

**Emerging Paradigms for Applied Drama and Theatre Practice in
African Contexts**

Kennedy C. Chinyowa
Tshwane University of Technology
South Africa

Introduction

Helen Nicholson (2005) aptly describes applied drama and theatre as a gift. Notwithstanding the contestable meanings that may be attached to the metaphor of a gift such as dependency, patronage and surveillance, Nicholson argues that the practice of making theatre in community settings creates spaces that enable participants' voices to be heard. Such practice goes beyond mere 'giving' and 'receiving' to embrace notions of emotional pleasure, empathic dialogue and mutual exchange. The gift givers, such as donors or practitioners, put themselves in the recipients' place and imagine not only what they (recipients) would like but also listen to what they would like to receive. More specifically, it is in the artfulness of giving and receiving during the process of interactive communication that applied drama and theatre acquire special significance. The desire and capacity to identify with the lives of others through the drama and theatre making process constitutes the experience of the gift.

From the foregoing metaphor of applied drama and theatre as a gift, one is inclined to ask the question: What paradigms would make up an authentic gift in the context of applied drama and theatre practice? This question is rendered more difficult by Nicholson's warning about the paradox of the gift:

Because it can be seen simultaneously as both a present and a poison, it is sometimes worth remembering the unpalatable truth that a present, however well intentioned, may be thought to be poisonous by those who

live in a different context, and whose version of a good life differs from our own (2005:161-2).

This article examines some of the paradigms that have emerged from how applied drama and theatre being practised in selected African contexts handles both process and product with specific reference to HIV/AIDS education. I adopt Robert Chambers' definition of paradigm as, "a pattern of ideas (or concepts), values, methods and behaviour which fit together and are mutually reinforcing" (1997:32). The combined term 'applied drama and theatre' is being used to refer to genres of theatrical performances that are being used to create transformational learning encounters between facilitators (or practitioners) and participants. To a large extent, these educational theatre activities are taking place in contexts that lie beyond the boundaries of theatre buildings (Thomson, 2006). Such genres include community theatre for development (also called popular or people's theatre), drama in education, theatre in education, forum theatre, industrial theatre, prison theatre, to name a few.

The tendency has been for both critics and practitioners to apply the Freirian educational paradigm of 'codification' and 'decodification' in the interpretation of applied drama and theatre work taking place in African contexts. In the words of Guarav Desai:

many of the theoretical premises of popular theatre workers in Africa originated in the seminal work of the Brazilian adult educator, Paulo Freire. Therefore, an understanding of Freire's theory and practice of education is crucial for the appreciation of the normative dimension of African theatrical practices (1990:69).

Although many popular theatre critics have applied Freirian pedagogy in their analyses (see Kidd and Byram, 1977, 1982; Byam, 1999; Noguiera, 2002), it sounds rather paradoxical to critique a performance-based practice such as applied drama and theatre using the criteria of a non-performance nature. What is needed is to come up with more performance-based paradigms that would make applied drama and theatre practice a true gift especially in HIV/AIDS education. As far as possible, I will draw examples from the work of two theatre organisations that have made significant strides in HIV/AIDS education, namely Amakhosi Theatre Productions based in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe and DramAidE (Drama in AIDS Education) based in Durban, South Africa. I will examine those paradigms that are closely related to applied drama

and theatre practice such as *folk media, popular participation, integrated development, and intercultural theatre.*

Folk Media Paradigm

The importance of folk media, described as the vehicle by which the common people, such as peasants and workers, communicate their ideas, values and beliefs (Ng'ombe, 2000) in applied drama and theatre practice can no longer be in doubt. The recognition of folk media as a paradigm for development communication became prominent during the shift from the modern development approach to 'the cultural dimension of development' (UNESCO, 1995, Escobar, 1995; Warren, Slikkerveer and Brokensha, 1995). However, as Nici Nelson and Susan Wright (1997) have argued, the shift towards the discourse of the marginalized, whom they call 'the primary stakeholders', has been more *instrumental* than *transformational*. More often than not, communities are led into participating in workshops using 'folk' songs, dances, poems and stories that have already been planned for them. Nelson and Wright assert that it is instrumental to *get* people to take part in workshops, and transformative when such people have power to decide on their own priorities. Robert Chambers (1997:30) sums it up when he says the instrumental paradigm means that 'they' (local people) participate in 'our' project as opposed to the transformational in which 'we' participate in 'their' project.

Thus, when folk media is instrumental, communities have less control over the process that is supposed to empower them. For instance, in a report on a workshop that was carried out in Malawi by the Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) Communication for Development Group to explore how folk media was used by the people in order to facilitate the process of development, it was noted that most external intervention programs were replete with examples of well meaning efforts that end up frustrated by a lack of appreciation of local communication systems (van der Stichele, 2000). The group cited one instance where puppetry like *nyau* masks were used among the Chewa people whose culture associates puppetry work with the world of animals and spirits. By implication, the development effort became a contradiction in terms because it attempted to explain 'rational' behaviour through 'irrational' means (Kamlongera, 2002), at least in the eyes of the local people.

How then can folk media be turned into an effective paradigm for communicating development messages in applied drama and theatre? To

answer this question entails a shift from an instrumental to a transformational paradigm for folk media. Larry O'Farrell argues that folk media, which he refers to as "drama-as-ritual" (1996:128) operates as a liminal force in the creation of different forms of reality. Richard Schechner (1982:70) adds that ritual play, which is part of folk media, has mechanisms for transformation during the process of 'staging'. The use of costume, masks, incantations, music, dance and song helps the performers to 'make-believe', to enter into another person or being. Through such liminal experience, the performer experiences changes in consciousness, either temporary or permanent. As Johan Huizinga elaborates with specific reference to ritual performance:

with the end of the play (season), its effect is not lost; rather it continues to shed its radiance on the ordinary world outside, a wholesome influence working on security, order and prosperity for the whole community until the (next) sacred play-season comes round again (1955:14).

To this end, folk media can be viewed as a transformational mode of performance. The different forms of folk media such as ritual, narrative, song, dance, poetry and masquerade have the capacity to bring about an order of reality different from that in which participants customarily live.

For instance, Amakhosi Theatre Productions often applies folk media like song, dance and narrative as a dramaturgical language by which ordinary people can easily communicate their understanding of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In fact, Cont Mhlanga, the founder of the organisation, strongly believes that folk media is created from everyday activity. In my interview with him, he insisted that I should underline the word activity (Interview, Gaborone, 2002). His view of folk media as a mediating framework in development communication did not seem to differ from Margaret Drewal's assertion of Yoruba play as "a mode of everyday praxis (which) is by definition serious and efficacious, shaping what reality is and how it is experienced" (1992:17). For Amakhosi Theatre, therefore, folk media acts as an effective paradigm by which community theatre groups can be able to frame their workshops and performances.

Similarly, Lynn Dalrymple (1992), the co-founder of DramAidE, regards folk media as a cultural frame of reference for most local community activities. In her writings on the work of DramAidE (see Dalrymple, 1992, 1995, 1996, 2006), she grapples with the problem of how to explore and change people's beliefs and attitudes through the

experience of ritual performance and drama. Following Arnold van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner's (1982) concept of liminality in ritual performance, DramAidE attempts to integrate ritual structure as a processual element in its forum theatre workshops. The DramAidE team simply creates a platform for community action on HIV/AIDS, and creates space for the target audience to take over the process using their own performance idioms. For taboo subjects associated with sexual deviance and social stigma such as HIV/AIDS, the spontaneity of folk media frees the co-players from society's rules, norms and obligations as long as the spirit of 'playing' is maintained. As James Ng'ombe (2000) concludes, if the common people have been able to create folk art, folk music or folk dances, it makes it imperative to view folk media as the communicative paradigm for those involved with local communities in development work.

Popular Participation Paradigm

Like folk media, participation is another category that has also been used and/or abused for 'development' purposes. As a result, different notions of participation have emerged which can only serve to confuse rather than clarify the concept. As Rajid Rahnema elaborates:

Modern jargon uses stereotyped words ... (which) fit arbitrarily together and support the most fanciful constructions. As these words are separate (depending on) context, they are ideal for manipulative purposes. 'Participation' belongs to this category of words (1992:116).

Several reasons have been put forward for the increased interest in the concept of participation by national governments and development institutions since the 1970s (Rahnema, 1992; Nelson and Wright, 1992; Chambers, 1997). Some of these reasons include:

- *bringing greater productivity at low cost*
- *being sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the people*
- *creating long term sustainability in development*
- *readiness to incorporate the local knowledge of the 'grassroots'*
- *being a good fund raising device for development agencies*
- *allowing more space for the sharing of resources by stakeholders*

However, because of its susceptibility to manipulation, Karl Polanyi (in Rahnema, 1992) argues that participation has been 'disembedded'

from its socio-cultural roots and perceived as a 'thing' or 'resource' for keeping the modern economy alive. But with the recent shift from a 'top-down' to a 'bottom-up' development approach, the participatory paradigm has begun to shift "from things to people" (Chambers, 1992:33).

What is the nature of this people-centred participatory paradigm in applied drama and theatre practice? Chambers points out that, "the paradigm of people implies the use of participation [as]an empowering process with a shift of power to those who are local and poor" (1992:33). Its point of departure is characterized by *process* rather than product, *partnership* rather than patronage and *diversity* instead of uniformity. In the case of applied drama and theatre, this implies that participation has to be *liberating* in order to allow originality of thinking, acting and feeling in the participants. This view may be compared with John O'Toole's (1976) argument for integral participation in educational drama. O'Toole identifies three categories of participation, namely : (i) extrinsic participation – where the audience provides feedback during post-performance discussions; (ii) peripheral participation – the audience contributes to the theatrical experience without affecting its structure; and (iii) integral participation – the audience perspective becomes an integral part of the theatrical process. From these forms of participation, O'Toole argues that the most effective way is to structure them in such a way that the participation becomes "an integral part : the climax, or at least the natural outcome" (1976:90).

When participation becomes an unself-conscious activity, the audience feels liberated to resolve even the hardest dilemmas. As Erich Fromm asserts, participation entails a re-appropriation of spontaneity:

for only if man does not repress essential parts of his self, only if he has become transparent to himself, and only if the different spheres of life have reached a fundamental integration, is spontaneous activity possible (1960:223).

Cecily O'Neill (1991) adds that workshop framing techniques involving improvisation and spontaneity are significant within popular theatre practices of different cultures. In particular, improvisation, which she refers to as 'a spontaneous dramatic encounter', has the power to generate:

an original text in action, and the experience which results can possess the coherence, complexity and singularity of theatre. ... While remaining apparently formless and undefined by a previous plan or script, (it has) a special capacity to lay bare the essential dramatic structures (11).

Taking improvisation as an essential function in applied drama and theatre workshops, and spontaneity as “the heart of improvisation” (13), popular participation comes to be realized as the bonding element for both the rehearsal process and the performance product.

For example, applied drama and theatre thrives on spontaneous participation as evidenced by Amakhosi Theatre (Chinyowa, 2007) and DramAidE’s (Dalrymple, 1992; Dalrymple and Botha, 2001) workshop and performance interventions. In Amakhosi’s Theatre for Community Action (TCA) workshop structure, spontaneity could be recognised in the selection and training of local talent from the target community. With the assistance of community leaders, Amakhosi Theatre selects and auditions local youths who would eventually form the local community theatre group. The selection criteria include folk media forms such as song, dance, poetry and narrative. These cultural performances act as popular sources of improvisation described by Margaret Drewal as “the moment-to-moment manoeuvring based on acquired in-body techniques to achieve a particular effect and/or style of performance” (1992:43). The level of spontaneity involved in actualising these ‘texts’ can test the youths’ potential for acting. Likewise, in DramAidE’s performance intervention strategy, forum theatre is blended with local cultural performances such as storytelling, praise poetry and ritual ceremony. Such theatrical synthesis is meant to give the target audience, in this case young men and women, a sense of ownership and responsibility over the intervention process. The synthesis of narrative and ritual with forum theatre becomes a means of ‘rehearsing’ to change the youth’s perceptions, values and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS using own language of performance.

Thus the spontaneous element in popular participation gives rise to a paradigm that is more permanent than ephemeral. In Huizinga’s (1955:31) view, ‘playing’ communities remain united by the feeling of being ‘apart together’, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms. Hence applied drama and theatre can not only bring about spontaneous participation but also adds a transformational dimension to the process. Of the almost thirty participatory approaches that Robert Chambers (1992:36) identified, he regards the popular mode as marking a genuine shift towards empowering participation. Although he admits that the paradigm of ‘things’ still remains strong, popular participation has shown that local people, with external support and encouragement, can perform as well, if not better than the outsiders. In other words, local

communities *can* develop themselves if afforded the space for genuine participation.

Integrated Theatre Paradigm

One of the implications of popular participation as an empowering paradigm for the marginalized is the role of what Rahnema calls “change agents” (1992:123). In applied drama and theatre, these refer to outsiders such as theatre activists and funding organizations. As Rahnema goes on to elaborate, the objective of the cultural dimension of development is to do away with the subject/object relationships that have tended to dominate most development projects, and, “to replace the alien authority of the outsider with a co-actor whose role is to intervene, primarily, as a catalyst in an endogenous process of self-generation” (1992:123). Yet the problem that many critics have identified is that, in the process of wanting to ‘develop’ the community, most external interveners have not been able to liberate themselves from their own conditioning as *the* thinkers or experts (Fals Borda, 1988).

A new paradigm shift is therefore needed that not only involves ‘the patients in their own care’ (Rahnema, 1992) but also makes such a dialogic interaction bring about better ways of intervening in other people’s lives. As pointed out earlier with reference to applied drama and theatre as a gift, the integrated theatre paradigm is a multi-pronged approach that enables outsiders to intervene on terms that are favourable to the interests and aspirations of the target community. But for this to happen, it is necessary for the ‘professionals’ or ‘experts’ to transcend their class orientation and begin to realize that:

no form of social interaction, or participation, (or intervention), can ever be meaningful or liberating unless the participating individuals act as free and unbiased human beings ... (Rahnema, 1992:126).

This is contrary to the modern development paradigm whose emphasis on ‘economic progress’ has led development workers to believe that their ‘modern’ biases, technological conditionings and scientific rationalizations are the best expressions of freedom *for* the people (Rahnema, 1992; Esteva, 1992). But, as Fromm (1960) points out, there is an inner lack of freedom associated with ‘modern progress’ which can be avoided by allowing individuals and communities to act, think and feel *originally and freely*.

Again, Amakhosi's Theatre for Community Action (Chinyowa, 2007) initiative and DramAidE's Five Step Intervention Model (Dalrymple and Botha, 2001) offer good examples of integrated theatre paradigms. For instance, in the Public Policy Seminar Dialogue Phase of Amakhosi's TCA approach, the local community theatre group's performance was followed by post-performance discussions that engaged all the stakeholders in dialogue. Locally selected rapporteurs recorded the major issues emerging from the seminar dialogue sessions. The dialogue facilitators who presided over the deliberations were also selected from locally trained peer educators. The team of outside experts such as researchers, bureaucrats and technocrats worked together with the local community to provide in-depth knowledge on health education and public policy regarding HIV/AIDS. Thus the public seminar dialogue sessions created space for the ordinary people to intervene in the authoring of their own lives with the assistance of external catalysts.

In the case of DramAidE, Dalrymple (1992) reports that although the organisation registered some initial successes with the Three Phase Intervention model, they soon realised that behaviour change could not occur by simply observing role models presented through ready-made theatrical performances. As a result, DramAidE shifted from their initial three phase model to a more complex Five Step Intervention model. The organization had realized that when it came to issues of sexual intimacy, people do not seem to approach such matters from a rational perspective. They were prepared to take personal risks, to perceive themselves as invulnerable, and act accordingly. DramAidE facilitators took cognizance of such causal factors behind risky behaviour and engaged directly with the youths through dialogue, reciprocity and feedback. The five step model was therefore geared towards providing more space for the youths to become active participants and take responsibility for their choices and decisions with outside facilitators acting as catalysts.

From these examples, it is clear that the adoption of an integrated theatre paradigm within contemporary development discourse requires:

sensitive 'animators' (who are) able to listen to the people, to the world at large, and to the roots of their common culture (in order) to cultivate the possibilities for (integrated) action and self-discovery dormant in the 'common man' (Rahnema, 1992:127).

A basic factor in this kind of self-regeneration of the people, even in the face of such a deadly scourge as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, is the collective involvement of all the stakeholders as partners in development.

Through 'playing' together, an inner sense of freedom can be created where both 'outsiders' and 'insiders' learn to listen, share, dialogue and liberate themselves from preconceived fears, biases, beliefs and value judgements.

Intercultural Theatre Paradigm

In the introduction to their edited volume based on proceedings from the International Drama and Theatre in Education Association (IDEA) congress held in Bergen, Norway, in 2001, entitled, *Playing Betwixt and Between* (2002), Bjorn Rasmussen and Anna-Lena Ostern point out that when different cultural practices meet, it is hard to come up with a unified terminology for fields such as 'theatre for development', 'drama in education' and 'community theatre'. Rasmussen and Ostern urge scholars to look beyond the different nomenclatures, concepts and understandings concealed beneath these terms. In one of the articles in the same volume, Tadashi Uchino (2002) argues that there has been some 'cross-cultural traffic' of theatre practices between Western and Japanese practitioners but this has occurred at the level of appropriation, acculturation and assimilation rather than dialogue, accommodation and reciprocity. In order to come up with what Patrice Pavis calls "a confluence of intercultural theatre" (1996:19), it is necessary to examine how practitioners have put the idea of 'playing between and betwixt sameness and difference' into intercultural performance practice.

Perhaps Victor Turner set the precedent by identifying a close link between the 'liminal symbols' of early tribal and agrarian societies and modern industrial societies when he said:

the symbolic genres of industrial leisure are analogous, if not homologous, to rituals, *particularly their liminal phases* (his emphasis), in tribal societies. That is, they are similar in function, if not in structure. ... In other words, they play with the factors of culture, ...just as tribesman do when they make masks, disguise as monsters, combine many disparate tribal symbols, or invert or parody profane reality (1978:282).

To distinguish between the tribal ritual process and the industrial leisure activities, Turner suggests the use of the term 'liminality' for the ritual symbolic inversions and 'liminoid' for the more complex modern metaphoric expressions. But what seems to unite all of them is the play principle, what Turner (1978:294) describes as the ludic 'anti-structure' that generates the system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise. Thus for the different cultures, play as the meta-structural

device for the drama or theatre remains responsible for bringing about the changing realities.

From Turner's (1982) liminal system, based mostly on his anthropological work among the Ndembu people of Zambia, it is possible to see how other scholars and practitioners have come up with a more or less intercultural performance paradigm based on the notion of 'playing between and betwixt sameness and difference', that is, a kind of hybridity, synthesis or blending of different performance forms. For instance, from the Indian performance tradition of *maya-lila*, Richard Schechner (1993) was able to construct a performance theory that he could apply in his experimental theatre workshops and rehearsals. Both Schechner (1993) and Clifford Geertz (1983) have also formulated a play theory based on their respective studies of Sanskrit (Indian) and Bali performance cultures respectively. Brian Sutton-Smith has built upon Victor Turner's system of 'anti-structure' in his classification of play activity as a paradoxical process for creating order out of disorder. As Sutton-Smith says, "we have something to learn through being disorderly" (in Turner, 1978:293). In their article aptly entitled, "Playing in the Margins of Meaning: The Ritual Aesthetic in Community Performance", Jonathan Neelands and Tony Goode decry the modern preoccupation with positivistic notions and urge practitioners to consciously seek out and reclaim:

the same traditional and Oriental aesthetic influences that have characterized the work of experimental and avant-garde theatre practitioners in the last fifty years. Brecht turned to Chinese theatre; Grotowski to Kathakali; Brook to classical Vedic and Vedantic theatre; and Artaud to Noh and Kabuki (1995:44).

Neelands and Goode's plea for an intercultural paradigm shift is further reinforced by Yvette Hutchison who describes how other Western artists like Pirandello, Genet, Ionesco and Picasso made use of the mask (derived from the West African masquerade in Picasso's case) as a means of mediating "the paradox of opposing states of being : inner and outer, real and fictional" (1994:52).

However, Rustom Barucha (1993, 1996) warns that interculturalism can become an ethnocentric practice that may be inseparable from the history of colonialism and Orientalism. More often than not, the specificities of local cultures are ignored through the adoption of an essentialist view of the Other. Instead, Barucha argues for an 'intracultural' rather than 'intercultural' paradigm. Intraculturalism

entails the interaction and exchange between local cultures, “within, between and across regions within the larger framework of the nation” (Barucha, 1996:159). Barucha’s option tends to further ‘localize’ national cultures in an increasingly ‘globalized’ world. As Allan and Carmen Luke have argued, “globalisation has generated new kinds of identity, new forms of intercultural communication and new forms of community” (2000:282). In terms of applied drama and theatre, the alternative remains that of an intercultural theatre paradigm that respects cultural specificity, reciprocity and diversity. In the words of David George, “reciprocity is as much a political and ethical priority as an aesthetic choice”. (1999:22) For instance, Peter O’Connor comments on how indigenous Maori ritual greetings like *powhiri* (welcome) and *poroporoaki* (farewell) marked the beginning and end of his process drama workshops “in ways as complex as the rules of theatre” (2003:270). Kate Donelan (1999, 2002, 2004) also argues that within an interactive drama classroom, intercultural performances can be made to dramatise and enact students’ sense of cultural connection and difference, and in the process, to generate new ways of seeing the world.

Although the shift towards an intercultural theatre paradigm in applied drama and theatre seems to be not yet fully developed, it is significant to note, from the work of Amakhosi Theatre and DramAidE, that the seeds of ‘playing between and betwixt sameness and difference’ are already being sown. The fact that their performances are rooted in local cultural performances means that such localisms are being re-imagined, re-vitalized and revised in the process of sharing with the ‘outside’ world. As Thomas Riccio says, “those that take also give back” (in Seeds, 1996:33), implying that applied drama and theatre performances such as Amakhosi’s *Vikela* (see Chinyowa, 2007) and DramAidE’s *See You at 7* (see Dalrymple and Botha, 2001), can be seen as forms of intercultural exchange between external facilitators and their target audience. In return, the target communities are likely to demonstrate the theatrical skills that they will have acquired from their training and exposure to applied drama and theatre.

For instance, Amakhosi Theatre has demonstrated a remarkable shift towards an intercultural theatre paradigm by taking its Theatre for Community Action (TCA) to the wider Southern African region (Chinyowa, 2007). The peoples of the six countries involved in the Integrated Regional Development Program (IRDP), namely Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique only share a Nguni dialectal past which has since been distorted by history. Yet,

through Amakhosi's TCA process, in particular, through localised renditions of Amakhosi's play, *Vikela*, the different regional communities managed to relate to each other from the vantage position of their own cultural diversity. For each of them, difference has not been so much of a liability but a source of cultural enrichment, learning about HIV/AIDS and global exposure. As the program's regional co-ordinator, Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, commented at the inter-regional colloquium held in Gaborone, Botswana, and attended by community representatives from all the six countries, "We are overwhelmed by the power of Theatre for Community Action (TCA) as a tool for community mobilization, community empowerment, community dialogue and research, and public policy dialogue"(2002:3). Perhaps what was even more 'overwhelming' were the multiple 'realities' that applied drama and theatre had created through the intercultural development paradigm.

Perhaps DramAidE offers a more fitting example of an intercultural theatre paradigm in operation. Since its inception in 1992, DramAidE has developed into a social movement capable of collaborating with both local and global organisations in HIV/AIDS education. Its ultimate goal has been to create an intercultural network of peer educators that promote safer sex, effective life skills and positive behaviour models (Dalrymple, 2005). In its Annual Report for 2004 and 2005, DramAidE reports that they have been able to team up with global partners like the John Hopkins University Centre for Communication (USA) in the Health Promoters Project, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the Preventing Mother to Child Transmission Project and the Norwegian Students Academy International Helpfund (SAIH), to mention only a few. This is not to mention other collaborative ventures with local organisations such as the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Centre for AIDS Development Research (CADRE) and African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF). In these community outreach projects, DramAidE and its affiliate partners have followed the principle of unity in diversity through their respect for cultural specificity as an ethical priority. As Richard Schechner (1985) points out, the performance of theatre, dance, music and ritual, by the very nature of their existence as modes of 'restored behaviour', gives us our best example of the field of human communication. These performance genres provide a platform for sharing ideas across intra- and inter-cultural divides.

Conclusion

In the quest to find an appropriate aesthetic that can act as a paradigmatic commentary on lived experience, John Fox urged researchers to look for:

a culture which may well be less materially based but where more people will actively participate and gain the power to celebrate moments that are wonderful and significant in their lives (in Neelands and Goode, 1995:45).

The few paradigms that have emerged from the examples of theatre organisations such as Amakhosi Theatre and DramAidE, namely *folk media*, *popular participation*, *integrated development* and *intercultural theatre*, have shown how applied drama and theatre can transform development into a function of the people's culture, and in the process, empower them to shape their own destiny, what Nicholson describes as "the gift of theatre" (2005:167). As Schechner (1993:42-3) has asserted, while humans have constructed or invented 'cultures', the basic ground of existence, playing, still permeates both work and leisure.

This article has shown how the practice of applied drama and theatre in African contexts has given rise to emerging paradigm shifts. For instance, folk media has been shown to be the means by which applied drama and theatre can communicate development using the people's own language of performance. But because of its dynamic, if not slippery nature, folk media has tended to be used as an instrumental rather than transformational paradigm. The spontaneous improvisation that is central to popular participation as a paradigm for the cultural dimension of development has also been shown to create greater efficacy in applied theatre practice. The same spontaneous quality, especially its collective nature, enabled all the stakeholders to engage in an integrated development paradigm as partners, and not separate individuals. The liminal element in applied drama and theatre, its capacity to 'play betwixt and between sameness and difference', was also found to be giving rise to a gradual shift towards an intercultural theatre paradigm. As Schechner (1993) would say, playing is the processual template, the continuous bending, twisting and looping of the action that leads to the different paradigm shifts in applied drama and theatre practice.

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