

EXPERIMENTING DANCE CONTENT FOR HISTORICAL PEDAGOGY IN NIGERIA: LESSONS FROM THE IMO STATE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Aim. In response to recent calls from scholars and cultural officers to resuscitate indigenous dances and other indigenous markers in Nigeria, this study aimed at exploring novel ways to revamp the content, teaching methods and appeal of indigenous dances in higher institutions in Nigeria. The project relied on a practical experiment at Imo State University, Nigeria to unveil how a vibrant and sustained indigenous dance tradition might be utilised as alternative pedagogical tool for history lessons which was excluded from the secondary school curriculum in 2009.

Methods. The performance project utilised dance in retelling the highpoints of Nigeria's history from precolonial to postcolonial period. It utilised movements and rhythm to capture the highpoints of historical happenings within the periods of focus. Unstructured interviews, participant observation, case study approaches were utilised in data collection, while critical pedagogy, positive psychology, flow theory, and somatics were also adopted as methodological and analytical use in the project.

Results. From the dance experiment, the researchers observed that teaching approaches have always been at the heart of students' disinterest in dance courses in most Nigerian universities. They also noted that the potentials and appeal of indigenous dance be heightened when new realities are injected into its contents and a more liberal and inclusive approach adopted in the teaching and learning process.

Conclusion. In conclusion, key areas to revitalising and sustaining the appeal of indigenous dances among students include rethinking old pedagogical approaches by incorporating emerging/prevaling sociological realities into indigenous dance creations and performance in contemporary times.

Keywords: Indigenous Dance; Pedagogy; Critical Pedagogy; Nigeria; Postnormality

INTRODUCTION

Fundamentally, dance is an art form that emphasises motion and movement as means of communication. For Margery Turner et al (1971), it is a nonverbal medium that deals with relationships, shapes, forms, emotions, attitudes, and pictures that can be immediately communicated through the senses as opposed to ideas or

concepts. According to Sunny Ododo and Kene Igweonu (2001), dance is the human body moving rhythmically in space and time while also releasing a certain amount of energy. It is the idea and expression of thoughts, feelings, and ideas using the body as a vehicle for interpretation and communication. According to their definition, dance is the discharge of some energy combined with the rhythmic movement of the human body in relation to space and time. Experts like Austin Okeke and Uche Ofoedu (2022) on the Igbo indigenous theatres claim that music, dance instruments, drama, mime, and visual arts in general are embodiments of a people's worldviews, identity and hopes. Even while there may be some parallels and contrasts across the many dance styles due to factors like origins, nations, and historical periods, Irene Loutzaki (2019) explains that not every society or individual would understand dances in the same way. Whether through the creation of new forms or the reworking of established ones, they can be seen as a mirror of social change. It is impossible to ignore the important social role that dances play as markers of social and historical norms.

Dance serves a societal purpose in defining an ideological focus and supporting the general public in understanding, internalising, and interacting with their surroundings, claims Arnold Udoka (2005). People who are part of a culture are therefore more likely to be aware of how they fit into society and their surroundings. Sadly, despite the existence of several indigenous dances in Nigeria today, fitting into contemporary times have become a major setback for indigenous dance forms leading to present lack of patronage. Even though indigenous dance since historical times is a potent tool for host communities, its ability to have a significant impact on the nation's contemporary socio-political, cultural, and economic spheres has not yet assumed its full potential. In light of this, the appreciation of actors and musicians by indigenous audiences has surpassed that of dancers in modern times.

Dance researchers, such as Christian Nwaru (2014; 2017) and Edward Warburton (2019), have studied pedagogical techniques to re-evaluate the pedagogical approach to dance to trigger younger generations' interest in dance as a valuable and potent art form. This is particularly relevant in the postnormal era, where according to Ziauddin Sardar (2010), human existence has entered a chaotic stage where nothing seems inherently real. The future of dance, including indigenous dance, is changing due to globalisation challenges. Kenneth Eni (2013) evaluates the future of live theatre, highlighting the need for new means of presentation and adaptation of staging techniques and styles to fit existing stages. Dance educators must consider various issues, such as what and how to teach, why and to whom, where and when to do so, and how socially constructed instruction is in general. Pedagogy, a discipline focused on teaching methods, is often overlooked in discussions of education in general, particularly dance education (Warburton, 2019).

The need to rethink the content, context, and pedagogy of the arts, especially dance, has been prompted by the exciting diversity of interest that characterise contemporary times. Every day, a variety of studies are undertaken in the realms of informal, for-

mal, and non-formal education, all of which revolve around people asking questions about their environment, themselves, and their desire to learn more. (Alu et al., 2023) This study is an experiment report geared towards the appreciation and sustainability of indigenous dance art. However, before going into the specifics of this experiment as practice-based research at Imo State University, the researchers will first examine the state of the art in critical pedagogy theory and its role in the project.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

The philosophy of education and social movement known as “critical pedagogy” emerged from the application of concepts from critical theory and cultural traditions to the analysis of education and culture. Its roots lie in the ideologies of Paulo Freire’s (1970a) seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It highlights the relationship between civic participation, social fairness, and democratic difficulties. As a transformation-based approach to education (Abraham, 2023), critical pedagogy aims to free students from injustice by developing in them a critical conscience. In order to reach self-actualisation, critical consciousness inspires individuals to take political and social action to improve their environment. The subject investigates the connections between teaching and learning in a given discourse. Its supporters like Hossein Tavakoli (2012) assert that learning, unlearning, relearning, reflection, and evaluation are all ongoing processes that have an impact on students. These actions, he claims, are especially important for students he believes have been historically and currently disenfranchised by what students refer to as traditional schooling.

Paulo Freire (1970b) maintained that critical pedagogy aims to elicit a consciousness that goes beyond mere comprehension. It motivates action. The relationship between classroom instruction, knowledge creation, the institutional framework of the school, and the social and material relations of the larger community, society, and nation state is thus thought about, negotiated, and transformed in this way (McLaren, 1998, p.45). With the help of linkages between teaching and learning, Bal Luitel et al (2022) support that critical pedagogy movement aims to help students develop a critical sense of self and social awareness and to take appropriate action against oppressive systems. According to James McKernan (2013), the notion of “conscientisation” or the development of one’s own critical consciousness is important to Freire’s work.

No socialism, according to Herbert Marcuse (1972), is feasible without the birth of a new logic and sensibility in the people themselves. Likewise, there can be no significant social change without a radical change in the people who are the agents of that change. In creating educational programmes, putting pedagogies into practise, and responding to humanitarian crises, Bal Luitel and Niroj Dahal (2020) affirm that critical pedagogy provides a framework for critically examining deeply ingrained attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions that might otherwise threaten empowering, equitable,

and socially just educational and social systems. Because of its criticism of established structures, this educational concept is regarded as progressive or even radical in some quarters. In this case, Gustavo Fischman and Peter McLaren (2005) aver that the instructor teaches their kids to be change agents who go beyond simply opposing injustice. They will instruct them to serve as agents of social transformation, as was previously said. Increased awareness can help people recognise the flaws in society that need to be fixed which corroborates Freire's (1970a) position that critical action could be triggered by critical understanding.

Critical pedagogy helps this study especially as the researchers intend to obstruct the status-quo in dance pedagogy, through rethinking the untoward power structures in the teaching of dance in most Nigerian institutions. This stands at the root of the sustained apathy of students for the course, especially for indigenous dances. The project's goal is to spark interest in indigenous dance again by investigating how it could respond to and confront contemporary social issues. The study production's content was informed by the realities of Nigerian history education, particularly given that history studies have not been taught in schools between 2009 and 2022. The project engages in the debates around its potential reintroduction into the curriculum by offering students and teachers a different approach to understanding Nigeria's historical evolution. Indigenous dance art on the other hand, has continued to crave novel approaches towards a facelift in society and asserting its place as equal to, if not the mother of other performance art forms.

The history subject dilemma in Nigeria's educational curriculum becomes a very apt avenue to deploy indigenous dance first, as a means of alternative pedagogical approach to teaching of Nigeria's history and secondly, as a way to sell indigenous dance to a younger generation as potent and flexible to address emerging realities in present times through interrupting the status-quo in the present teaching and learning of dance. In 2009, Bolanle Olabimtan (2022) reports that the Federal Government of Nigeria banned history as a subject in Nigerian secondary schools on the basis that the students who offer history are increasingly few while its teachers are almost non-existent in schools. In 2021, Henry Tyohemba (2022) reports that the Minister of Education declared that the subject will be re-included among the subjects to be taken at the junior secondary level.

The challenge here is on the fact that despite this laudable step towards the reintroduction of the subject into the curriculum, the Nigerian education system in thirteen years has succeeded in raising a generation who are almost bereft of knowledge of their history. This position is further reinforced by an overall poor students' class contribution and performance in courses related to the nature and historical development of Nigeria. The situation raises questions on the socio-political futures of Nigeria in this precarious situation where her citizens do not sufficiently know about their past which drive the researchers' quest in the production of *Our Heritage*. This research is couched on the position that the pedagogical approach is at the root of the myriads of challenges facing dance art in Nigeria especially in the institutions; and critical pedagogy offers a novel approach to revive and secure the future of dance in Nigeria.

Performance Experiment of *Our Heritage* in Imo State University.

Our Heritage is a dance production staged in the Comassie Arts Theatre of Imo State University (IMSU) on the 4th of September 2023. It chronicles the development of African societies from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial period. The production utilised the storytelling method as well as other performative arts such as music, songs, mime and iconic props to relate the content of the distinct periods of Nigeria's history. The participants in the production were second and final year students of Theatre Arts, Imo State University and was choreographed by the lead author, as a practical component of his ongoing Doctoral research in African Dance and Choreography.

The undergraduate curriculum of IMSU Theatre Arts Department introduces students to dance at their first semester in second year and to choreography in their third year. In their final year, they are allowed to specialise in one of the various areas of theatre such as directing, media, theatre management, technical theatre, and performance. The performance areas are made up of dance and acting. This means that students who specialise in this area are expected to take acting and dance courses. The dance courses taken in this final part include Advanced Choreography, Dance Drama Techniques and Nonverbal Communication. This project was carried out by the second-year students under THA 207: Fundamentals of Dance and the final year students under THA 455: Dance Drama Techniques. The number of participants involved in the experiment across both classes totaled 180 students. The researchers worked on the project for 92 hours spread across seven weeks at three days and approximately 3 hours a week.

Our Heritage is a dance production that is built around the history of Africa. Focusing on Nigeria, the play takes off from the pre-colonial period, showing the distinct cultural life of the people, their modes of survival and cosmic relationship.

Figure 1

The Ritual and Festival Dance as a symbolic party of the precolonial period.



Source. Own research.

The next is the arrival of the colonial masters which heralded the slave trade and punctured the pureness of African life. Their ideological, philosophical, political and performative aesthetics introduced to Nigeria, led to the dilution and extinction of some core values and indigenous performatives.

Figure 2

Arrival of the Colonial Masters and beginning of slave Trade



Source: Own research.

Independence and postcolonialism were the last period in the project where the researchers explore how badly the nation fared socio-politically, morally, religiously, and economically.

Figure 3

Introduction of alien aesthetic and moral ideologies into Nigeria



Source. Own research.

The current socio-political issues of the nation were highlighted in this period including recent events such as police brutality, drug abuse, prostitution, ritual killing, and electoral malpractice which were all build-ups to the recent #ENDSARS protest. Thereafter, the production exposed the latent potentials of Nigeria to stand again despite

the current throes of bad leadership and followership if only the citizens can decide to be the light in their various corners, embrace unity and shun ethno-religious squabbles.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers relied on critical and methodological theories, content analysis, participant observation, unstructured interviews and key informant information. The dance production involved 180 participants and sixteen different dance forms that cut across the three distinct periods in Nigeria's history: precolonial, colonial and postcolonial. The method of engaging with the planning and creation of the production was informed by three theories which were utilised at different stages of the experiment. These theories include the Seligman's Positive Psychology, Csikszentmihalyi's Flow theory and the Somatic approach to teaching dance. The three concepts helped the project in three distinct ways.

Positive psychology helped the researchers to sell the concept to the participants, getting them to see dance in new ways by imagining its possibility to address tangible issues in contemporary society. According to Martin Seligman (2002), the goal of positive psychology is to divert a person's focus from negativity and onto good expectations and memories in an effort to attain a balanced viewpoint. The researchers in the preliminary aspects of the project utilised dialogue to condition the psychology of the participants to review the hitherto negative perceptions about dance courses. On first meeting with the participants, the lead researcher engaged the students in a discussion about Nigeria's historical development. It was observed that a majority of the students (especially the second-year students) were not able to contribute much to the discussion. The researchers ended that discourse by summarising the history of Nigeria to the participants and went on to ask them how they would best capture the highpoints of the history in a dance theatre. Some of the relevant ideas harvested from the session became very useful materials in the plotting, choreography and designing of the production.

The psychological effect of this shared approach greatly impacted the production as participants became eager to see the realisation of the project especially due to the complexities in the storyline and the various scenarios that make up the content; most especially also as they have a stake in the creating of the artistic process through their inputs. Also, the researchers through this approach got the participants to become very committed to the course as they were all involved with the scheduling and duration of the rehearsals based on their other class engagements. The usual power structure of imposing the time and venue for rehearsal and demanding compliance were broken down in the project through the positive psychology approach and substituted with interest and willingness in ways that students see themselves as stakeholders

in the project. The positive psychology in this sense helped to make the students responsible for the production unlike the hitherto teacher responsibility.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) Flow theory speaks to the all-encompassing feeling experience when one acts fully engaged. For Susan Jackson and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1999), it is a harmonious experience where mind and body are working together effortlessly; leaving the person feeling that something special has just occurred. Flow frequently happens in activities that have an aim. It demands opportunities for action, tasks or challenges within the abilities of the participants, and that unambiguous objectives and prompt feedback regarding progress made enable total concentration on the task at hand. For Csikszentmihalyi (1996; 1990) and Klara Łuczniak and Jon May (2021), a person experiences a subjective state when these circumstances are met, which is marked by: focus on the work at hand; a blending of action and awareness; a sensation of control; and intrinsic reward or satisfaction.

The researchers in this experiment separated the participants into the indigenous and Western dance forms which the students find comfortable and tried to task their creativity in the creation of movements. This approach was adopted to intercept the hitherto power structure of imitative approaches where the dancers have to get to repeat the choreographer's pre-planned movements, rhythmic patterns and posture in dance classes. This process allows the students to understand their roles, the aims and objectives of the dance performance and allows them contribute materials or even substitute movement materials in the choreography.

Somatic approach was adopted to help participants' mental and body awareness in the project. Anu Sööt and Ele Viskus (2014), Karen Schupp and Karen Clemente (2010), Susan Stinson (2004) and Rebecca Enghauser (2007) unveil several potentials and angles of the somatic approach in dance teaching and learning. The purpose of the somatic approach is to help students connect with their bodies and learn to recognise the unique qualities within them. The goal is to enhance, heal, and develop one's body. Dance is primarily viewed as a physical and artistic profession, but the somatic approach links the cognitive component of the project for the participants. Dancing is undoubtedly a physical and artistic profession, thus using body awareness in teaching and learning has grown more and more crucial. On the use of this approach, for Sööt and Viskus (2014), teachers have a responsibility to inspire students to start from their bodies and all of their unique qualities.

This approach helped to provoke the right mood and motives of the various movements, character and actions of the participants. This approach served as the binding factor to the entire work as it gave cognitive and physical grounding for the participants to completely become aware of their bodies, create and recreate movements, analyse the movement materials and psychologically process the various tasks in line with the concept and goal of the project. The researchers served mainly as facilitator and motivator in the process; leading the participants and suggesting movement materials in form of tasks for the participants in the various dance forms mapped out

for the project. Unstructured interviews and key informants provided the background on the overall approach and reception to dance productions and pedagogy in the study area. Their inputs were helpful to the project as they aided the researchers to understand the approach, content and challenges faced by the students in their dance courses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

By obstructing the traditional ‘do-as-I-do’ instructional role of the teacher, the students were free to explore and apply their creative ingenuities to the concept.

The positive psychology, Flow and Somatic approach adopted in the project were useful alternative pedagogic models to breaking the traditional imitative pedagogical process and put learning in the hands of the students. These approaches are implied when Sööt and Viskus (2014) talks about the holistic dance pedagogy. For them, a holistic dance teacher takes a human-centred approach to instruction, introducing pupils’ unique human plans and taking into account their unique personal traits. In their opinion also, more attention needs to be paid to the human beings and how they interact with their surroundings, as well as how they recognise their role in the process and how to adjust to change.

The researchers observe that opening-up the concept for students’ contribution to the plotting, design and performance not only sustained their interest but served as a new vista for the participants to comprehend other history courses such as THA: 213 (Drama and Theatre: Colonial Period). It provided them the opportunity to understand colonialism and its influence on the nation’s history and development as well as postcolonial ideologies especially as it affects the leadership and sociological landscape of the nation. Although it was a dance practical, students frequently asked questions that border on other courses related to the concept especially in the angle of religious influences on Africa, colonial structures and slave trade. The approaches explored in the project provoked a new understanding and interest in the art of dance especially indigenous dances which according to Christian Nwaru and Princewill Abakporo (2022) most Generation Z (people born between 1995 to 2010, also referred to as Gen Z) quickly discard as fetish, mundane or barbaric. Breaking down the walls of traditional imitative dance pedagogy, the students were able to find interest in learning and exploration of the various movement tasks based on their body types, time and chosen dance form.

In line with Kendra Cherry’s (2024) concept of democratic leadership, the concentration and contributions of the students to the process also provided them the forum to explore their creative thoughts towards achieving set pedagogic and artistic goals. The students were brought up to the levels of teachers for both themselves and their audience. This was reflected in their approaches to content planning and delivery. This dy-

dynamic method of engagement reinforces Janet Alsup's (2005) assertion that the holistic teacher education advances the radical notion that teachers are people and not demigods of knowledge with a one-way learning traffic. It makes contemporary teaching and learning a very dynamic process which should become the approach to teaching and learning of indigenous dances in institutions if the art is to survive this millennium. Serving as facilitators enabled the researchers to identify highly skilled dancers in the group who were deployed as dance instructors to bring other young dancers up to speed with the movement materials.

In line with critical pedagogical templates, traditional learning methodologies are reviewed. According to Henry Giroux and Susan Giroux (2006), in order to encourage pupils/students to change the world for the better, the teacher as 'citizen scholar' is also expected to take critical standpoints and connect their work to significant social challenges in society. Channelling the project towards burning issues such as the History dilemma in Nigerian curriculum, provided the platform for participants and audience members (most of whom also are Gen Z) to appreciate the potentials of indigenous dance to provoke and contribute to conversations on new and emerging realities. Relating her experience in the project, a final-year student participant explained that they had never engaged in dance in such a manner before. In the production, they were able to retell Nigeria's history using traditional dances and songs. What made the experience particularly enjoyable was their involvement in the planning and movement creation process, as well as the choreographer's consideration of their individual dance choices and body types. She added that the project helped her gain a better understanding of many concepts they had been taught in African theatre history back in their second year.

Further to observations on the impact of the project on students' appreciation of dance art, there was an increase in the number of final year students who wanted to engage in dance production for their final projects. Before now, choice project topics for performance students have always leaned towards Nollywood, drama productions and other digital performances. The field of dance seemed less interesting for the students due to the approach to its teaching which makes them do dance for the sake of its intrinsic and aesthetic values without weaving the art to address burning sociological issues as have been carried out in *Our Heritage*. After the project, the researchers talked some interested students through aspects of the production that could form their case studies for their final projects.

The project sparked new interest among the student audience who felt the need for more dance related productions.

This shows that there is hope for reviving the appreciation of indigenous dance art if there is a critical review of content and pedagogical approach to dance art in higher institutions in Nigeria. The modalities for bringing indigenous dance up to par with

contemporary challenges in Nigeria has remained at the core of the dwindling appeal of the art. There is a wide gap between the indigenous dance art and emerging sociological realities in Nigeria and efforts must be put in place to bring dance up to speed with contemporary trends and made to address issues peculiar to growth and development of society like other art forms such as drama and music. The researchers observe that more than the fun of involvement and participation, they were able to understand Nigeria's historical antecedents, appreciate the nation's unique cultural differences and the need to embrace unity for meaningful national growth and development.

The success of indigenous dance forms in the nation can be attributed in part, to the adoption of an appropriate teaching and learning methodology. This is most likely the best method to guarantee that traditional dances and knowledge systems withstand the forces of westernisation and globalisation. The approach to sustain the interest of students in dance education lies on the dance teacher who must become open-minded, student-centred, dynamic and critical in the dance studio. Being open-minded speaks to the dance teachers' willingness to adopt and utilise new ideas from media and even the students (Sööt & Viskus, 2014) and Leijen et al (2008; 2009). Student-centred talks about the way the teacher is focused on the students owning the process and getting more involved in the designing, teaching and learning process. Dynamic in the sense that he has to understand various pedagogical ideologies and going further to, according to Kristina Mullamaa (2017) when to apply those in engaging the students towards sustaining their interest in the dance work. To be critical, educators need to be able to incorporate sociological and pedagogical relevance into their work. Being critical aids the educators in assessing the influence and openness of the teaching method on and among students. It supports the process of individualisation and motivation, both of which have an impact on students' drive and ability to learn successfully and independently throughout their lives (Mullamaa, 2017, p. 95).

The dance teacher/facilitators must understand the abilities and differences of their students

Usually, in most institutions, dance classes are engaged in as requirements to qualify for a degree in Theatre/Performing Arts. In these institutions also, most of the dance lecturers' approach to teaching dance contribute to the apathy of most students to the course. Most of them are reluctant to take dance classes because of the approach of their dance teachers or instructors who treat them like professional dancers. (Nwaru 2014) Most times the dance teacher forgets that a large number of his students have not had contact with the art of dance while some too, have been radically influenced by the negative societal perception of the art in Nigerian society. Only a few students have love for the art and have encountered the art in one or two situations. The impression of the student about the art of dance while in school, will linger even after

school. This should make the approach to its teaching intentionally dynamic to build and sustain interest in participants. Dance teachers in this process, may need to appreciate students who meet up with movement tasks as a means to encourage and motivate the others.

Students are humans and have creative abilities too

The fact that they are students does not make them less creative. As much as they are humans, they are creative beings who can contribute in very many ways. The dance teacher should be open-minded to recognise and adopt creative inputs from the students and engage them towards realisation of the dance work. Making the students collaborators in their own learning, proves very effective and helps sustain their interest in the work to see it through. As stakeholders in their learning, this method makes them look forward to rehearsals, be actively involved in the process, and task their physical and cognitive resources to get things done. This approach by the researchers, backed by an interesting and collaborative production concept, helped put the students in flow states several times and sparked up the right attitude which endured till the production night and after.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective marriage of town and gown in the teaching of dance in universities

Sadly, choreographers are very few in Nigerian tertiary institutions where dance or dance related courses are offered. In most institutions, there are no dance teachers and most dance courses are given to persons who have a theoretical knowledge of the art. In most cases, the course is handled by scholars in criticism or academic staff that are relatively young with the impression that they could make certain rhythmic movements. This mind-set in addition to the teacher-centred traditional pedagogical approach has dissuaded students in the past from picking up interest in this area. The need for certification to teach in tertiary institutions is necessary. However, the inability of these institutions to create room to accommodate skilled but uncertificated individuals whose experiences and abilities could be valuable to dance art pedagogy is another limitation. These sets of people are found in several States' Councils for Arts and Culture, National Troupe and private dance troupes in the country. There is also the category of lecturers within the institutions who are certified in dance but have not mastered the skills and techniques of the art to make practically meaningful impact on the students in the dance studios. These gaps are limiting factors in the pedagogy

of dance which must be addressed—the gap of bridging between town and gown. Udoka (2005) sees the two as major predators who poach on Nigerian indigenous dances. In his words:

There are two major predators who poach on traditional dances in Nigeria and there is a significant social division between them. These predators are: the dance scholar in one group and the other group is made up of the popular local performers. They assume the role of predators because in spite of the knowledge and authority that each group possesses (the dance scholars in research and documentation; the popular local performers in production and performance styles), there is no correlation between their efforts. These two are the poachers of traditional dances since each only takes from the dances that belong to society without giving anything back to the society in a manner that would situate the function of the art form as a strategic medium in shaping the realities of a nation (Udoka, 2005, p. 283).

More than ever, there is need for a healthy marriage of the two for the sake of the future of the art. Each side of the divide have their unique abilities that can help the revival and sustainability of the art form. For schools without dance lecturers, rather than teaching theory and leaving the students (most of who are apathetic to the art) to themselves, a collaboration with the Arts councils can come in handy to give the students a practical guide after the theoretical sessions with the assigned lecturers.

Theory must meet practice

Certain dance teachers are not updated on pedagogy and developing trends in dance instruction. They are also quite limited in their understanding of theory and lack the ability to adapt their art to evolving trends in society and dance education. This encourages students' apathy, since many believe that the art can make no meaningful contribution to society other than aesthetics and exercise for the dancer. Those days are gone when a choreographer was simply a bunch of talent and skill. We are in an era when those abilities and skills must be utilised to heated discussions about the state of humanity and the path forward for humankind. The artist is influenced by current events and cultural trends. According to Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez (2008), the cultural perspective of the society in which the artist lives and works usually determines the nature of his artworks. Simply said, a society's art is derived from its ever-changing traditions and culture.

Any significant effort towards recovering the failing standard of indigenous dance art in modern Nigeria must be done by situating indigenous dance forms within the matrix and realities of today. Indigenous dance must reflect current circumstances. Indigenous dances could be used to spark discussions about environmental issues, migration, and gender equality as highlighted in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. How, for example, may indigenous Nigerian dances be adapted to raise

awareness about environmental resilience and provoke post humanist consciousness? How then can this be accomplished without the dance teacher being aware of the reality or implications of such issues? Theory must meet practice in indigenous dance to become relevant tool in contemporary Nigeria. According to Scott Taylor (2005), by assessing a theory's applicability, theatre professionals might avoid losing intellectual influence, becoming stagnant and complacent, or adhering to outmoded methods of thought that do not reflect modern social realities.

Government intervention on Curriculum

The educational sector will also have to sit up in the area of curriculum planning. The exclusion of History as subject in the curriculum must have to be compulsorily added into the curriculum for all classes in Nigerian Secondary schools. In history lie the cultural trajectories, influences and continuities of a people. The researchers see the removal of history from the curriculum as the highest height of colonial influence on a people and it reinforces the submission of Valentine Obinyan and John Otoide (2021) that Kakistocrats have hijacked the leadership of the nation. Efforts should be made to reinstate history in the curriculum, as it remains one of the most important courses that connect students to their traditional roots, cultural uniqueness expressed in their culture, arts, politics, and sociology, as well as the impacts on those cultures over time. What significant development can be done in a country that ignores its past? In lieu of this much anticipated inclusion of history as a subject, the arts can serve as an alternate pedagogy to history studies, providing young Nigerians with a foundation for the future. The subject's omission from 2009 to the present represents over thirteen years of producing students who have no basic grasp of their history.

Similarly, the government must step up its efforts to provide enough financing and facilities for dance education in the various universities of country. The deplorable conditions in which most dance teachers train their students can only be imagined. This has been the core cause of numerous strikes by universities throughout the nation's history. Almost all universities in Nigeria complain about a lack of facilities. Dance as an area of expertise and scholarship is rarely considered in the developmental interventions of governments, educational authorities, or even the Theatre Arts Departments that house it. This feeds additional apathy in the area, threatening the sustainability of dance in these institutions and across the country. For example, there are fewer than 10 full professors in the field of dance across the country, and none of them are under the age of 55. This explains the futures of the field of dance education if efforts are not in place to give dance education a facelift backed by strong governmental policies. Indigenous dances and performance traditions ought to be taught and practiced in elementary and high institutions. This is done to ensure that, while the practice promotes children's health and fitness, it also fosters their cultural sensitivity and awareness

of the identities underlying these dances, which contributes to the preservation of Nigerian traditional dance by boosting societal appeal about the art in the long term.

Documentation on Pedagogic Approaches for Indigenous dances

Indigenous dance pedagogy in Nigerian universities is yet lacking in sufficient scholarship. Scholars must become intentional in their documentation of experiences, approaches, challenges and outcomes of teaching dance in Nigerian universities to spark up conversations on methodologies, dynamisms and roles in the teaching and learning process. This is in light of the fact that while dance as a subject enjoys scholarship in areas of its relevance, iconicity, and aesthetics, the structures and approach of knowledge transfer still begs for attention.

CONCLUSION

Several dance scholars have pointed out that the challenge of dance education in the 21st century is akin to those encountered by education in general. Scholars like Sööt and Viskus (2014), and Stinson (2005; 2010), support that even with the best efforts to prepare educators for the twenty-first century pedagogical challenges, none of us will be able to teach the dance forms we are familiar with to the students we have taught in the past, in the schools we attended, using only the teaching strategies that we find comfortable. Certain levels of change must come in line with the peculiarities of the changing time, aesthetic levels, media advancements and sociological issues. This is where most dance teachers in Nigerian Institutions and governments have not lived up to their tasks of delivering quality teaching. Their focus has hitherto been to force technique into the students with the old century teaching method but dance is fast metamorphosing into a tool for the development of the total individual physically, emotionally and psychologically (Sööt & Viskus, 2014). Modifying the surroundings and available resources to meet each learner's unique demands (Onyishi, 2023) should be the goal of dance education today. Corroborating this thought, while Meredith Sims and Heather Erwin (2012) question the dance education hinged only on movement without the historical roots of those movements and why they are employed in the dance work, Stinson (2010) holds that collaboration, self-control, focus, and hard work towards a purpose are more important than any dancing instruction we teach. This entails prioritising problem solving, making connections, perceiving relationships, and remaining fully alert and present in the methodology, content and design of the dances we teach.

To this end, it is yet possible to get indigenous dance art back to its pride of place in the nation when the teaching and learning methods is reviewed. Injecting concepts

such as Dance Flow theory, somatic, positive psychology, critical pedagogy, breakdown of the traditional imitative approach as well as ensuring that the contents of our works with students with indigenous dances speak to evolving myths, tales, technologies and questions about our collective humanity. This does not entail that dance educators must shut their eyes to other cultural peculiarities, but must be open enough to adopt them in their works to further explore the flexibility and malleability of indigenous dance art to coexist with new and emerging dance forms and flow with existing and emerging choreographic and aesthetic trends. It is high time new reasons to engage indigenous dances emerged in contemporary times; the new tales of government insensitivities, insecurity issues, migration, gender discourse, identities, environmental sustainability and survival as burning issues could find expressions in dance in indigenous dance creations. In conclusion, indigenous dance must be repackaged for the younger generation in ways that meet their aesthetic and sociological needs in order to stay relevant, compete favourably with other dance and aesthetic forms as well as regain its relevance in contemporary Nigeria.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researchers declare no conflicts of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The paper received funding from the Bowen University Research Directorate (BURG) and supported by Research and Development Agency (APVV-22-0204) Religiosity and Values of Permanent Sustainability

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