

---

---

## **Restructuring the Academic Environment through TFDs for Sustainable Development: A Case Study of “Dr. Lecturer” a PhD Class Project on University of Port-Harcourt Community**

Charles Agha

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v21i4.17>

### **Abstract**

*This paper is anchored on the use of Theatre for Development (TfD) as a restructuring mechanism and strategy for sustainable growth and development. However, there is no gainsaying that within the academic environment that irregularity abound especially arising from misconducts like: sexual harassment, buying of grades, flirting with lecturers, victimization and indecent dressing. The TfD pilot project executed in the year 2017 by the students of Theatre and Media Arts, Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Port-Harcourt Rivers State, has been carefully reviewed to show the potency of performance arts (TfD) as a restructuring mechanism for development. This paper adopts the analytical research method and the TfD official eye approach. The finding reveals that Theatre for Development (TfD) is a grass root mobilization and concientization mechanism for sustainable growth and development especially as it relates to the recent trend in the academic communities.*

**Keywords:** Theatre for Development, Performance, Mass Mobilization

### **Introduction**

The nation's varsities and tertiary institutions of higher education have often been referred to as the citadels of learning and the acquisition of special knowledge for the sustainable growth and the development of the country and her citizenry. These academic communities are Christened as such because of the volume of

teaching and learning exercise that are reflected through shared academic contents between professionals and students in the quietude of this enlarged community. However, there is no gainsaying that within such environment that irregularity abound especially arising from misconducts like: sexual harassment, buying of grades, flirting with lecturers, victimization, seductive indecent dressing etc, which are culpable agents that threatens the possible breakdown of the academic structures of these communities. It is therefore on this threshold that this paper tends to examine these misconducts as anomaly using Theatre for Development (TfD) also variously called theatre for community animation, popular theatre, and theatre for integrated rural development as part of social movement covering many parts of Africa. These developmental mechanisms have been given greater visibility in recent times and have grown in bounds in other parts of the developing world. It has been used to support development works covering health, water, agriculture, education (Abah, 1997). Following the trails of the different TfD projects and achievements recorded, Nda (1993) concludes that:

Theatre for development is effective in mobilization, concientization, creation of two way processes, promoting decision making creating of inter-group and inter-settlement solidarity as well as revitalization of people's own forms of cultural expression (p.38).

In line with the above, Kidd (1984, P.24) affirms that "TfD also called community theatre is a means of bringing people together building confidence and solidarity stimulating discussion exploring alternative option for actions and building collective commitment to change". He further outlined varieties of approach that could be used for a better realization of a TfD project, that is, a proper indulgence in the theatre for the people, by the people and with the people. According to him:

In theatre for the people, amateurs control the process and present a finished product to targeted or undifferentiated audience; in theatre with the people, outsiders collaboratively work with selected group of people from the target group, in theatre by the people, local people assume control of the process (p.6).

However, the Tfd project of "Dr Lecturer" evolved "theatre with the people" as a chief approach to gainfully exploit cases of misconduct among lecturers and students of University of Port-Harcourt Community. This is the basis of this review of "Dr Lecturer" a Tfd pilot project carried out in 2017 in University of Port-Harcourt, Rivers state.

### **A Review of "Dr. Lecturer"**

"Dr. Lecturer" is a Tfd class project embarked upon by the Ph.D students of Theatre and Media Studies of the Department of Theatre and Film studies, University of Port-Harcourt, Rivers state. The project stated with Goal Identification, especially with a scheduled discussion meeting and within that frame, the class was able to identify possible problem areas inherent in the university community which needed attention. The areas of need or problems identified within the community bother on misconduct among lecturers and students and this was broken down into five sub-categories: 1. Sorting of lecturers (buying of grades), 2. Flirting with lecturers (for possible enhancement of scores), 3. Sexual harassment (lecturer/student), 4. Victimization (intimidation of students), 5. Indecent dressing (weapon of male/female seduction).The students also adopted the use of the official eye approach as the most susceptible theatrical idiom to tackle the menace of misconduct. However, this approach is in tandem with the status of the project initiators who are all students, and who may have one way or the other encountered similar problem in the cause of

their studies within the environment. The use of questionnaire in place of plenary was also adopted to elicit direct response from the academic and non-academic members of the university community (audience) which is a common feature of all Tfd projects. Moreso, for a proper data collection and analysis, a set of questions were formulated and administered as questionnaire to represent the different aspects of the identified problem infused in the content of the play scenario.

As soon of the committee for Data Analysis and Play Creation or scenario were through with their job, the group drifted into rehearsal proper, where all the contents of the questionnaire and scenario are interpreted and given life, after which comes the Production of “Dr. Lecturer” on the 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 at the University of Port-Harcourt Arts Theatre (the crab). The short scenario captured slices of misconducts, as reflected in the questionnaire through a simple plot of three movements, and those common issues often heard of in the varsities and tertiary institutions environment.

### **Synopsis of “Dr. Lecturer”**

**Movement I:** The play starts with a drum beats as students walk into the classroom, they exchange greetings and sit at their different positions. A student addresses the class, and minutes later another student suggests they rehearse their class practical dance. The affirmation of all rolls the drum as group choreographed dance comes alive, the dance comes to a halt as the course representative enters with the previous class test scripts in hand. He calls out the names on the script and the owners push forward to collect them. At this point the class became rowdy with the murmur of students over their poor grades. However, in course of this Dr. Lecturers walks in and the class is quiet again, Dr. Lecturer inquire over what the noise was all about, as students are full of compliant over their poor performance.

In a flashback, drum rolls to reveal a lecturer’s office and in it is a male and a female mascot. The male mascot (corrupt lecturer) seats while the female mascot (corrupt student) tries to seduce him as she makes her way to the table of the male mascot in a series of seductive moves caped in songs and obscene dance movements. The female mascot holds the hand of the male mascot as he marks her script good, good, good. The flashback is dissolved to reveal Dr. Lecture and the students in their initial positions.

**Movement II:** The drum rolls again to reveal another flashback, but this time a male mascot is seated in an office (up stage) while Dr. Lecturer is seated (down stage) writing. The course representative is seen giving money and a long list of students to the male mascot. The mascot scrutinizes the list and marks good against some names and request for more money which the course representative doles out. After that, the course representative proceeds to meet Dr. Lecturer down stage with another list of students and half way the male mascot stops him, drum rolls and a song of warning filters in and the scene is dissolved and they all return to their previous positions. However, another rowdiness ensure from students demanding their monies from the course representative, while Dr. Lecturer questions them, and apparently another female student in a seductive dance movement try some advances at Dr. Lecturer and she is pushed away.

**Movement III:** Dr. Lecturer gets very angry and addresses the students. “Now listen up, here in university of Port Harcourt it is no longer business as usual. Misconducts like cultism, is an offence that attract its own measure of desired consequences. Now repeat after me, your clothes must not bear any form of vulgar, offensive or obscene prints or language. You must not expose your midriff, chest, upper thigh or show visible cleavage or undergarment. You must not arouse

or harass the sensibilities of any staff or student in the university community. You must not solicit your lecturer for grades or scores”. He continues, “if you sense any form of harassment, you have the duty to report to the professional ethics committee or the office of the registrar”. And gradually the student’s hands are put down, while he Dr. Lecturer tries to encourage the students. “These acts of misconduct must stop. Do not ignore or keep silent at instances of it, if we break the culture of silence, we can stop the menace of misconduct and evolve a healthy interaction in the university community”. The students claps Dr. Lecturer as he walks out, drum rolls again and the students perform the closing dance. THE END

The production is then followed by administration of the questionnaires in place of Plenary which engages the audience in a brief talk about what they have just watched. The questionnaire administered represents the identified problems by the group, which are meant to be answered immediately and returned before the audience leaves the auditorium. Follow up: the follow up of this group work of Dr. Lecturer is reflected in the instant questionnaires administered and analyzed hereunder.

### **Bio-Data of the Respondents**

Bio-Data category of respondents	Age				Gender		Rank/Level						Total
	20	20	25-30	30-above	Male	Female	GA	AL	S L	Profs	Academiad	Others	
		25					100	200	3 0 0	400	500	P.G.	
<b>Students</b>	25	30	45	20	46	74	17	19	3 4	30	8	1 2	120

Agha: *Restructuring the Academic Environment through TjDs for Sustainable Development: A Case Study of “Dr. Lecturer” a PhD Class Project on University of Port-Harcourt Community*

<b>Lectures</b>	-	-	-	20	12	8	-	12	6	2	-	-	20
<b>Non-teaching staff</b>	-	6	10	18	20	14	-	-	-	-	34	-	34
<b>O t h e r s</b>	-	4	8	14	10	16	-	-	-	-	-	26	26
<b>T o t a l</b>	2	0	0	20	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	200

The table above reveal the age range of the respondents with students as 25 (20 years), 30 (20-25 years), 45 (25-30 years) and 20 (30-above). It revealed the lecturers’ ages with 20 (30-above). It also revealed non-teaching staff with 6 (20-25years), 10 (25-30years), 18 (30-above) and others within the university community with 4 (20-25years), 8 (25-30years) and 14 (30-above) with the sum total of 200 respondents. From the table, we can see clearly that the gender for students was revealed with 46 (male) and 74 (female) making the total of 120 students. 12 (male) and 8 (female) making total of 20 lecturers; 20 (male) and 14 (female) making the total of 34 non-teaching staff and 10 (male) and 16 (female) making the total of 26 others within the university community. The total male was 88 while female was 112 forming the sum total of 200 respondents. The table also revealed level of students with 17 (100 level), 19 (200 levels), 34 (300 levels), 30 (400 levels), 8 (500 levels) and 12 (post graduate) students making the total of 120. It revealed the rank of lecturers with Graduate Assistant (Nil), Assistant Lecturer (12), Senior Lecturer (6) and Professor (2) making the total of 20 lecturers; the non-teaching staff with (34) and others within the university community with (26). The sum total of the respondents was 200 from 8 faculties in University of Port Harcourt.

## Computations of Percentage Responses of Respondents for Misconduct in Students/Lecturers Interactions in University of Port-Harcourt

SN	Statement questions	T o t a l Responses/ Total Percentage	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%
1	Misconduct is rampant in the interaction between students and lecturers	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	76	38%	80	40%	8	4%	32	16%	4	2%
2	Students indulge more in acts of misconduct than lecturers	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	70	35%	55	27.5%	10	5%	37	18.5%	28	14%
3	Lecturers indulge more in acts of misconduct than students	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	50	25%	25	12.5%	35	17.5%	40	20%	50	25%
4	Swearing lecturers is a common form of misconduct than flirting with lecturers	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	82	41%	78	39%	8	4%	28	14%	4	2%
5	Sexual harassment by lecturers is a common form of misconduct	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	35	17%	27	13.5%	75	37.5%	41	20.5%	22	11%
6	Female students fall for lecturers' harassment	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	47	23.5%	85	42.5%	21	10.5%	32	16%	15	7.5%
7	Students also harass lecturers	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	48	24%	80	40%	5	2.5%	28	14%	39	19.5%
8	Victimized students do not report to appropriate authorities	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	69	34.5%	50	25%	14	7%	36	18%	31	15.5%
9	Disciplinary management does not handle issues of lecturers' misconduct fairly	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	10	5%	29	14.5%	12	6%	90	45%	59	29.5%
10	Disciplinary management does not handle issues of students' misconduct fairly	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	24	12%	28	14%	6	3%	68	34%	74	37%
11	Indecent dressing is a form of misconduct	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	54	27%	58	29%	18	9%	20	10%	50	25%
12	Male students are more decently dressed than female students	TNR = 200 TP (%) = 100	64	32%	51	25.5%	20	10%	45	22.5%	20	10%

### Discussion of Findings/Summary

Item 1 in the table above indicated that 76 respondents out of the 200 respondents were represented with 38% and strongly agreed that misconduct is rampant in the interaction between students and lecturers. 80 respondents out of the 200 respondents with 40% also



agreed. Meanwhile, 8 respondents out of the 200 respondents with 4% were not certain as they concluded with undecided. The item also revealed 32 respondents out of the 200 respondents represented with 16% and 4 respondents out of 200 respondents represented with 2% disagreed and strongly disagreed. Based on the above percentage, the table revealed that 78% agreed against 18% disagreed indicating that misconduct is rampant among lecturers and students of the University of Port Harcourt.

The table revealed item 2 with 37% representing 70 respondents as strongly agreed, 27.5% representing 55 respondents as agreed whereas, 5% representing 10 respondents were not certain as they ticked undecided. The item also revealed 18.5% representing 37 respondents as disagreed and 14% representing 28 respondents as strongly disagreed indicating that students indulge more in acts of misconduct than lecturers with 62.5% agreed against 32.5% disagreed out of 100%.

From the table, item 3, we can see clearly that 25% strongly agreed, 12.5% agreed and 17.5% undecided whereas, 20% disagreed and 25% strongly disagreed. The item revealed that 37.5% agreed against 45% disagreed out of 100% proving that lecturers also indulge in the act of misconduct but not as much as that of students in University of PortHarcourt. Again, it was revealed in item 4 that sorting lecturers is a common form of misconduct than flirting with lecturers in the university with 14% strongly agreed, 39% agreed; 14% strongly disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed. This proves that 80% agreed against 16% disagreed out of 100% of the respondents responses.

On the issue of sexual harassment by lecturers as a common form of misconduct, item 5 indicating 17.5% as strongly agreed, 13.5% as agreed while 37.5% as undecided who are not certain; 29.5% disagreed and 11% strongly disagreed. The item revealed that

the respondents are not quite sure whether sexual harassment by lecturers could be a common form of misconduct with 77.5% undecided. Though, 31% agreed against 31.5% disagreed out of the 100% responses of the respondents indicating that sexual harassment by lecturers is not rarely a common form of misconduct since they are not the initiators. On one hand, item 6 revealed 23.5% as strongly agreed, 42.5% as agreed, 10.5% as undecided; 16% as disagreed and 7.5% as strongly disagreed indicating that female students fall for lecturer's harassment. On the other hand, item 7 revealed 24% and 40% as strongly agreed and agreed; 2.5% as undecided, 14% and 19.5% as disagreed and strongly disagreed indicating that students also harass lecturers.

Furthermore, we can see clearly in item 8 that students rarely report to appropriate authorities with 34.5% as strongly agreed, 25% as agreed, 7% as undecided, 18% disagreed and 15.5% as strongly disagreed. In item 9, it was revealed that the school management do not handle the cases of lecturers' misconduct fairly and was indicated with 5% strongly agreed, 15.5% agreed, 6% undecided; 45% disagreed and 29.5% strongly disagreed proving that school management frown at cases of misconduct by lecturers and do not compromise with such cases. Item 10 revealed 12% as strongly agreed, 14% agreed while 3% undecided; 34% strongly agreed and 37% as agreed indicating that the school management does not handle issues of misconduct fairly with students. However, item 9 and 10 prove that University of Port Harcourt management did not take the issues of gross misconduct kindly with both lecturers and students of the University.

In addition, the table indicated item 11, with 27% as strongly agreed, 29% as agreed, 9% undecided; 10% disagreed and 25% as strongly disagreed indicating that indecent dressing is a form of misconduct. It also revealed item 12, with 32% strongly agreed, 25.5% agreed, 10 undecided, 22.5% disagreed and 10% strongly

disagreed indicating that male students are more decently dressed than female students in University of Port Harcourt. Summarily, the finding of this study reveals that both lecturers and students are involved in the act of misconducts in University of Port Harcourt. It also concludes that school management does not take issues of misconduct kindly with lecturers and students who are directly involve. Finally, the study reveals that misconducts are rampant in the interaction between lecturers and students in University of Port Harcourt.

### **Conclusion**

Restructuring as a developmental strategy begins with the individual. No wonder Duruaku (2011) says that “development can only be achieved when the human resources are at peace, enough to engender harmony through common discourse that are the drivers of progress”. The 2017 TfD project by the Ph.D students of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Port Harcourt in review, has currently achieved its mark especially with the establishment of the University of Port Harcourt Ethics Committee, to look into cases of indiscipline among students and staff of the institution. The authority of the school has also set up many security outfits to monitor the nefarious activities of students and to tackle the menace of cultism which has continued to rear its ugly head in the environment. However, it is our hope that through lampooning the academic environment using the instrument of the TfDs that a reasonable amount of restructuring can be achieved.

**Charles Agha**  
Department of Theatre Arts  
College of Education, Agbor  
Delta State  
chaprinze11@gmail.com

## References

- Aba, S.O. (1977). *Performing life: case studies in the practice of theatre for development*. Zaira: Shekut Books.
- Duruaku, ABC. (2011). *Cultural festival as a tool for national development in Nigeria*: Abuja, National Institute for cultural orientation.
- Freire, P. (1978). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: penguin.
- Kamiongera, C. (1961). *Theatre for development in Africa*.
- Kidd, R. (2002). *Strategy and workplan for designing trainer's guide (Toolkit) on HIV/AIDS stigma*. Academy for Educational Development and International Centre for Research on Women. Washington.
- Nda, Z. (1993). *When people play people: Development communication through theatre*. Zed Books, London.