
Drama, a Vocational Tool for Achieving the National Objectives of Vision 20:2020 in Nigeria

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Abstract

Literature is made up of three branches of which drama is one. Among these branches, drama is different. This is because it possesses some vocational features such as practical application and prospects for work and self-employment. It involves more than acting. Music and spectacles two of dramatic elements, attest to its vocational nature. The role of vocational education in national development should not be over emphasized. On this note, this paper discusses the role of drama as a vocational tool in achieving the national objectives of vision 20:2020. It first highlights the meaning of vision 20:2020, gives the meaning of drama, discusses it as a vocational discipline, its role in achieving the National objectives of vision 20:2020 and finally, makes some suggestions on how to do justice to the study of drama as a vocational discipline to achieve the National objectives of vision 20:2020.

Introduction

The national objective of vision 20:2020 in Nigeria is to make Nigeria to become one of the top economies of the world. On the possibility of Nigeria realizing its vision 20:2020 goal Usman (2010) notes that the country has enough resources and capability to ensure the realization of the goals, thus he opines, If Nigeria harnesses the potentials in its human and natural resources properly, implements plans and addresses issues of wastage and leakage in the economy, we can be ranked among the top 20 economics in the world by 2020.

He added further that the first element is the human resources and he believes if well utilized, Nigeria will achieve its objectives. Other elements according to him are natural resources and management. It is against this background that this paper tries to highlight how Drama as a vocational discipline could be used to achieve the national goal of vision 20:2020.

Meaning of Drama

Drama according to Hornby and Gatenby (1974) is the term applied to those productions of Art which imitate or present action by introducing the personage taking part in them as real and as employed in the action itself. Here the underlying words or principles of drama are the imitation of actions and persons.

Aristotle as quoted in Akwanya (1998:3) view drama as “the art of the stage, as a mode of imitation representing the characters as performing all the actions dramatically”. Drama is designed for the theatre where the actors and actresses take roles of characters, perform the indicated actions and utter the dialogue (live on the stage) (Abrams 1981). Ogebe in Igilligi (2005:201) rightly observes that “it is not just the language of drama that matters so much as how that language is translated effectively into spectacular action on the stage”.

The study of drama therefore involves more than understanding the language used in the dialogue uttered by the characters. Characters and diction are just two out of about six elements of drama. The six elements are character, diction (choice of words), plot, thought, music and spectacle. Drama is a vocational discipline and its vocational nature is brought out by the last two elements, music and spectacle.

Vocational Education in Nigeria

Vocational education refers to the education designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitude, work, habits and appreciations encompassing knowledge and information needed by works to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis (Okorie and Ezeji 1988).

“Vocational education” in this write up includes the education obtainable at the technical colleges and vocational teacher education obtainable in any tertiary institution such as university, polytechnics and colleges of education. Vocational education is designed to prepare individuals to acquire practical skills, basic and scientific knowledge and attitude required for success in any chosen vocational area.

According to Ukwungwu (2001:93) “Vocational education is the training which provides an individual with particular experience and knowledge necessary in particular occupational fields such as agriculture, home economics, technical trade, fine arts and music”. He explains further “educational training in discipline with practical application n and prospects for work and self-employment”.

From these definitions, it can be inferred that all the courses studied in the department of vocational teacher education in federal and state colleges of education and polytechnics are required to have industrial work experience, training or attachment for a specified period of time before they are allowed to graduate. Examples of such courses or disciplines include agriculture, business education, fine and applied arts, carpentry, electrical installation, home economics, painting and decorating and so on.

There is no doubt that these are disciplines with practical application and prospects for work and self-employment.

A case examination of all the disciplines which can be described as vocational reveal that they require practical skills for example courses as office management, typing, shorthand and accounting are studied in business education while home economics, furnishes one with the basics for understanding foods and nutrition, textile, fibre and finishes etc. There are land preparation, planting, weeding, manuring, harvesting, processing and storage, marketing and food preservation and livestock rearing in Agriculture.

However, from the discussion made so far on vocational education it is pertinent to observe that although drama is not at present offered in the schools of vocational education, it has all the characteristics of vocational disciplines.

Drama as a Vocational Discipline

Drama as one of the three genres of literature stands out clearly from other literally genres poems and prose because of its peculiar nature. It is an academic as well as vocational subject. It is very unfortunate that people most times do overlook that vocational nature of drama and regard it as a mere branch of literature. For this people, drama simply means the play script made up of the characters and dialogues and perhaps some stage directions.

Using the booming home video industry in Nigeria as an example Igilli (2001:59) is of the opinion that one can safely classify drama not only as an academic subject but also as a vocational subject. He goes further to state that if agriculture, introductory technology, home economics, business studies and computer education are said to be vocational subjects, the vocational subject is one that ensures employment for the student that has been exposed to it.

As a sub-type of literary art, drama is associated with properties specific to it, and which distinguish it from other literary forms. In drama according to him, action is seen to take place, with the characters performing dramatically the actions implicated in the words (Akwanya 1998:7). The point being made here is that drama is best appreciated when acted on the stage and it has certain properties that differentiate it from other literary genres like poetry and prose. The properties are character, diction, plot, thought, music and spectacle. Among these six elements, character, diction, plot and thought help to explain drama as an academic subject while music and spectacle strongly suggest that drama is a vocational discipline.

Music is very essential to drama which according to Nwabueze (1990:180) is a dramatic element encompassing all aspects of sounds that add to the play's theme. They include the qualities of speech, pitch, volume, duration and rhythms. He states further that music also includes signs, footsteps, shouts, cries, gunshots, telephone, doorbell and other off stage sounds.

Spectacles as the second element that establishes drama as a vocational discipline is described by Igilli (2005:204) as all the visual elements of a play. It includes scenery, costume, make-up and movement of the characters. All these help in translating effectively the language of drama into spectacular action on the stage.

This, according to Ogbe in Igilli (2005:204) has brought about the professional attention given to theatre arts in terms of stage design and lighting, costume, stage set and properties, speech production and even stage direction. Drama according to him has outlived the view that it is a poem and has come to represent a booming entertainment industry.

The film industry is currently the most popular means of entertainment in Nigeria with the home video taking the lead.

In drama production, the activities of some personnel are needed and the interesting thing about these personnel is that they are trained in school of vocational education or in technical colleges and polytechnics. Examples of these personnel are; the property master in charge of both hand stage pops. The stage carpenter, who builds scenery, helps on setting and striking it, makes some of the properties and carries out any necessary repairs to the set. The electrician, in charge of stage lights, the effects man, responsible for sounds made at the sight of the audience, the scientific artist, who designs and paints the scenery, wardrobe mistress in charge of costumes and the seamstress who helps to make costumes. With these, drama is being referred to as a vocational discipline or course.

The Role of Drama in Achieving the National Objectives of vision 20:2020 in Nigeria

Drama is regarded as a vocational discipline when it leaves the classroom and is enacted in the theatre for the entertainment of the audience. A theatrical presentation of drama seems more involving and demanding in terms of cost, knowledge and practical skill required for making it a success.

Since it is a vocational discipline, it is work oriented and it links learning to immediate opportunities for employment. This means that graduates of theatre arts and dramatic arts are employable. Employable according to Hornby (2001) refers to the condition whereby one has the skills and qualifications that will make somebody give one a job to do for payment. It also refers to a state whereby one can be self employed.

Nevertheless, there is this unemployment problem in Nigeria today which poses a great danger to the society. It breeds people with understanding habits and criminal tendencies who are capable of destroying the society. Osuala (1995) notes that the violence that racks Nigerian cities has its roots in unemployment. He stated that those who have no jobs in seemingly affluent community, lash out in anger and

frustration. Moreover, the society loses a great deal economically when it cannot put to work so many million of hands. In this case the economy is over burdened with millions of unproductive consumers. Unemployment therefore creates wastage and poverty in the society.

Drama therefore, could help in no small way to combat this unemployment problem if Government should stress more on vocational aspects of drama in Nigerian schools in order to enable the students of drama or theatre arts to acquire the necessary skills that will enable them to be employed or self reliant at the end of their education.

The home video came on board in Nigeria, not only in reaction to a rejection of alien cultural domination but also to reinstate Nigeria's own cultural heritage and orientate her own people suffering from colonial mentality (Haynes, 1979:13). In the same vein the introduction of vocational education into the Nigerian education system was a result of the inherent deficiencies that were existing in the educational system inherited from Nigerian's colonial masters. Thus, one of its goals according to the national policy on Education (FRN 1998) is to give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self reliant economically.

However, drama could help to reduce employment problem in the country if majority of the youths could be encouraged to study drama or theatre arts in schools because of its lucrative nature especially now that the film industry is the most popular means of entertainment in Nigeria. Actors, actresses and all the personnel involved in drama production are well paid. Distributors and marketers of these films also make their daily bread through this means.

Suggestions

For effective study of drama as a vocational discipline for achieving the national objectives of vision 20:2020 in Nigeria the following suggestions are made.

- i. It is necessary to have departments of dramatic arts in colleges of education and polytechnics in Nigeria as it is obtainable in some universities in the country where there are departments of theatre arts or sub-department of dramatic arts. Currently, drama or drama and theatre in education, is studied as a literature component in the department of English and African languages in Colleges of Education in Nigeria.
- ii. Drama students like their counterparts in other vocational disciplines should undergo two or three months industrial work experience or attachment to public or private theatre companies. Alternatively, they should produce a full length play or plays as a requirement for graduation, displaying not only their knowledge of acting but also their mastery of stage design and technology.
- iii. Graduates of Drama or drama and theatre should be provided with entrepreneurship education to enable them be self-reliant and work towards becoming self employed.
- iv. Local and State government should Endeavour to employ more graduates of drama and theatre arts into the Primary and secondary schools respectively.

- v. The curriculum planners should enshrine drama and theatre art into curriculum of primary and secondary schools in the country and it should be studied as a separate subject of its own.
- vi. Government should encourage graduates interested in establishing private enterprises by giving them financial grants/loans supervised by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE).
- vii. Parents should encourage their children to study drama and theatre arts in school because of its employment value.
- viii. Students should be trained to master skills desirable for optimum performance and proficiency. Graduates must possess high level competencies that can make them employable in the area of drama and theatre arts.
- ix. There should be a continuous effort towards professional development on the part of teachers of drama and the theatre arts so that they can face the challenges posed by present unemployment of school leavers. In this case they should attend seminars, workshops and conferences regularly and read current literature in their areas of specializations.
- x. The teachers of drama and theatre art should handle their teaching tasks properly and adopt methods that would enable students attain proficiency in the skills they are meant to acquire.
- xi. Like all vocational disciplines, drama is expensive; government should therefore provide special drama grants to all tertiary institutions offering the course.

Conclusion

Drama as a academic discipline is also an interdisciplinary vacation subject. For it to serve as a tool for achieving the national objective of vision 20:2020 in Nigeria, it requires special attention by the government. The government should create separate departments of theatre or dramatic arts in colleges of education and polytechnics as they are in some universities. Special funds should be regularly made available to these schools by the government. This in no small way will help to make the study of drama more effective and fruitful and thereby help in achieving the National goal of vision 20:2020.

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