

AFRICAN THEATRE:

STUDIES IN THEORY AND CRITICISM



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CHAPTER THIRTY – SIX

Theories and Concepts of Management in Theatre Administration

Segun Oyeleke Oyewo

Introduction

The idea of management is as old as humanity, diverse forms of management theories and concepts have been applied to various fields of human endeavour. The universality of management makes it transferable from one organization to another at some levels but even at that a deep knowledge of the profession and aspects with which a manager is concerned is required. The functions of management are usually the same in all organizations. Whether in theatre, health sector, military, production or service jobs, the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling are common to all and the expertise in one organization can be transferred and applicable to others. Technical skills are however the most difficult to transfer from one industry to another, this is primarily because technical skills refer to a particular technical ability in specific technical aspects that are often times professional or event specific. For instance the skill of a surgeon cannot find direct expression in the performing arts, while the technical skills of acting, set construction, stage management and music conductor, choreographers can only be applicable in the aspects of the performing arts.

Management is necessary in any organization seeking to accomplish objectives, because it offers the control needed for the realization of the goals and aspirations of any enterprise, be it commercial and non commercial. That essential control needed within the framework of an organisation is achieved through management. Not every person working in an organization carries out management duties and responsibility. There are two basic types of work in any organisation; the non managerial work and managerial work. The first refers to the basic skills and unskilled categories of workers, such as assembly line workers who make home appliances, perform operative tasks such as tightening bolts; and football players block, punt, and tackle. In the theatre the actors, technicians, while not performing inferior responsibilities fall under the non managerial work. However, in view of the fact that a manager is referred to as a person who works through other people (subordinates), and brings people together to accomplish goals, then the non managerial work comprise of any theatre personnel who controls one or more people in the theatre/production. In a large theatre production there are observably more people in the non managerial work than in the managerial work, but there are more roles in the managerial categories. Actors/actresses, stage hands and the likes are the example of the non managerial works. Many people hold many management titles in the theatre production and in a theatre organization.

Examples of managerial works are Director, Producer, and Business Manager, Stage Manager, House Manager, Technical Director, etc. The various managerial works have been classified by Conte (2007) into five namely; Freelance Producing Managers, Financial Managers, Fundraising Manager, Marketing and Income Related Managers, and Production and Operations Managers. Theories and concepts of management have been engaged and employed in the field of arts administration comprising of theatre; dance, drama, music as well as other visual and creative arts. According to (Dewey, 2003) "it is becoming increasingly understood that management of the fine arts takes place within a broader context of cultural policy and administration". Relevant examples of such abound at the local and international levels.

The Federal Department of Culture, the National and States Council for Arts and Culture and the various other bodies at the national levels espoused in the Cultural Policy for Nigeria are saddled with the responsibilities of administering the management of Arts and Culture at various levels in Nigeria locally and in foreign cultural policies and administration. International Organisation of the Festival of Arts is a UNESCO sponsored organization with the Head Quarters in Austria and Greece. UNESCO and other bodies are responsible for the organization and administration of tangible and intangible arts and culture at the multinational and international levels.

The field of Arts Administration is concerned with the management of cultural institutions and arts organization while arts management is the organization and coordination of various people working together in order to achieve the arts institution's goals and objectives. The Federal Department of Culture (FDC) and National Council For Arts and Culture (NCAC) are examples of institutions in Arts Administrations, while the National Troupe of Nigeria (NTN) and University Repertory Troupes are in arts management. According to Menear (1999, p 54), "arts management combines skills in business and the arts to promote all facets of the arts: visual, performing, creative arts such as projects and events, venues, marketing and development, education, production as curator, programmer, arts practitioners etc"

The theatre is a very strong component of the performing arts and as such theatre administration as an aspect of arts administration employs the theories and concepts of management in running the theatre and its programmes. According to Conte and Stephen, (2007,1)

Theatre administration concerns all the performing arts because they have the same core issues namely;

1. producing or presenting artistically satisfying work in accordance with their missions.
2. Finding and keeping an audience,

3. Providing for the financial and creative well being of an organization or production, and 4. Maintaining a good personnel and PR

In essence, theatre administration concerns management of business operation around a theatre organization. Administrators are responsible for facilitating the operations of the organization and fulfilling its mission.

According to Menear and Hawkins (1999,82), "The job description for the Administrator of a theatre production will vary according to both the organization and the individual" The three major areas of his operations include financial control, marketing and house management. The most important thing to him is that the "administrative team works with the production team to achieve the best possible show"

The duties of a theatre administrator can include; staff management, marketing, budgeting, PR, fundraising, programme development and selecting plays, raising capitals, house management and audience development, Box Office Management and publicity. Whether for the theatre programme, events or venues, the administrator employs the theories and concepts of management. Some of these are unique and peculiar to the theatre while some are universal and applicable to the theatre field as to all other fields. However, some realities in Nigeria have made some western universal concepts and theories of management to be inapplicable to Nigerian theatre. This issue has been addressed elsewhere in a paper by this writer titled "Theatre Management in Nigeria: western Principles and Nigerian realities" The paper addressed such issues as the inadequacies of some western management principles in the management of theatre in Nigeria because of some peculiar cultural practices which necessitate the need to adapt some basic and crucial cultural practices in managing the theatre.

Different kinds of theatre projects will need different approaches to budgeting and marketing and different venues. Menear (1999) identified the three major areas of theatre administration as financial control, marketing and house management. As a result of increase and growth of theatre organization, theatre schools, size of budgets and employees, there was a greater demand for formal accountability which brings about the administrative form of arts and theatre management. This development from the earlier impressarial form can be graphically represented thus: impressarial>traditional authority, Charisma, entrepreneurship>Administrative form> entrepreneurship innovative form. This according to Kotler (1997, p20) has necessitated the emphasis on private sector, market places, marketing, fundraising, profit making ventures and commercialization of artistic enterprises. The Arts and theatre are now used more in innovative ways to support social causes chosen by various corporate bodies. Contemporary arts managers therefore need the appropriate tools to build and sustain an organization that supports its artistic mission while facing the challenges

of an uncertain and changing environment. (p23). One can then aver that the ability to analyse and strategise requires fluency and comfort with current management theories and techniques.

Definition of Key Terms

We shall now explore the theories and concepts of management employed and applicable in theatre administration but there is the need to bring certain key terms in proper perspective for this chapter. The terms are; theories, concepts, management, administration and theatre administration and management.

Friederich W. Taylor-Father of scientific management defines theory as a combination of concepts and principles. Concepts refer to abstractions formed from generalization from particular e.g. management and organization, while principles mean fundamentals or general truth on which other truth depends. A scholarly grouping of concepts and principles creates a theory such as organizational theory, theory of leadership, theories x and y etc

Management Theory is a collection of ideas which set forth general rules on how to manage a business or organization. Management theory addresses how managers and supervisors relate to their organizations in the knowledge of its goals, the implementation of effective means to get the goals accomplished and how to motivate employees to perform to the highest standard.

Management theories and concepts are categorized into two mainly: 1. Historical Management Theories classified into scientific, Bureaucratic/Administrative and Human Relations theories. And 2. Contemporary Theories subdivided into Contingency Management, Systems approach and chaos theory.

Historical Management theories refer to early theories of management from pre-historical time where management activities were needed to carry out the gigantic projects of the early human civilizations. These further led to development of other methods to improve management practices as a result of new challenges brought about by the industrial revolution of the 1800's.

Scientific approach pioneered by Taylor focused on efficiency task at hand. By designing the job at hand appropriately, this theory postulates that the worker would be more efficient and productive and that productive workers would earn more money. It also means that there would be safer workplace and fewer injuries on the job. Many of Taylor's methods include: the assembly line, payment related performance, financial incentives, bonuses, total quality management. These are among some of the current practices commonly used by management.

Two sub-theories emerged within the scientific approach, namely, the administrative and the Bureaucratic Approaches postulated by Henri Fayol and Max Weber respectively. While the one emphasise management tasks and principles of planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling, the

other focuses on strict guidelines for the running of a company. The strict set of guidelines invariably stifled workers creativity.

The Human Relations Approach by Elton Mayo takes its cue from here and stresses the importance of human interaction and personal relationships in the work place. This approach took into consideration the importance of group dynamics, teamwork, and the positive impact of social interaction. Manager's roles included care and concern for the needs and wellbeing of workers. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory which emphasizes motivation and personal development, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory of job satisfaction and McGregor theory X and Theory Y are major examples of the humanist theories.

Contemporary Theories are the modern theories of management. The Systems approach attempt a balance between two extremes of impersonal scientific approach against the individually focused Human relations approach. This approach relies on all components or sub systems, to work in harmony and coordination in order to ensure the success of the larger system.

The contingency perspective builds upon the systems approach yet recognises that there are numerous factors that may impact on organisation's performances. The size of an organization, small, medium or large scale goes a long way to determine the levels of management and performance of that organization. The examples of these types of organizations are stated below;

1. Small Scale

- Toilet paper factory
- Toot Pick Production
- Printing Business
- Garment Sewing Products
- Furniture Carpentry
- Brick-laying
- Food Canteen

2. Medium Scale

3. Large Scale

- Building Construction
- Furniture Factory/Industry
- Gown/Garment and Clothing Factory.
- Food Franchise
- Printing and Publishing

Different Situational Examples

A: SMALL SCALE	B: MEDIUM	C: LARGE SCALE
Small Capital	Medium	Large Huge capital
Handy Machines/Equipment	Medium	Heavy Machines

Average Working Space	Medium	Large Space of Land
Manageable Human Resources	Medium	Large Labour Supply

The theatre can belong to any of these three classifications primarily depending largely on the nature of such theatre enterprise. Often times the large scale theatres are profit oriented and commercial inclined, while the small scale are usually non profit in nature. The medium scale however could fall within a combination of the medium scale and small scale. The National Troupe of Nigeria (NTN) is a unique example of a large scale but non profit theatres while Universities repertory theatres are examples of the non profit medium scale organizations.

The contingency perspective accepts that all business situations are different but that each comes with its own set of problems, challenges and internal and external environmental factors. Some of these macro-environmental factors or contingencies include changes in technology, demographic shifts, economic conditions, cultural factors and government legislations. However, flexible approach is appropriate for uncertain environment while inflexible environment requires a more rigid and structured management style of operations.

A more recent theory of management that emerged in the 1980's is the Chaos theory which is premised on the belief that any system can exist without any specific direction or predictability. By recognising that chaos was part of the normal order of things, techniques could be employed that would anticipate, and take advantage of ensuing chaos. [McNamara, 2015].

Culture and the theatre had since time past been organized in one way or the other as emblemized by the survival of the rich array of festivals and attendant performances replete in the traditional society. Nigeria is rich in traditional drama and this has provided valuable basis, foundation and source materials for modern Nigerian drama and theatre and their management. The Yoruba travelling Theatre and the works of some contemporary playwrights adapted significantly from the aesthetic and management styles and practices of Traditional Yoruba Travelling Theatre (Alarinjo). The Popular traditional theatre of the Tiv Kwagh-Hir Theatre, the various traditional forms of Hausa Drama, the Igbo masquerade traditions have also influenced the direction of the development of drama and theatre in theory and practice of aesthetics and management. Also for example, the traditional cultural festivals by the various ethnic groups were annexed in the establishment of the various states arts council in Nigeria. In that context, the National Council for Arts and Culture was established at the Federal Headquarters. This Council was commissioned to organize annual Festival of traditional Arts and Culture thus opening the required issues of management as a crucial challenge in the management of drama and theatre in Nigeria. However the formal introduction of management of Theatre with the secularization and commercialization of theatre, and modern Nigerian theatre also took its cue from

this formal beginning. According to Conte (2007, 153) "the history of educational theatre... is largely modern history" both in the entire world and in Nigeria, because theatre was not introduced into the curriculum of Western Universities and Nigerian Universities until early and later part of the twentieth century respectively. The emergence of theatre as a curricular subject in the University has been referred to as a tardy but eventful process. According to Adedeji (1980,p4) "the first drama course leading to a degree in the world was established at the Carnegie Institute of Technology at Pittsburgh in 1914". The emergence of theatre and later its management as a discipline in Nigeria started at the University of Ibadan. An Arts Theatre Management Committee was constituted in 1957, to according to Adedeji (1980 p10), "manage the theatre and plan its further development. In managing the theatre, the promotion of cultural and academic interests should guide the committee in its work." A school of Drama was formerly opened in 1963 and it transformed into a full-fledged Department of Theatre Arts in 1970. From this beginning emerged a proliferation of theatre arts departments in Universities in Nigeria. The evolving departments took on different nomenclatures which are suggestive of and largely influenced their management styles but essentially, they are all focused at the teaching of theatre in theory and practice.

Nomenclature and Structures of University Theatres

Some of the universities took on nomenclatures such as; Dramatic Arts, Performing Arts, Creative Arts and Theatre Arts. In all these universities, theatre administration has operated at three levels namely; administration of the theatre department, administration of productions and in some cases administration of university resident troupes. It entails primarily financial control, marketing and house management but according to Mayer (1999, p82) "a job description for the administrator of theatre production will vary according to both the organization and the individual."

From that inception, diverse halls and theatres, some large and well equipped were constructed on one campus after another. At the University of Ibadan where theatre premiered in Nigeria, there was the western type proscenium Arts Theatre, at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, it was the ABU Studio theatre, a combination of the features of Greek theatre and traditional Hausa setting and Architecture. Obafemi Awolowo University's pit theatre brought into bear the story telling theatre-in-the-round for the multiple setting pit theatre. It also has the Oduduwa Hall which was much larger and western oriented. The Crab theatre patterned to reflect the cultural and social environment of the immediate locality was built at University of Port Harcourt. It was designed to give room for flexible setting by Ola Rotimi. The University of Jos evolved from a fully air conditioned studio theatre to an environmental amphi-theatre patterned after the Greco-Roman amphitheatre. The performing arts theatre structure at the University of Ilorin seems to be the most ambitious theatre in Nigerian Universities in recent times in

terms of facilities. It is a far cry from the end stage centralized Africa Hall structure at the former site of the University. These venues and facilities also have implications for theatre administration in these departments.

Apart from this, administration of the theatre departments follows almost the same pattern and employs the diverse management theories as occasions demand, more predominantly the contingency approach. In all these the chaos theory never features as a theory primarily because the educational system does not give room for the unstructured nature of this management theory. The systems include the management of the departments and of productions. In some productions the members of staff constitute the production staff while students often make up the production crew, while in others especially convocation productions, students serve as both production crew and staff, while the academic staff members are involved in supervisory and consulting capacity.

In spite of the diverse nomenclatures of theatre in different Universities in Nigeria, there are basic similarities in administration. However the differences are not entirely cosmetic but a kind of emphasis placed on different aspects of theatre as a kind of trademark and focus of each university. One major difference is the aspect of university repertory theatre. Universities of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, and University of Calabar among others operated resident theatres at one point or the other. Most of these with the exception of Ile-Ife and Calabar are now extinct. The resident theatre companies where they existed perform some major functions in the administration of the various theatre departments namely; serving as; a teaching laboratory, public relations for the universities, research source materials, international relations etc. Its organization varies from one university to another. At the University of Ibadan for example, the management of the Unibadan masque/ Unibadan Performing Company as the different names suggest went through a purely non-profit organization as Unibadan Masque to a commercial venture called the Unibadan Performing Company (UPC). While the former was under the management of the department, the latter was at various times under the management of the University consultancy service as a commercial venture. The same situation was also applicable at the Obafemi Awolowo University where the Ori Olokun Theatre also metamorphosed into Awo Varsity Theatre under the management of the department and the University Consultancy Service respectively. However, the Awovarsity Theatre invariably returned to its primary functions and under the direct management of the department and this probably accounts for its survival as the only fully surviving Resident Theatre in any University in Nigeria.

One major management technique employed in running these resident theatres was the volunteer management where students work on volunteer status in some activities such as artistic, marketing and technical aspects and are remunerated as volunteers for their efforts. The volunteer system is designed to provide additional and complimentary learning experience for students in an

apprenticeship mode. This system also exists in different forms in situations without repertory theatre in recent times and it is informally addressed as the "Aruku". This concept refers to a situation where performances are knocked together within the shortest possible time and at the cheapest possible cost. It has its own advantage of serving as a viable platform for students to learn, making the theatre accessible to majority of the people at much reduced cost, and as such building a following/audience. However, it has the tendency of cheapening the arts, diminishing its economic viability and exploiting the students/artistes.

Theatre scholarship and practice at the Universities of Ilorin and Jos have similar experience without resident theatre troupes and as such students and staff constitute the major components of artistes and crew for their productions. These two universities belong to the same generation established in 1975 even though their theatre departments have different names, theatre arts at University of Jos and Performing Arts at the University of Ilorin. Ilorin has retained its name while some other universities have changed from Theatre arts to incorporate mass communication, communication arts, film studies etc. Ilorin employs the integrated performing arts department management system by its tripartite programme of dance, drama and music. Its focus and mission statement is "an appreciation of each areas of Drama, Music and Dance as distinct from the other in their art forms yet interrelated as equals without any one being dominant at the expense of the other" Sofola (1992). It submits that African holistic perception and definition of the art of performance best reflect man's attempt to articulate the essence of his being. This perception strongly influences its programmes; both students and convocation/departamental productions.

Convocation Production evolved over time to have become a major theatrical tradition in most Nigerian universities with or without theatre departments. In times past, even universities without theatre departments contracted theatre departments from sister universities to present convocation productions. This writer has been privileged to participate as student and production staff member in convocation productions of two universities in the late 1970's and mid 2000's respectively. Convocation production at the University of Ilorin offers opportunity to show case the different segments alternately annually, and to provide students opportunity to learn in a workshop festival experience. For example, Bode Omojola's *Opera Ode for a New Dawn* directed by this writer was the convocation production for 1988, while the play *Ozzidi* by J.P. Clarke also directed by this writer was the 1989 convocation production. Although three areas thus feature alternately for the convocation productions, their productions still operate within the concept of African total theatre where none of them is compartmentalized as in a typical western scholarship orientation. The convocation period provides other opportunities of learning in a workshop experience beyond the stage productions alone, it had provided the avenue for the department to showcase its tripartite nature of scholarship in composition and performance of the

University Anthem, anthem of the Performing Arts Department and the provision of music at the annual event by the Department's convocation band.

The workshop festival experience is also tenable in most other universities because the convocation period offers the chance to have a big departmental production of a carnival festival proportion sponsored by the universities. Apart from this period, the only training opportunities for students are class productions and final year projects plays/productions. This is unlike in the past where other major productions were produced by the department and even toured Nigeria and beyond.

Most of the Nigerian universities also stress the aspect of town and gown and the various theatre departments have come to provide major avenues to give vent to this mission through community theatre as a course on the curriculum in practice and theory on the one hand and other "Aruku" productions on the other.

Another major aspect of management in theatre administration in the universities is the area of audiences and marketing of the theatre. The summation is that no matter the artistic challenge and the politics of the arts, the economic survival / commercial reality cannot be waived aside. Whether in subsidized educational theatre or commercial theatre, stage performance or theatre in the media, the four distinct business functions of financing, producing, distributing and marketing/advertising are very salient. These significantly shape the orientation of world theatre and are therefore important in the process of rethinking the theatre for national development all the world over. Theatre business depends on there being an audience--a good-sized audience at that. , various departments have had to implement plans and strategies that guarantee a growth in audience.

At the University of Ilorin for instance, diverse marketing theories and audience development techniques are engaged, and as in all other universities one prominent approach is the "jungle publicity" which is a local variant of the carnival publicity and a more refined form of the original "jungle publicity of the Alarinjo theatre tradition." Interestingly these techniques are not restricted to the university campus alone it has been known to be very effective in merging town and gown and developing audience from town. The immediate communities of both the old and new theatres of the University at Agbooba and Tanke Oke Odo respectively were and are still centres of aggressive "Jungle" publicity. Informal survey of attendance reveals significant audience attendance from these places over time.

Another major area of theatre administration within the university theatre departments where various management theories are engaged is in play/dance/music production in the university theatre. The process begins with play selection where the students receive high priority because the focus is pedagogy although the immediate and target audience also attract crucial obligation. Characteristics of the various management theories come in at various stages of the productions. For example, seasons are somehow very stable and might give vent to the employment of rigid and structured management style of

operations. In some instances however, the environment, programmes/calendar are very uncertain therefore warrant flexible approach. In essence, an eclectic approach to management seems to be appropriate for theatre administration in the college theatre department. After selecting the play comes the casting when auditions are held to assign roles and after which the rehearsal process begins, and the various motivational theories become the most appropriate at this stage. The University of Ilorin Major project productions by final year students of the department referred to as PFA 499 Major project Theatre Fiesta is representative of most of the productions in this regard.

Paradigm Shift in theatre administration in Nigerian Universities.

From the period when theatre became a curriculum subject in Nigerian universities up till now, a lot of shifts and changes have taken place in its administration and ipso facto management. There has been paradigm shifts in aspects of resident theatres, nomenclature, population, theatre structures and venues, convocation productions, town and gown, touring productions (local and international), production positions and lecturing positions, financial control, production staff and production crew, volunteer management, casting, rehearsals and, productions. All these aspects have significantly influenced the field of management of theatre.

First and foremost resident theatres have gone into extinction in many theatre departments, nomenclatures of theatre departments had to be changed to make it more attractive in some situations which has led to population explosion of students. Diverse theatre structures have been built and there has been an increasing awareness of the need to merge town and gown. Unfortunately however, there has been dwindling financial provision and bigger but inadequate facilities to meet up with the increasing number of students, a situation that has put much pressure on existing facilities. Touring with productions locally and internationally was a very prominent component of theatre practice and scholarship in the past but this has dwindled significantly to the extent that experience that could be garnered in such tours have been reduced to just theory of practice, putting more demands on the lecturers.

Finally there is a noticeable systemic change in theatre management in theatre administration in Nigeria in the above areas as a result of which paradigm shift is emerging. These should be consciously analysed and monitored to streamline the growth and development of theatre practice, scholarship and its management in Nigeria Universities.

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