topic are, it was our intention that rather than give too much time and opinion on opposing and contending voices which might end up prove counter-productive; it was agreed that we should rather lead them to
focus on other challenges befalling them especially as it concerns the educational development of the children which was already towing a segregated dimension whereby only the Christian children are attending formal education with no member of the Muslim community in attendance. This we find potentially dangerous for the future of the society.

**Rehearsals and Performance**

While rehearsing, roles were taken by both Christians and Muslims in the community. It was a simple improvised drama and as such it was not so difficult for those who played roles to quickly adapt to their respective roles. The members of the community made significant input into the plot of the story. This was quite useful as it enable the play to gain the picture of the people’s reality. After the rehearsal stage, the next was the performance of the improvised play before the entire community. The whole activities which community members and facilitators have engaged in throughout the period of stay in the community were then given to the community people in dramatic performance form.

To kick start this stage of the programme, one of the facilitators, Mallam Sulaiman Haruna, welcomed the people to the evening gathering and intimated them on the evening activities. The TFD workshop members together with some members of the community presented the play performance. The drama talks about two primary school pupils in the village, one a Muslim and the other a Christian who initially started going to school built by the catholic missionary, but later on the Father of the Muslim child stopped the child from attending the school, when his friend asked him why was he not coming to school he did not give a good reply, but said he was not chanced. After a long while, both friends did not see each other, but when they later met, the Christian pupil started narrating the much he has benefited in the school and that he can now speak and understand English language. With pains and disappointment in him the child went home to ask his father why he stopped his schooling but he never gave him any concrete reply.

The play stopped at that stage and it was now time for the people to speak on the issues highlighted in the play but by this time it was a bit late, and some members of the community and neighbouring communities wanted to leave. After consultation with some elders, we collectively decided to postpone the discussions for the next day.
Post-Performance Discussion
The post-performance discussion ordinarily comes up after the drama itself, where issues emanating from the drama itself are discussed and analyzed, but in the case of the Zangon Tama project there was a slight variation due to time constrain. The post-performance discussion stage came up the next and final day, which later turned out to become a very useful community dialogue where issues analyzed went beyond the matters raised in the drama.

Being Sunday, some community members had to go to their places of worship in the early hours of the day. Hence, the programme for the day was scheduled for the midday. As soon as it was midday, the people were already assembled. All segments of the community were represented. In the course of discussion a major issue which the people discussed was the problem of religious divide which was affecting the community. Both parties bare their minds on this problem. Some others lamented the poor state of infrastructures in the community. The Community Laison Officer on his part said that although a number of them have seriously talked about the problem of community disharmony, he made them to understand that there are other issues which they must also tackle as a community which this issue of conflict is avoiding them to critically look into. He lamented on the lack of cooperation so far as regard the school project of the community and made them to realize that they must all understand that this is for the benefit of the future of their community.

Having identified and discuss some major problems affecting the community, a significant development which the community dialogue led to was the building up of a community action plan (CAP). The whole intention of the CAP was done with the intention charting a new path for the community's peaceful co-existence and development. The following were the initial major issues that were agreed upon as a way of kicking starting the Plan:

i. As a way of collaborative efforts to addressing the problem of education, the Christians and Muslims of the community stated that there will be need to build a separate structure which they can use for their primary school for their children and the structure will be run by both parties. In this regard, they sort for our maximum cooperation for which we obliged them.

ii. They also agreed to use the primary school structure owned by the church to start an Adult Education programme. This action is taken with the intention of creating mediums by which the community can
further learn and harness their potentials in unison. The inauguration was scheduled for Friday the 8\textsuperscript{th} of July, 2011. The TFD workshop students assured them of sending some delegates as a way of follow-through process.

iii. They agreed that religious leaders must ensure that they help in propagating religious tolerance and co-existence among them through their preaching and messages during religious services.

iv. They also pointed out the need to still have more community dialogue that will help in strengthening their bond as well as enabling them to collectively resolve other social challenges which affect the community.

This stage of the Zangon Tama TFD exercise made the people to realize more, that the very problem of religious differences which exist among them should not be used as a hindrance to their collective goals, on the contrary, develop a greater awareness and consciousness that will enable them to harness the potentials within them to turn around what seems to be a conflict among them, to a comparatively advantageous scenario. Paolo Freire (1985) terms this Conscientization, that is to say developing a particular kind of consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform unsuitable realities. Instead of paying so much attention to the differences that is inherent in their religions peculiarities, the Zangon Tama community was brought to a deeper realm of consciousness that they must first and foremost turn their energies into addressing their common socio-economic and environmental challenges. It is only in this way that they can come to the full knowledge of the potentials which they have as a united force.

**Follow Through**

This stage of the TFD exercise has always been a challenge for many TFD projects. This is because a number of seem to pay less commitment to undertaking a follow-through to the already conducted TFD exercise. Hager (1990) did state that “without a proper follow-through the success of the TFD exercise cannot be adequately determined because the community may even relapse into passivity”. However, for the Zangon Tama TFD exercise, a follow through was successfully organized. It involved some members of the facilitators that initially made the first visit. The follow through took place on
the 8th of July, 2011. The day of the follow through was also the day that was set for the launching of the school and Adult education project. At this occasion, with the assistance of the community liaison officer, we had the privilege of having in our midst the presence of the former local government chairman, Alhajhi Mohammed Usman.

Some of the action plans which were discussed initially were brought up to ascertain the extent to which the community has made effort in addressing these areas. The community liaison officer, Mr. Matthew noted that after our visit, they have been able to meet again to discuss more on the different social problems they face and to agree on how to organize the launching of the school and adult project. They also planned that the building will in future serve as a community secondary school. He also lamented that some members of the community are still not showing the expected interest in what they are doing. He added that the presence of the former local government chairman is as a result of the meeting.

When the former chairman of the local government was invited to speak, he seriously thanked the team of the TFD project and encouraged them to continue to toe this line of development. He then reminded the people that they must realize that growth and development does not have any religious face, and as such the people will be committing a serious error if they choose to hinder their own progress because of their religious differences. He then donated the sum of twenty thousand naira and also promised to help them, in ensuring that an accessible road is made to the community. The TFD facilitators also donated a total sum of seven thousand naira for the project and promised to provide zinc for the school. As for the community themselves they said that they will now sit to see how they can apportion the remaining amount to different members and groups in the community. By this move the community are thus stimulated and given new zeal to pursue and explore their set agenda with the needed symbiotic spirit that can keep the hopes and aspirations of the community alive. Nwosu (2010:35) exploring the potential which the theatre process poses in the transformation of conflict points out that:

Theatre reawakens the consciousness of key players in inter-personal conflict and sharpens their sense of reasoning. Drama and Theatre act as catalyst that stimulate change in mode of behaviour and perception of thoughts, which is
capable of reshaping the social structure of a people, for a more conducive and comfortable living

In an interview with Mr. Steve Daniel, the lecturer who coordinated the TFD project, he did say that the community has now commenced the construction of a borehole project which came about as a result of a contact with a philanthropist who was interested in helping the community get a bore-hole. Furthermore, he noted that some representative of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) visited the community to look at possible areas of improving their socio-economic status. It is important to state that these very experiences which has seen external influence coming to identify with the people’s condition shows the importance which continuum in the TFD project requires. The consistent concern shown by TFD resource personnel should also be seen as a way widening the process of intervention by which the follow through process of the TFD can be pursued. The resource persons also serve as functioning linkages between the community and relevant bodies who could help to address the social conditions of their community.

Conclusion
The study of the Zangon Tama TFD experience in this paper, clearly shows that the TFD medium can contribute to community peace building and progressive turnaround. This it was able achieve by creating a climate for enhanced community interaction and socialization, the working out of a greater sense of religious and social cohesion, developing strategies for community members in addressing their communities challenges as well as making the people aware of not only their rights but also of their responsibilities. As government and non governmental agencies, community leaders and other stakeholders involve in tackling the challenges faced by local communities, TFD as a process for community engagement becomes a tool of inestimable value in mediation. This is able to achieve by pursuing a careful but friendly investigation of the way opposite parties interact, disagree and manage their differences. Its central tool is dialogue amongst people. Through dialogue, TFD allows all parties to seek a common understanding. Hence, TFD as a tool that rally people and strive for collective and united living becomes very strategic in community engagements.

References


