

THE GIRL-CHILD IN THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE: CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Theatre for Development is one of the verified systems in participatory development communication that aims at addressing knowledge gaps and effecting attitudinal and behavioural challenges. Thus, it can serve as a tool for informing and educating against harmful practices that impact negatively on the survival, development, protection and participation of children (especially female) at the community and household levels. This is against the back drop of the campaign all over Africa today, of the voiced urgency to alleviate mass poverty and increase the welfare of the girl-child and women through education. This paper is an attempt at capturing the efforts by UNICEF in Northern Nigeria in addressing gender gap in education. The question posed by this paper is whether the TFD methodology has been able to give the girl child the necessary voice through its processes not just to read the alphabet but also to read her world. This paper argues that the lack of opportunity for the girl-child to locate her space in the context of participation in the processes of her development does not portend well for her overall growth in the high speed techno-communication 21st century world.

Keywords: Theatre, participation of children, girl-child,

INTRODUCTION

Theatre from its early beginning has been engraved in humans many attempt to address the various limitations and ambiguities of life and that of the environment. In the quest to deal with the mysteries of nature, human beings resorted to performative medium inform of dance, imitation and ritual to tame nature to their advantage. Theatre has evolved from these humble beginnings into the various forms that we have today. It is therefore imperative to state that drama right from its roots has always been man's instrument for investigating, learning and understanding new knowledge. Elam K. Chambers sums it up thus:

To the primitive mind, the obvious way to obtaining result in nature is to make imitation of it on a small scale. To achieve rain, water must be splashed around, or

some other characteristics of a storm or shower must be reproduced. To achieve sunshine, a fire must be lit, or some other representation of the appearance and notion of the sun must be devised. (35)

Osofisan corroborates the assertion above when he enunciates that:

It certainly would not be a fanciful speculation to suggest that as far back as the beginning of Organization of men into social and political communities, theatre activities must have served as a part of the socialization process initiated and employed by our ancestors. (1)

He espouses further that, because all human societies have always been aware of the need to nurture, mobilize and foster group solidarity among its members, it has always used the theatre among other strategies to achieve these goals. At no point in the history of human existence is the theatre more functional than it is today. Illah captures it more succinctly when he expresses that, “every community has developed over time, a theatre that suits its way of life, its pressure and shifts in attitudes” (3). Theatre For Development is an off shoot of these pressures. It is a theatre of necessity that gives strength to the voice of the silent masses on issues relating to their overall development. It provides the avenue to scratch to the surface, salient issues bordering their growth and transformation and spurs them to take affirmative action. Bill Lee describes this type of theatre as being participatory and belonging to a:

Family of approaches and techniques that enable community groups to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to formulate appropriate and empowering action. (2)

Expatriating further, Iorapuu and Bamidele illuminate that Theatre For Development is a:

process of reflection and action that uses the medium of drama to deconstruct the myths that people become split personalities or social, economic and political Lepers. (in Osofisan 35)

Abah also, while advancing on this discourse elucidates that, “in order for people to reclaim their voices, the stages in the TFD practice define movement of participation in critical analysis of their issues” (123).

TFD is people oriented. It is a theatre done by the people for the people utilizing local content to recreate their historical realities. This practice of making theatre in community setting, creates spaces that enable the participant’s voices to be heard. This is because the performance involves the interaction and negotiation of meaning between performers and the audience as they interact

both actively and vicariously. In the process, the enactment will appeal to the people in terms of memory and imagination and galvanize them to seek for an alternative reality.

TFD is a communicative and informative strategy, it probes the level of knowledge, attitudes, motives and other issues of the target community. The TFD strategy thus opens up a wide range of option in promoting issues relating to the girl-child and her education in Nigeria. More so, this approach also provides girl-children with the opportunity to express their views and make the adult in their lives to listen to them. This educative and informative medium if properly harnessed can help the girl-child to learn more constructive ways of influencing her society. It is from this perspective that Iorapuu and Bamidele (in Osofisan) advocates that:

TFD among other advantages provides opportunities to discuss and represent issues on the 'performance floor' giving the strategy a certain immediacy, authenticity, credibility and cultural acceptability. (39)

The questions, however, is has the TFD strategy been used to address specifically issues relating to the girl-child and her development? How has the advantages and opportunities provided by the TFD strategy help in the educational, mental and social development of the girl-child in Nigeria? This study is an attempt to answer the questions above as well as an exploration into the aspects of Theatre For Development that may impinge its utilization by the girl-child in addressing specific matters relating to her development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used to generate data for this study is basically qualitative. The primary source of data came from interviews and Focus Group Discussion with parents and girls in four communities (Gwam-paikoro LGA, Chibani-Munya LGA and, Rimi and Kankia LGAs) In Niger and Katsina States respectively. Analysis and review from books, Journals and Electronic sources provided the secondary data for this work.

The Girl-child and her Predicaments

The girl-child is a biological female Homo sapiens from birth to eighteen years. The age before one becomes a young adult. She is defined by the "anatomical and physiological characteristics that sets her apart from her male counterpart" (Amirikpa, 3). The period covers crèche, nursery to early child hood (0-5 years), primary (6-12 years) and secondary (12-18 years). Within this length of time, the young child is completely under the nurture, care and tutelage of her natal parents, guardians or older siblings. This early stage of development includes infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence. At this stage, the girl-child is malleable, she builds and develops her personality and character around the adults in her life. At this stage also, she is very dependent

on those whom she models her behaviour through observation, repetition and imitation. Her physical, mental and spiritual development starts and progresses to the peak at young adult stage.

As babies, the differences between girls and boys according to Aderinto “seem minimal, but with time their opportunities for education and development become glaringly unequal” (97). The cultural and social value that places premium on the boy than the girl manifests in diverse forms putting the girl in gross disadvantage. This is thoroughly grounded in institutionalized patriarchy alongside pervasive gender ideology at the home and the society at large. The attendant effect is that, the girl-child even before she was born is discriminated against. The culture of boy-child preference in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and some part of the globe reinforces the subordinate position of the girl-child. She is thus, socialized to accept an inferior self-image to the boy. A key reason adduced for this negative attitude is subsumed within the socio-cultural belief system that tenaciously, albeit spuriously cling to the idea that male children are more superior because they continue to retain and preserve family names after marriage. While it is an established tradition for the female to drop their family name for the husband's name after marriage. The girl child is further caged and put under strict observation and control so as to limit promiscuity. She is expected to be more reserved (shy, servile, subservient, quiet, compliant and withdrawn) in order to be perceived by the patriarchal society in approving terms.

Other socio-cultural factors also impede girl's development educationally, socially and mentally. For instance, in Nigeria, culture plays a crucial role in girl's enrolment, retention and completion rates. The right to education in Nigeria is closely mediated by cultural relations of patriarchy. This implies that girl's educational opportunities tend to be circumscribed by patriarchal attitudes about gender roles, which results in some parents attaching greater importance to the education of boys than girls. This is stretched further when she finally gets the opportunity to be enrolled. Family constraints which manifest in household chores put her at a gross disadvantage. The girl, because of heavy burden of household chores such as cooking, fetching of water and firewood, the care of younger siblings, and washing, hardly has the time to study and do her homework which further affects her performance academically. And whenever a family member is ill, it is the girl-child who is most likely to be made to stay at home to cater for the sick thereby, missing school activities for that period. This of course has overall impact on her learning achievement. The message, therefore, that goes out overtly or covertly from parents and the society at large, is that, education has more relevance for boys than girls. The culture of son preference as a result of the low value placed on the woman generally in the Nigerian cultural context, affects to a great extent the efforts both nationally and globally at girls development.

On the whole, her basic rights are undermined and this has engendered a variety of other harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, disinheritance, she is seen as a sex symbol

and forced into early marriage. This is in spite of the fact that protection rights according to UNICEF (2002) require that all girls and women have full equality and freedom from discrimination and violence under the law, startling statistics still indicate that over 2 million girls in at least 28 countries still undergo Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and that girls and women were becoming infested much faster than men and boys with the HIV virus because of limited life skills, increased battering and violence that expose them to such hazards. This is more clearly articulated by Aderinto when she expresses that:

It is no accident that roles prescribed for the male-child exposes him to socio-economic and political advantage while prescriptive norms limit the socio-economic and political chances of the female child. (10)

It is from the same perspective that UNICEF 1993, lucidly depicts the situation of the girl-child thus:

In the developing world today many more boys become literate than girls. In some countries, twice as many boys are brought to health centers for treatment. Employment rights, social security rights, legal rights, property rights and even civil and political liberties are likely to depend on one cruel chromosome, distinguishing human male from human female. (1)

This enunciates the fact that the socio-cultural environment within which the girl-child operates does not motivate her to attain her full potentials and thus, breeds in her low perception of self. And with little or no education, she is subsequently “subordinated perpetually to her husband for almost everything, even the way she thinks and behaves” (Ikechukwu, 6).

Coming from this muffled background, how can the girl-child employ the potentials of Theatre for Development to confront the realities and bridge the socio-cultural barriers that have rendered her invisible and voiceless? And what is the nature of this medium (TFD) that might impinge its usage by the girl-child? This paper is an attempt to answer these questions.

The TFD Methodology

The TFD methodology consists of community research/Data collection and analysis, scenario formation/building, rehearsal/ performance, and post- performance discussion. Ayegba in his work, however, compressed the TFD methodology into principally three elements. These are the research element, participation element and the action element. The first step in the TFD process is what Steve Aba refers to as “moving into the village and assembling the pictures” (16). This involves the initial contact and the acquaintance with the leadership of the community to state

the mission and objectives as well as obtain permission to engage the community. This will culminate into the next stage which is research element.

Research Element / Data Collection /Community Research.

This stage in TFD practice involves the identification of problem through the generation of data from the target communities. Ayegba describes it as “the practice that originally connects the theatre to the people and gives it credibility as a tool for the discussion of the realities of the people, leading to new discussion and knowledge” (116). Community research is a participatory process and the people themselves are part of the investigation that avail access to the interpretative structures that will help in the reconstruction of events which eventually justify their action. It is built on the foundation of fact from the environment, and by dialoguing the people interrogate the issues that are identified through the proliferation of meaning at different stages. Many solutions are arrived at and tested until a common ground is reached. There are several approaches that can be adopted in researching a community. Three, however, have gained prominence over the years. These are the Homestead method, the flooding method and the interview method.

The Homestead method requires an intimate connection between the animateurs and the villages. In this context, the facilitators are expected to live with community members in their various houses and be part of their day-to day routines during the period of stay. The informal and conversational nature of the approach allows the villagers to open up and share information and experiences with the animateurs. What transpires in this context is that, via dialogue information is generated from people living in their own context. This method helps to build confidence and trust between the facilitators and the target beneficiaries. In the flooding method, the group of animateurs, flood the community from a base that has been assigned to them by the community, visiting people in their houses, farms and at social, informal and even religious gathering to generate data.

The interview method involves the use of both questionnaires and oral formal interviews at ascertaining the people’s needs and situation. A major constraint of this method lies in the fact that most rural dwellers are unable to read and write and due to the very distant nature of the formal interview, it alienate the people from the animateurs. The formality of this method may breed lack of trust and the people may say what they feel the facilitators would want to hear. This method has most often been considered inappropriate for rural research. What has evolved, however, is the integration of Semi Structured Interview (SSI) and Focused Group Discussion (FGD) to give the process a more qualitative dimension. The information gathered from the field is subjected to critical analysis and further triangulations to enable deeper understanding and the

creation of new meaning. The analytical stage is fueled primarily by the idea of problematization which from coutinho's perspective:

Means both asking question and calling into question and is therefore a challenging attitude and, is at one and the same time the beginning of an authentic act of knowing and the beginning of an act of subversion. (9)

Accordingly, the analytical phase involves dialogue, discussions and participation of the people which help to deepen the findings and subsequently lead to action that will subvert the status quo. This stage provides the ingredients for the next phase of the process.

Scenario Formation / Rehearsal

This stage is very crucial in the TFD process. This is the point where dialoguing and the deep interrogation of the issues identified during the observation and data generation phase comes to fruition. The scenario building and rehearsal process goes beyond merely putting together a story. It is a continuous process of scrutinizing, analyzing and clarifying issues identified. This stage is also very important because it is the melting point of all the dramatic elements and the people's folk media forms. It attracts the full involvement of the people who add more content and form to the drama skit. The joint discussion and thinking that takes place between the community and facilitators within the scenario formation and rehearsal stage, helps to increase and improve their appreciation of their problem and to see them from an entirely different perspective. When the beneficiaries are fully involved, they can take over the stage by making, shaping, discarding and adding new materials until the drama tells their story, meets and addresses their needs. The knowledge gained will lead to action which can occur as they decided to confront the existing state of affairs. It is a process that continuously probe and interrogate social and development issues: A continuous activity of social engineering.

Performance/Discussion

Performance as defined by Kershaw, is "an ideological negotiation between the group of performers and their target audience"(16). While Ayegba describes performance as "the testing grounds for the action strategies debated and formulated as the people's responses to the issues analyzed in the whole process" (120). The final performance in the TFD process uses signs and symbols of signification which connects with the target community's cultural frames of reference to forge a dialogue of word views, where the functional world fuses with the realities and experiences of the people. The performance captures the message in concrete images, written in the various body movement and gestures, embellished with songs, music, proverbs and other significations that the people are at ease with.

The unfinished and open ended nature of the final performance creates the avenue for more interrogation and mediation that engenders even newer strategies and action. The performance and discussion phase is most beneficial in the TFD process. It attracts stake holders within and outside the community where attention is drawn to issues in the community that may need external support. This may be the local, state or the federal government and other development partners.

One of the key advantages the TFD medium has over other media is that, it encourages full participation of the people in development and other issues that have direct relevance to their daily lives. Through this medium, people could be mobilized and conscientize not just to seek abstract solution to matters affecting them, or have solution imposed upon them from outside, but to take charge and map out appropriate solutions that will address their realities. The TFD methodology is driven through the people's cultural forms such as: proverbs, songs, music, dance, incantations and of course drama.

The question here is, how can one evaluate a TFD intervention that did not apply all the processes of the methodology that has been discussed above, as is the case with the GEP intervention under evaluation? In other words, at what point can one really verify that a theatrical process has met all the demands to be classified or accepted as TFD? At this point, it is imperative to reiterate that the TFD methodology is not a dead end in itself but a point in negotiating dramaturgy. That is, the methodology is stretchy and flexible and thus, dynamic and adaptable as the case may be. Illah expounding further on this view, states that, a theatrical process will qualify as TFD *"at the point of its sociology. That is, a theatre located among the people, instigating their participation either as participants or audience involving an activity of concern to them"*. (Interview, 20th July, 2018)

This implies that, when communities do drama targeted at their development or when a group of performers take an aspect of theatre towards galvanizing communities for developmental purposes, such activity can stand as TFD. Illah further illuminates that:

TFD is a broad concept and platform. If the community's focus is development, and a theatrical form is employed, it will configure as TFD. Isn't the goal of TFD the people doing theatre by themselves! TFD is elastic not fixated. (Interview, 19th July, 2018)

In essence, the directive principle of the TFD methodology proposes to enable ordinary people employ theatre for their own benefits. In this instance, the TFD approach used in the GEP intervention by UNICEF, qualifies as TFD and thus deserve attention and evaluation.

Conceptual Issues

First, it is important to state that theatre trades in consciousness, feelings and moods and it is consciousness that has inhibited the girl-child over the years. TFD therefore, opens up a wide range of opportunities through its processes in promoting and dealing with issues, relating to social, mental and political growth and development of the girl-child. It is in the same mood that Illah espouses that:

The TFD paradigm anticipates certain development in which barriers between people, their culture and their realities are removed so that they engage in dialogue and capacity building for genuine development and the attainment of their human right (10).

The perspective above mirrors the fact that TFD's tripartite nature (to educate, inform and entertain) makes it an amenable tool through which the girl-child can communicate her fears, hopes and aspirations to the adults in her life.

The TFD approach being both an intra and inter personal communication medium, avails the girl-child the chance to deconstruct and change her realities (norms, beliefs and attitudes that inhibit her). This is because the process involved in data collection, data analysis, scenario formation and final performance, will help the girl-child to learn more constructive ways to mediate and influence her world: The situation in which the girl-child develops the understanding and access which enables her to influence decisions and outcomes that impact her life and her society. This is because, as Daniel and Bappa explain, "the practice of TFD indicates a strong belief in the creative capacity of every individual and attempts at restoring the use of that power to the larger majority of the society" (18). This further explains the fact that the theatre is an activity of consciousness which is designed to influence minds to change their perceptions of themselves and their world through co-operative thinking and action. In this instance, TFD creates the avenue for the girl-child to become visible and assertive: That which the rigid socio-cultural system has denied her in time past. Akashoro elaborates this further when he expounds that:

It is the theatre's ability to ask its audience to think about what they have seen; challenge them to face up to the aspects of their lives that they have tried to ignore; challenge societal beliefs and forces and mold the mind while still entertaining that makes it such a vital medium of conscientization, mobilization and communication. (61)

Illah consolidates the position above when he sums that:

TFD as an aesthetic event, will continue to question our perception of reality, the reconstruction of this social reality will result in greater good if children and

women (girl-children) are brought center stage and guaranteed both the democratic access and voice to fully participate. (16)

The perspective above also illuminates the second dimension to this discourse- participation. Participation here is both a process and an outcome. Participation is one of the greatest strength of the TFD approach. Participation as described by Burkey is:

An essential part of human growth, that is, the development of confidence, pride, initiation, creativity, responsibility and co-operation and the process whereby people learn to take charge of their own lives and solve their own problems. (56)

It is a process of awakening, of raising levels of consciousness and a process of transformation that enables people to grow and mature as human beings and to navigate and interact effectively with their world. It is from the same stance that early childhood development programmers reiterate that the connecting thread between much of the most inspiring children programming work going on seems to emphasis on children's active participation in defining projects which directly impact their lives and making decisions at different stages (Arnold,10). The immediate and transitional impact of this approach on children's self-worth, their enthusiasm and opportunities for learning and problem solving abilities are implicit. This is even more so in the case of the girl-child in most homes in Nigeria. Raised from birth to look after the needs of the men and boys in the family, it is hard for her to believe her opinions are valued because no one hardly ever sought her opinion on anything or felt she had one, and so it is hard for her to formulate ideas and express them.

As she grows, this further crystalizes into a wave of inferiority complex and shyness that renders her silent and invisible as a woman. This is because, according to Caroline Arnold, it is during the early years that vital aspect critically influencing people's abilities to interact effectively with their world is laid down (15). This implies that, it is during the earliest interaction that our sense of who we are and the confidence and skills to express ourselves and negotiate our rights are established. This clearly points to the fact that psychological mechanisms underpins important social and intellectual behaviors, this is why David Elkind espouses that, "the self grows out of the reflected appraisal of other persons in the course of interaction. How we come to think about ourselves is a consequence of how others have reacted to us in the course of early experience" (12). The exposition above indicates that, the experience of child-hood determines whether a "child grows up to be intelligent or dull, fearful or self-assured, articulate or tongue tied" (Begleys: 137).

In general, the female inferiority complex is established from childhood through social interaction in the home, school and community at large, including the differential levels of

support and motivation, which has influenced the aspiration and eventual learning of girls over the years. The TFD approach is driven by its ability to facilitate participation which is the key factor that has heighten the exclusion of the girl-child from the mainstream. With TFD, the participant (girl-child) is on a journey to self-discovery, consciousness, and positive action.

But in spite of the radical posture of Theatre for Development, little has been done to include the girl-child in its processes. Steve Daniel and Bappa analyzing the situation note that:

Over the years, the methodology adopted has been adult centred. Even when issues relating to children (girl-child) are discussed, the child is most often ignored or merely used as show piece to enrich the project. The creative potentials of the children are hardly discussed or harnessed (19).

This strategy of exclusion according to Illah, “took the girl-child further away from the centre stage, even in cases where they were the subject of the drama in plays focusing on their education, health etc.” (14). While they were allowed to go along and enjoy the performance, they were not permitted to contribute to matters arising from the performance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section focuses on interactions through interviews and Focus Group Discussion sessions with girls and parents in the states under study which relates to issues that border on the girl-child and her development as mediated by UNICEF through its Girls Education Project (GEP) phase One and Two. The language used during the interview and focused group discussion sessions was Hausa through an interpreter. This is subsequently translated in the body of the work. 10 people were interviewed from each state, totally 20 people. While 32 (8x4) people participated in the FGD session. The total population for this study is 52 in all.

UNICEF and a variety of development agencies have utilized TFD as an interpersonal form to enhance the dissemination of key development messages and to stimulate active participation among marginalized people on development themes. A case in point is the UNICEF’s Girls Education Project (GEP) being implemented in six northern states of Bauchi, Niger, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto and Borno from 2005-2019. From interviews and Focused Group Discussions, it was discovered that TFD based drama was and is a key strategy in the effort to mobilize and sensitize communities on the benefit of girl-child education. The aim is to address cultural mind sets about the importance of the girl and her education and subsequently get parents to change their behaviour and attitude and realize that educating their daughters is equally important as boys.

From the four focus group discussions with female pupils in Gwam primary School (paikoro LGA) and Chibani primary school (Munya LGA) in Niger state, Bardayya primary school Rimi LGA and Hassan Usman Model Primary School Kankia LGA in Katsina state, it was discovered that TFD based drama was used at different occasions by different agencies to communicate key messages on the importance of girls education to parents and guardians. The agencies include: ministry of education through the Arts Council, SUBEB through the mobilization units at the local government, teachers and pupils of the primary schools. Confirming this, Mallam Muazu Sarki the School Based Management Committee (SBMC) Chairman of Chibani primary school alludes the use of TFD based drama in addressing the challenge of girls education in his community (Chibani). In his words:

Yes, drama was used in the sensitization and mobilization of both parents and community members on girls' education and the need to empower women and girls to enable them contribute positively to the development of the community. (interview, 9th May, 2016)

In another instance, Alhaji Audu Usman Turaki, the community leader of Kankia, affirms that TFD based drama was used at different times to reinforce key messages on female education and girls development rights. He illuminates that:

Among the rural people, no matter what you say, it will seem abstract and most people at the community level may not be able to conceptualize it, but when messages are reduced to drama, that is, when they see it acted out, the messages becomes clearer and more meaningful to them. (14th May, 2016)

Maryam Usman coinciding with the views expressed above states that, "the use of drama has helped to garner attention of parents in the community to the relevance of female education" (interview, Chibani, 9th May, 2016). The respondents from the interview all concurred that TFD based drama was not only used, but that the "drama has effectively communicated messages on girl's education in their communities. The result according to them is due to the fact that drama helps to engrave practical prints on people's consciousness which in turn has helped to reverse the belief of parents that girl's education is a waste of time and resources. Mallama Jumai Adamu from Qwam cited an example of the effectiveness of the TFD based drama mentioning a neighbor who had been strongly opposed to girl's education going to enroll two of his daughters to everyone's amazement after watching a performance during an enrollment campaign drive in 2009. When asked, the man's response was, "the message in the drama opened my eyes to what was in front of me, what I should have realized a long time ago".

From the perspective above, it is clear that TFD based drama was used to address the challenge of girls' education in the states under study. However, the concern of this paper is to ascertain if TFD was also used to address girls on their specific challenges as it relates to their education and overall development. In this regards, this paper is off the opinion that although the issue being addressed by the Girls Education Project in the states under study, concerns majorly the girl-child and issues relating to her rights and development, yet, at no point were girls the target of the TFD based drama. Rather the focus was on changing parents' social and cultural perspective that relegates the girl-child and her education to the background. In other words, no attempt was made to bring the girl-child into the mainstream of the performance where psychological constraints resulting from her socialization process could be addressed or where she could participate and state her fears, misgives and opinions relating to her development. The process only made provision for her to follow the main story, she was however not allowed to contribute to the discussions afterwards. In some instance as captured by Illah (in a similar attempt in Jos) "once the main production started, crowd control measures had to be used, whips in had to keep them quiet" (in Osofisan, 14). This is in spite of the fact that bringing children especially the girl-child "from the fence to the forefront in which their voices are heard will help advance the platform of their rights as enshrined in CRC and CEDAW" (Illah in Osofisan, 16).

This was subsequently revealed during the focused group discussion sessions with girls in the states under study. Even the parents expressed emphatically that children, (especially girls) do not have the capacity to participate in decision affecting their lives. The result is that some of the girls seemed confused and insecure. This is clearly expressed by Mairo Usman one of the participants in the FGD thus:

I am not sure what is expected of me. Yesterday I was told schooling was not meant for me, that all I need is a husband who will take care of me. The next day, I was asked to prepare and go to the same school that was not meant for my type. This is all so confusing. (FGD, 18th may, 2016)

This of course, is the situation of most girls in the states under study and in other parts of the country. This has in turn affected their overall achievement and performance not just as girls but also in future as women. In another instance, the participants expressed concerns anchored on fear at two levels. The first concerns the issue of capital punishment and sexual harassment from male teachers and the other relates to their intellectual capacity. This is aptly captured in the following lines by Bilkisu Muslahu one of the participants in the FGD session:

At first, I was very afraid to go to school after my parents enrolled me. I felt I was not intelligent enough for the formal school system. I felt intimidated hearing the stories of how hard it is to learn and study and how boys do better in school than

girls. I have never seen myself as an intelligent person before now. This is because in my family, we are three girls in the midst of several boys, most of my brothers were sent to school leaving the girls. Our parents gave the impression that we were not as good as the Boys. This was the cause of my fear when my father enrolled me in primary one when I was ten years old. (FDG, 15th may, 2016)

The lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem resulting from socialization has continued to be a burden that most girls in the research environment struggle with throughout their lives. This is a stronger reason why interventions (TFD or otherwise) targeted at empowering girls must begin with efforts to conscientize and redirect their attention to their potentials and capacity as human beings. This begins with providing an enabling environment for them to be heard as well as being actively involved in the intervention process.

Consequently, beyond the boundaries of exclusion analyzed above, is the nature of the TFD approach which might make it difficult for the girl-child to access. TFD is a communicative tool. This requires expression, articulation, interaction and communication skills. The girl-child who as pointed out earlier, has been socialized into shyness and silence may find it strange and uncomfortable to suddenly express and communicate her needs before the adults who had denied her the right to actively participate or air her opinion (if it is believed she has any) on matters relating to her overall development. Besides, for her to be accepted in the patriarchal society, she must be seen (trained) to meet certain standard. Being bold, confident, expressive, assertive and visible are definitely not part of the qualities of a 'good wife'.

The aesthetics of the theatre involves the rehearsal period which is the time for experimentation and discovery. A period when the actor/actress/participant learn, study and investigate the role and also a time to reconstruct and polish the story. This stage is quite demanding and requires long working hours. The girl-child who is under close scrutiny because of the fear that she may become pregnant or promiscuous, is not allowed to go out or stray away from the house for long. Also, Burdened with household chores, carving out time for rehearsals may be quite challenging.

The final performance is a very crucial aspect of the TFD approach. The final performance showcases the problems or issues which engenders discussion and probes for newer strategies and actions. This phase attracts all stake holders to build confidence and solidarity, stimulate discussion, explore alternative options for action and build a collective commitment to change. In this context, parents, teachers, development agencies and the entire community. The performance usually takes place in an open area designated by the community head. It could be the village square, market or any open area wide enough to accommodate the entire village. With no rest room or green room within the vicinity of the performance space, it becomes difficult for

the girl-child to change into and out of costume (given her very reserve upbringing) in the course of the performance. This may hinder the effective utilization of this medium by the girl-child.

The point being made here is that, the girl-child can successfully use the communicative, dialogic and participatory potential of TFD to communicate as well as address issues relating to her welfare and survival. To do this, she must navigate round the ethics and aesthetic of the TFD strategy (costume, make-up, props and other stage metaphors) to give form, order and expressions to her reality. That is, use the theatre to seek new levels of awareness towards behavioral change by doing theatre by themselves. In other words, they collect data about their problems, analyze them, turn them into a story for people to see and collectively find solutions to the identified problems. The process involved in the rehearsal, discussions, thinking and expressions will help the girl-child to write her analysis of her situation and strife for a better future. Also, through the making of their own theatre and using it as a means of developing their own ideas and trying out various strategies for overcoming neglect, victimization and exclusion, they are able to build confidence and self-expression and organization. For as Ross Kidd aptly enthused:

Through dramatization, analysis and re-dramatization, people discover the real constraints and contradictions which inhibit change and possibilities for overcoming these obstacles. (294)

After all, play (mimesis) in childhood has over the years been identified as a significant element in a child's overall development. The most outstanding component of a child's play, is imitation which in essence is a dramatic experience. This view is succinctly illuminated by Froebel when he expounds that:

The play... (imitation) is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for in it alone is the free expression of what is in the child's soul. It is the purest and the most spiritual product of the child and at the same time, it a type and copy of human life at all stages and all relations... For to one that has insight into human nature, the trend of the whole future of the child is revealed in his freely chosen play. (in Ayegba, 101)

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined issues germane to the development of the girl child in Nigeria and concludes that, it is through the voicing of silences that young girls will be able to claim their rights to make decisions about their development and their future. This will in turn help her as she grows and matures, to learn more constructive ways to express herself in public, analyze and verify information, make decisions and resolve conflict. In essence, acquire and use power,

maintain channels of communication, keep accounts and use money wisely. It is this voice and confidence that TFD should restore to the girl-child through its processes. Even though, the TFD strategy has a number of important functions for young girls to positively contribute to their personal and social development and equip them with skills, capability and resources to make successful transition to adulthood, these potentials was not exploited by UNICEF and the implementing agencies in GEP One and Two.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Against the backdrop of the findings of this paper, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) TFD practitioners in the field of child Development should take special cognizance of the psychological and socio-cultural situation of the girl-child and include in their strategies method to address these issues by mainstreaming such issues into their drama skits. Also, girls must gain focal attention in the drama intervention targeted at their development. In this instance, separate performances must be mounted specifically for girls to re-orient them.
- 2) There is need for government through the ministries of Education to revive and establish guidance and counseling units in both primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, most especially the rural areas where there are very few role models for girls to look up to and where girls do not have access to life and career information to guide them. The Guidance and counseling units will also help to cater for the psycho-social needs of most of these girls who drift through school because their parents say so, without really learning literacy and numeral skills for life. In other words, some see schooling only as a means to securing a better husband instead of a tool for socio-mental development. That is, education should be seen first as a means of improving one's life and not just an alternative to getting a good husband, becoming a better wife or being a good mother.
- 3) Basic TFD training should be organized for schools with drama club and young girls in those clubs to enable them navigate around some of the challenges of the TFD methodology that has been identified in this work. In this way, they are able to effectively use the TFD strategy to address issues regarding their development, build communication skills and confidence and get society to listen and hear them out.

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