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New perspectives on the role of political theatre in Nigeria

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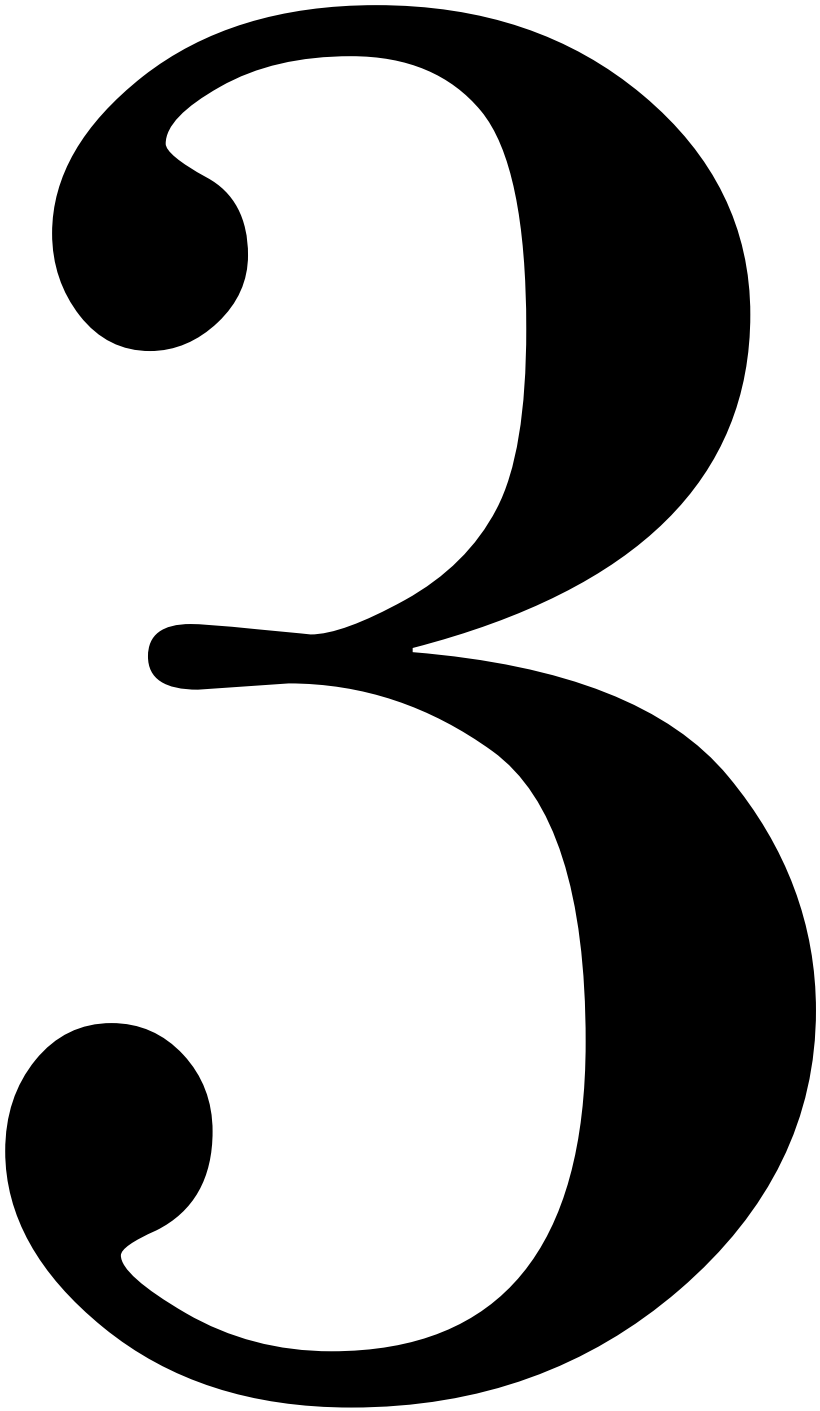
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Chapter 3

**Legislative Theatre: Foundation,
Critical Reflections and Seminal
Experiment in Nigeria**

In this chapter, I shift attention to a theatrical possibility by which theatre practitioners could collaborate with citizens to enhance civic participation, facilitate political education and possibly incorporate the citizens in creating laws that are more people-oriented. I propose that Nigerian theatre practitioners should, in collaboration with Nigerian citizens, utilise theatre as a stage – a chamber - from where laws could possibly emanate. This theatre is the Legislative Theatre. I propose the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology by Nigerian TfD practitioners. I will, in the course of this chapter, elaborate on why I make this proposal.

Theatrical performances are notable for interpersonal communication,⁴⁶⁷ that being one of the advantages of the theatrical form over other mediums of communication. Also, theatre is a living art form⁴⁶⁸ which comes into being whenever and wherever actors and audience come together. The immediacy and aliveness of theatre are accentuated, in the case of the Legislative Theatre, by the non-existence of the fourth wall which conventionally separates the audience from the actors.⁴⁶⁹ Thus, the exchange between, in this case, the actors and the spect-actors exudes life in the (re)presentation of the lived experiences of the participants. This feature of the Legislative Theatre could potentially impact positively on the legislative inputs that are birthed on the stage as they will be less of a *representation* but more of a *presentation* of existential realities.

Innovated by Augusto Boal, Legislative Theatre is a form of theatre which seeks to embed theatrical dialogue and deliberations into democratic, legal processes; a method which, in Boal's words, transforms citizens into legislators.⁴⁷⁰ A compelling consideration in Boal's conceptualisation of Legislative Theatre as an essential component of democracy is the necessity to minimise the deficiencies inherent in representative democracy. Boal argues that the legislator should not be the one who makes the law. Rather he should be the one through whom the laws are made. In other words, through the Legislative Theatre, the citizens themselves make the law.⁴⁷¹

Boal's concept of the Legislative Theatre was inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in which Freire, against the 'banking' method of education, espouses the problem-posing system of education as a pedagogic process in which people 'come

467 Nwadiuwe, "Theatre for Development: An Alternative Programme for Reproductive Health Communication in Urban Nigeria," 104.

468 Dani Karmakar, "Theatre and Communication: Relation Between Actor and Audience," *Commentary-11 Global Media Journal-Indian Edition* 4, no. 2 (2013): 2.

469 It should be noted that many modern types of theatrical engagements have accommodated the disintegration of the conventional fourth wall. Legislative Theatre is only but an instance.

470 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 15.

471 Boal, 8.

to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process of transformation'.⁴⁷² Fundamentally, the problem-posing form of education blurs the invidious distinction between teacher and student by recognising both teacher and student as partners and co-beneficiaries in the pedagogical process. Inspired by Freire's postulations, Boal wrote the *Theatre of the Oppressed* in which he espouses the Poetics or Theatre of the Oppressed as a theatrical tool that dissolves the distinction between actor and spectator, and makes both parties co-producers of a theatrical piece. In titling the book, Boal sought to pay homage to Freire whose pedagogical theories partly inspired his theatrical practice. Boal further extended the methodology of the Theatre of the Oppressed by inventing the Legislative Theatre as a politico-theatrical tool that would allow 'the electors to give their opinions, to discuss the issues, (and) to put counter-arguments'.⁴⁷³ Boal avers that such politically vibrant exchange and counter-argumentation between electors and their elected representative would make the electors 'to share the responsibility for what their parliamentarian does'.⁴⁷⁴ The kernel of Boal's claim is that this process makes electors not spectators or reactors to what their representative does but active participants exercising their citizenship rights within the ambience of a democratic government.

The examination of how this synergistic cooperation could function within the Nigerian geo-political space will be prefaced with a discussion of the socio-political atmosphere under which the Legislative Theatre methodology was innovated in Brazil. Following the conceptual foregrounding already provided, I will in the next section provide an abridged historical account of its founding and discuss the socio-political context which both necessitated and aided its founding as a politico-theatrical form. I will then discuss the features which distinguish between Legislative Theatre and Forum Theatre (the branch of the Theatre of the Oppressed closest in form to the Legislative Theatre), the seminal example of the Legislative Theatre practice, and the impact of the implementation of this form of theatre within the Brazilian context.

Leaving the seminal experiment, I will cursorily examine selected examples of the adoption of Legislative Theatre in Canada, Afghanistan and the USA. While acknowledging its challenges and limitations, I will argue that the methodology holds potential benefits in regard to assisting in the evolvement of a more acceptable form of democracy. To validate that claim, a crucial layer of the contents of this chapter will be the discussion of the laboratory Legislative Theatre project which I carried out at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. The practice-informed research effort was intended to examine how the application of the Legislative Theatre method-

472 Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 12.

473 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

474 Boal, 16.

ology could foreseeably unfold within the Nigerian context. Drawing inferences from the experimental project I will extrapolate the conceivable challenges, limitations and benefits of the application of the methodology in Nigeria. Based on that experiment also, I will align my thoughts with Gianpaolo Baiocchi's view that Legislative Theatre's ultimate goal is fundamental socio-political transformation which it achieves through indisputably better legislation realised through the experiential input of the citizens.⁴⁷⁵

Having hinted, in Chapter 1, on what I consider to be the application of the concept of play in the works of Nigerian playwrights, I will conclude this chapter by theorising Legislative Theatre as play. I look beyond the arguments about the 'autotelicity' and the 'purposelessness' of play to theorise Legislative Theatre as a play act with which the interstice between autotelicity and purposefulness could be navigated in order to, possibly, produce tangible results in the form of legislation. Briefly, I give an account of the emergence of Legislative Theatre.

3.1. The Foundation of Legislative Theatre

Legislative Theatre was the invention of the Brazilian theatre activist, Augusto Boal, which came about as a result of his incursion into active party politics. Having been forced into exile in 1971, Boal returned to Brazil in 1986 at the end of Brazilian military dictatorship. The years between 1964 and 1978 were critical for cultural animators in Brazil due to the stranglehold of the Brazilian military dictatorship. Despite being considered less cruel than others of its ilk in the Southern Cone, the Brazilian military junta was sufficiently tyrannical to deny Brazilians such basic rights as the habeas corpus.⁴⁷⁶ During the period, Brazilians were susceptible to arbitrary arrests and imprisonment.

The laws under which the arrests and subsequent imprisonments were enforced were not clearly defined yet many Brazilians were declared criminals against the state under such imprecise laws.⁴⁷⁷ Theatrical engagement during this period brought the practitioners into direct confrontation with the military regime and occasioned the need for ideological and ideational positionality among the Brazilian culture practitioners. Within the theatre community, those with leftist leaning were part of the engage⁴⁷⁸ or

475 Gianpaolo Baiocchi, "Performing Democracy in the Streets: Participatory Budgeting and Legislative Theatre in Brazil," in *A Boal Companion: Dialogues on Theatre and Cultural Politics*, ed. J Cohen-Cruz and M Schutzman (New York City: Routledge, 2006), 83.

476 Margaret E. Keck, *The Workers' Party and Democratization in Brazil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 25.

477 Keck, 25.

478 Campbell Britton, "Politics and Performance(s) of Identity: 25 Years of Brazilian Theatre," in *A Boal Companion: Dialogues on Theatre and Cultural Politics*, ed. Jan Cohen-Cruz and Mady Schutzman, 1st Editio (London: Routledge, 2006), 14.

contestation against government's oppressive rule. This group of culture practitioners ideologically 'alienated' other practitioners who chose to adopt a different approach in addressing the Brazilian socio-political disorder.⁴⁷⁹ Augusto Boal was one of the theatre practitioners whose practice was in tandem with the Marxist ideology and it was within the context of the engagé orientation that he rose to prominence.⁴⁸⁰ Boal was critical of the military administration and for his 'anti' Establishment stance, he was arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and forced into exile, a period he spent mostly in Paris, France.

While an exile in Paris, in 1978 Boal founded the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO). On his return to Brazil in 1986 and in an attempt to replicate the success story of CTO Paris, Boal set up the CTO in Rio de Janeiro. But the CTO in Rio had a wobbly start with contracts that either failed at inception or were short-lived. One of such was the CTO's link with the Department of Education and the Integrated Centres for Popular Education (CIEPS) which ended abruptly in 1992. Boal and his team struggled to keep the CTO afloat but their resolve eventually waned and they were willing to rest the dream of the CTO, Rio. This coincided with the period of elections which, in Brazil, 'always have something of carnival about them'.⁴⁸¹ Boal and his team then resolved to bury the CTO Rio with a 'bang not a whimper'⁴⁸² by aligning with a party or a coalition that had the dream of realising a better Brazil. This marked the inception of the CTO's alliance with the Workers' Party (PT).

The alliance with the PT was conceivable because the CTO found that the ideals which informed the establishment of the Centre resonated with the ideologies of the Workers' Party. The CTO was established with the aim of fighting against operational systems and policies that were favourable only to a section of society to the detriment of others (the majority). In practical terms, the CTO recognised the binary distinction between the oppressed and the oppressors and through the Theatre of the Oppressed – in particular, Forum Theatre - methodology, the CTO positioned itself to help the citizens, especially the oppressed, to 'develop their taste for political discussion'.⁴⁸³ Also, the PT emerging as it did from the working class, and being socialist in orientation, demonstrated their inclination towards changes in social and economic policies that would benefit the less privileged.

479 Britton, 14.

480 Britton, 14.

481 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 10.

482 Boal, 9.

483 Boal, 7.

Also, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, leader of the PT averred that ‘a true workers’ party could only construct itself from the bottom up’⁴⁸⁴ if it truly intends to provide the platform for the political participation of those marginalised by traditional politics. Thus, the PT demonstrated their preference for a new concept in politics, that is, the politics of maximal representation and inclusivity that would engender the participatory involvement of sections of the population that had previously been excluded from participation in politics.⁴⁸⁵ These ideological convergences facilitated the synergistic cooperation between the CTO and the PT.

In order to elicit the firm commitment of the members of the CTO, the Workers’ Party proposed that the CTO presented a candidate to run for the election. The CTO accepted the proposal believing it stood no chance of winning any election and presented Boal as their candidate. However, things took quite an unforeseen turn and at the end of the elections, Augusto Boal became one of the 42 *vereadores* or City Councillors elected in Rio de Janeiro out of which six were elected on the platform of the PT. By this victory, Boal was able to employ members of the CTO as either full-time or part-time staff. This marked the entry of an entire theatre company into a legislature and provided Boal the opportunity to make theatre as politics instead of making political theatre. Thus, Boal’s ‘experiment’⁴⁸⁶ with the Legislative Theatre, a platform on which to effectuate a different form of representative democracy took *centre stage*.

3.1.1. Legislative Theatre: Socio-Political Context of its Inception

Like other modes of praxis which comprise Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed methodology, Legislative Theatre was a ‘concrete response to a specific problem and context’.⁴⁸⁷ Boal’s concept and methodology of the Legislative Theatre was developed within the context of a conflation of both remote and direct socio-political indexes. Remotely, representative democracy in Brazil had its peculiar glitches. Discussing the genesis of participatory democracy in Brazil, Sa Vilas Boas cites various scholarly sources to note that from its inception in the 19th century, Brazilian representative democracy was perceived in derogatory terms as an ‘imported superstructure’, a ‘failed importation’, ‘a cynical instrument of domination serving the large land-owners’ and therefore an ‘idea out of place’ that is not adapted to Brazilian ‘reality’.⁴⁸⁸ Buarque de Holanda

484 William R. Nylen, *Participatory Democracy Versus Elitist Democracy: Lessons From Brazil* (New York, N. Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 38.

485 Keck, *The Workers’ Party and Democratization in Brazil*, 3.

486 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 14.

487 Jose Soeiro, “Legislative Theatre: Can Theatre Reinvent Politics?,” in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. Kelly Howe, Julian Boal, and Jose Soeiro, 2019, 187.

488 Sa Vilas Boas, “The Genesis of Participatory Democracy in Brazil: A Scientific (Re)Construction,” 4 See Sa Vilas Boas for the sources cited.

denounces it as a ‘lamentable misunderstanding’⁴⁸⁹ which instead of marking an actual end to colonial experience, became a post-colonial institutionalisation of colonial domination. However, from the 1970s there was a shift in perception that no longer saw the representative system as unsuitable for the Brazilian society but rethought it as merely being distorted in practice⁴⁹⁰ and can therefore be remedied. This shift in perception coincided with the commencement of democratisation in Brazil.

More directly, in 1973 the Brazilian military dictatorship under president Ernesto Geisel commenced a process of ‘gradual liberalization’⁴⁹¹ of the political space. As part of the process, the military loosened its grip over political institutions in Brazil in 1985. This move was significant in that it marked the definite commitment of the military administration to, and the actual commencement of, the democratisation process. The otherwise long process of liberalisation was further strengthened in 1988 with the enactment of a democratic constitution⁴⁹² and was eventually concluded in 1989 when the first direct presidential elections were held in Brazil after three decades.⁴⁹³ The new Brazilian constitution, although considered conservative, was sufficiently flexible to accommodate participatory institutions⁴⁹⁴ in their diverse forms.

This shift in the perception of representative democracy birthed an upsurge of civil society organisations in the build-up to Brazil’s return to democratic governance. But the traditional notion of the elitist nature of Brazilian politics lingered. Also, the chasm between the government and the more representative civil society organisations limited the opportunities for utilising the participatory channels.⁴⁹⁵ The PT became the first political party in Brazil to harness the opportunities for participatory involvement of the Brazilian citizens as provided for in the constitution by introducing Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Porto Alegre in 1983.⁴⁹⁶ As I have previously noted, this socialist ideological inclination and grassroots inclusivity of the PT played a decisive role in CTO’s choice of PT as the party to collaborate with during the 1992 elections.

Apart from the above indices that converged to make the CTO’s cooperation with the PT conceivable, other factors were at play on the wider national political sphere.

489 Buarque de Holanda 1936 cited in Sa Vilas Boas, 5.

490 Sa Vilas Boas, 8.

491 Keck, *The Workers’ Party and Democratization in Brazil*, 1.

492 Leonardo Avritzer, “Living Under a Democracy: Participation and Its Impact on the Living Conditions of the Poor,” *Latin American Research Review* 45, no. Special (2010): 167.

493 Keck, *The Workers’ Party and Democratization in Brazil*, 1.

494 Avritzer, “Living Under a Democracy: Participation and Its Impact on the Living Conditions of the Poor,” 166.

495 The government preferred to work with the docile civil society organizations instead of the more representative ones. Heller, Patrick 2012 and Kerk, Margaret 1992 discuss this extensively.

496 Patrick Heller, “Democracy, Participatory Politics and Development: Some Comparative Lessons from Brazil, India and South Africa,” *Polity* 44, no. 4 (2012): 648.

Brazilian representative democracy of the 1980s was an ‘anomaly’ characterised by patrimonialism and clientelism⁴⁹⁷ in which periods of electioneering campaigns provided the only opportunity for contact between electors and their representatives. As earlier referenced, Lani Guinier conceptualises this anomaly as ‘electocracy’, that is, ‘a political environment that defines itself by sacred moments of choice’.⁴⁹⁸ By implication, within the intervening period between two elections, the electorate typically has little or no contact with their representatives.

With respect to democracy in the Global South, Heller discusses a contestation over the balance of power between the institutions of state and the civil society or common citizens in general.⁴⁹⁹ Chantal Mouffe treats this contestation as the norm and forecloses ‘the possibility of a non-adversarial democratic politics’.⁵⁰⁰ This contestation over the balance of power is another index of the socio-political ambience in Brazil which provoked Boal’s experiment with the Legislative Theatre. Heller suggests that it is contingent upon the subordinate classes to look beyond the framework of electoral politics in order to secure their collective material interests.⁵⁰¹ In this wise, Boal sought to use the theatre in collaboration with the citizens to tilt the balance of power in favour of the less privileged.

To recourse once more to Guinier’s concept of electocracy, Guinier states that in an electocracy, the elected is more important than the electorate. According to her, electocracy undermines the quality and quantity of citizen participation and of collective mobilisation. Guinier holds that elections are necessary but electocracy diminishes democracy. Electocracy, to borrow Tocqueville’s words, turns the elected representatives into ‘powerful strangers’.⁵⁰² A noteworthy instance of both Guinier’s electocracy and Tocqueville’s ‘powerful strangers’ occurred when the then Brazilian president, Jose Sarney, called for elections. Close to the elections, Sarney introduced reforms that improved the economic status of Brazilians. However, a mere three days after the elections, Sarney declared that, ‘[T]hose were provisional measures, now we have to go back to the way it was before’.⁵⁰³ Boal decried this as an act of treason and in one of his election leaflets noted that the voting power is paradoxical given that ‘at the moment

497 Marie-Hélène Sa Vilas Boas, “The Genesis of Participatory Democracy in Brazil: A Scientific (Re)Construction, Brazilian Political Science Review, Vol. 11, No. 1, (2017) 3

498 Guinier, “Beyond Electocracy: Rethinking the Political Representative as Powerful Stranger,” 2.

499 Heller, “Democracy, Participatory Politics and Development: Some Comparative Lessons from Brazil, India and South Africa,” 648–49.

500 Chantal Mouffe, “Art and Democracy: Art as an Agonistic Intervention Public Space”, onlineopen.org 3.

501 Patrick Heller, Democracy, Participatory Politics and Development: Some Comparative Lessons From Brazil, India and South Africa, *Polity*, Vol. 44, No. 4, Deepening Democracy (October 2012) 644

502 Lani Guinier, “Beyond Electocracy: Rethinking the Political Representative as Powerful Strangers, *The Modern Law Review*, Vol. 71, No. 1, (2008), 3

503 Taussig, Schechner and Boal, 1990, 51

of exercising it, at the moment of voting, this power disappears'.⁵⁰⁴ Boal was therefore averse to a process which recognises and accommodates the voting power of the voter before an election but paradoxically causes that power to whittle away the moment the voters exercise their franchise as was exemplified through President Sarney's action.

The advent of Boal's Legislative Theatre can thus be foregrounded within the context of Heller's concept of the contestation over the balance of power, Guinier's concept of electocracy and Tocqueville's 'powerful strangers' all of which found expression within the Brazilian socio-political milieu of the post-military dictatorship era. Boal innovated the Legislative Theatre, a kind of theatrical enterprise in which, as he claims, a 'citizen is transformed to legislator'⁵⁰⁵ as a way of bridging the gap between the 'powerful strangers' and their constituents. In his innovation of the Legislative Theatre, Boal's objective was to decidedly minimise the deficiencies of the representative system of democracy by making it continuously and progressively participatory, inclusive and a synergistic cooperation between constituents and their representatives. In this way, Legislative Theatre could serve as a tool to move democracy as practically close to popular sovereignty as possible.

3.1.2. The Aims

Given Guinier's and Tocqueville's concepts of electocracy and 'powerful strangers', respectively, as analysed above, Boal's aim in conceptualising the Legislative Theatre was to engender fundamental changes that will ensure that electors would continue to have political agency even after elections. In effect, Boal sought to bridge the gap between the electors and their parliamentarians by giving the electors a voice to ensure that they (the electors) are partners with, not mere spectators of the activities of, the parliamentarians. Boal employed the Legislative Theatre as a way to achieve these aims in order to dynamise the role of theatre in society. Boal examined the central role played by the Greek Tragedy in the socio-political life of the ancient Greeks. Performed in the city centre, the Acropolis, the Greek tragic performances took centre stage not only spatially but also metaphorically by playing a pivotal role in the lives of the Greeks, a role Boal denounced as coercive. Boal, through the Legislative Theatre, conceives of theatrical performances not held captive within designated buildings (as is often the case with conventional theatre in modern society) but one that, metaphorically speaking, returns to the heart of the city. In other words, Boal's intention was to make theatre the centripetal force of the society not in a coercive manner but as a tool for dynamisation of the members of the society.

504 Paul Heritage, 'The Courage to be Happy: Augusto Boal, Legislative Theatre, and the 7th International Festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed' *The Drama Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1994, 25

505 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 15.

In discussing the impact of both Participatory Budgeting and Legislative Theatre in Brazil, Baiocchi reckons with Legislative Theatre as a radical transformation in democratic practice.⁵⁰⁶ With reference to the physical locations (mostly in communities and neighbourhoods) where Legislative Theatre is often performed, Baiocchi holds the view that Legislative Theatre takes place first at the periphery rather than at the centre.⁵⁰⁷ Baiocchi appears to have used the term ‘periphery’ in a geographical sense. Nevertheless, it is indicative of where true democratic power should be found, that is, with the common people. But the physical locations where Legislative Theatre takes place seemed to be of secondary consequence in Boal’s reckoning. It does appear that space, for Boal, was more metaphorical than physical. Thus, Boal’s purpose was to bring theatre ‘back to the heart of the city’ and ‘back into the centre of political action – the centre of decisions’⁵⁰⁸

Therefore, notwithstanding the physical locale where Legislative Theatre performances are held, its overarching objective is to re-conceptualise the ‘centre’ by redefining the source or spring of power within the society and making theatre the political life wire of the society. In a sense, therefore, merely making political theatre could represent the ‘peripheral’ whereas making theatre as politics could represent the ‘centre’ considering that theatre as politics aims at recalibrating the fulcrum of political action. Political theatre, says Boal, ‘comments on politics’ whereas making theatre as politics ‘is... one of the ways in which political activity can be conducted’⁵⁰⁹

Still on Boal’s aim in innovating the Legislative Theatre; while Greek tragedy, through the putative effect of catharsis, sought ‘to tranquillise (sic) them, and return them to a state of equilibrium and acceptance of society as it is’, Boal’s purpose, as he put it, was ‘to produce not catharsis, but dynamisation’.⁵¹⁰ Boal rejected a theatre ideologically premised on a passive ‘acceptance of society as it is’ but one that seeks to elicit in the audience the ‘desire for change’.⁵¹¹ I note, however, that Boal’s equation of spectatorship with passivity has been variously critiqued by scholars, a point I will return to shortly.

Boal’s ideological repositioning of the theatre is noteworthy for two main reasons: (1) it tends to democratise the performance space by giving all participants the opportunity to participate thereby metaphorically reflecting theatre’s putative potentiality for the practice of democracy and (2) speaks to the possible role of theatre and the

506 Baiocchi, “Performing Democracy in the Streets: Participatory Budgeting and Legislative Theatre in Brazil,” 83.

507 Gianpaolo Baiocchi, “Performing Democracy”, 83

508 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

509 Boal, 16.

510 Boal, 16.

511 Boal, 16.

theatre practitioner in the actual practice of democratic governance. In other words, theatre, through deliberate action by theatre practitioners, has a crucial role to play in democracy. However, Kelly Howe warns against an automatic equation of ‘forum-ing’ (a feature of Boal’s Forum Theatre and Legislative Theatre methodologies) with democracy and democracy with equal access. I reason, therefore, that in the execution of the Forum Theatre or Legislative Theatre projects, conscious precautionary steps should always be taken to navigate the assumption that democratic agency is automatically accessible to every participant.

Boal states rather categorically that the target of the Legislative Theatre is to ensure that laws are both drafted and voted on.⁵¹² This adumbrative statement is perhaps the source of the scholarly disputation as to whether or not a Legislative Theatre project must produce legislation. To instantiate this disputation, while Ben Fink avers that a Legislative Theatre engagement should produce legislation in harmony with the nomenclature, ‘*Legislative Theatre*’⁵¹³, Howe, however, downplays that condition putting more premium instead on the generation and circulation of knowledge within the space of the Legislative Theatre event.⁵¹⁴

I note here that there is, perhaps, the need for distinction between voting on a proposal or a bill as prescribed by Boal and the actual passage of that bill into legislation. In other words, that a draft proposal for legislation is brought before the legislature does not imply its automatic passage into legislation, not to mention the implementation of the legislation in society. The imprecision inherent in Boal’s position stated above is critically significant in that it reveals a disjunctive relationship between Boal’s theoretical postulations and his actual practice and therefore creates room for various interpretations as evidenced in Fink’s and Howe’s standpoints. It further compels, as I argue, the countenancing of both Fink’s and Howe’s criteria in the determination of what constitutes Legislative Theatre. I posit therefore that while the ultimate aim of any Legislative Theatre engagement should be the promulgation and implementation of the legislative proposals by citizens, the import of the knowledge generated and circulated during the process ought not be discountenanced or diminished. I stake the claim that before the promulgation of the laws, the generation and dissemination of knowledge about laws (both the extant and the conceivable) is already a crucial reason for which to embark on a Legislative Theatre project.

Regarding the relational dynamics between the stage and the auditorium, Legislative Theatre, similar to many modern forms of theatre, deviates from the conventional, i.e.

512 Boal, 72.

513 Ben Fink, “Making Space (Literally) for Social Change through Community-Based Theatre—from Soup Kitchen to City Hall,” *Theatre Topics* 21, no. 2 (2011): 204, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2011.0027>.

514 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 240.

proscenium arch theatre, and actively seeks a collaboration between the actors and the spectators. In the case of Legislative Theatre the transitivity inherent in modern theatrical practice is translocated to the arena of active politics where it creates the ambience for exchange between electors and their representatives. In emplacing an integrative form of democracy, Legislative Theatre aims to produce more active, responsible and responsive citizenship in communities. Legislative Theatre shares this aim with Forum Theatre as attested to by Howe who sees citizens in Legislative Theatre as embodied think tanks⁵¹⁵ installed with expertise by their daily lived experiences that make them sufficiently informed to proffer solutions to problems that affect them directly. The inception of Legislative Theatre in Brazil within the context of the transition from a dictatorial government to a democracy notwithstanding, its applicability seems not be confined within such specific boundaries. Other instances of the application of the methodology which I will discuss later in this chapter will attest to this claim. Before then, I discuss next the specifics of Boal's practice of Legislative Theatre.

3.1.3. The Specifics of Boal's Practice of Legislative Theatre

As one of the branches of what Boal termed the Theatre of the Oppressed 'tree', Legislative Theatre budded long after Forum Theatre and other earlier branches of the tree. Thus, it builds considerably on the gains of the other branches of the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology. It is closest in form to the Forum Theatre, the immediate substratum of the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology on which the Legislative Theatre rests. Thus, the Legislative Theatre methodology enjoys affinity with the Forum Theatre. Therefore, to understand the methodology of the Legislative Theatre, I will discuss its common grounds with the Forum Theatre in order to make the point of departure explicit.

The Forum Theatre methodology is an exploratory process which commences mainly, but not exclusively, with workshops during which concerns common to the participants are identified. Life experiences which are oppressive in nature often form the nub of drama sketches constructed by workshop participants. As observed by critics of Forum Theatre methodology, life experiences of 'a self-selected or randomly selected or even purposively selected' participants might not always 'provide unmediated access to all that one really needs to know about the issues'.⁵¹⁶ Reliance on life experiences poses an even more significant challenge where the experience is secondary and not personal thereby making it impersonal and mediated. This necessitates the conduct of research in order to afford all participants a richer understanding of the issues involved.

515 Howe, 240.

516 Ines Barbosa, Vanesa Camarda, and Paul Dwyer, "Forum Theatre, A Dramaturgy of Collective Questioning: An Interview Ines Barbosa, Vanesa Camarda, and Paul Dwyer," in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*, 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 172.

In Forum Theatre, the performance (also called ‘anti-model’) presents a protagonist engaged in a struggle against oppression. The action in the anti-model shows a problem ‘in an unsolved form, to which the audience,..., is invited to suggest and enact solutions’.⁵¹⁷ The practice of conceding the stage for the use of spectators in Forum Theatre contravenes the theatrical convention which (traditionally) allows access to the stage only to actors. It, however, facilitates the democratic use of stage space by both the actors and the spectators alike. The anti-model which is often presented twice is performed the first time in a manner that allows a safe distance between the audience and the actors. In that case, it is during the second presentation that intervention from the audience would be allowed.

The ‘Joker’ or facilitator is neither fully an audience member nor an actor. The Joker ‘has a clearly intermediary, facilitative and analytical function, which demands rigour, practice and experience’.⁵¹⁸ She explains the rules of the game to the audience and invites them, at the appropriate time, to halt the performance at whatever point they have an intervention to make with respect to the protagonist’s dilemma.

With the shout of the transgressional ‘stop’, the performance is halted and a spectator proffers an insight into how the protagonist could overcome the oppression. The spectator is then invited to mount the stage, take on the role of the protagonist – thereby transmuting into a spect-actor (another Boal’s terminology) - and try to drive the action to a different resolution with the other actors (the oppressors) opposing his resolve. By giving room to different spect-actors to intervene, various solutions to the dramatised oppression are enacted as a rehearsal for real-life situations. After various interventions might have been tried out and an agreeable option(s) seems to have been arrived at, the Joker steers the group to take a position by getting them to vote in support of or against the position or to indicate their neutrality. Thus, with the introduction of the voting process and the firm resolutions reached thereafter, a parliamentary ambience is created. In essence, the incorporation of the act of voting and the process of taking collective decision by the participants, and producing legislative proposals are some of the features which move the session away from the typical Forum Theatre to Legislative Theatre.

The transmutation from spectator to actor (spect-actor) is significant in Boal’s theatre for two main reasons. First, it destroys the element of illusion on stage and engenders transitive dialogic exchange between actors and spectators – a process which Boal

517 Translator’s Introduction to First Edition Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, ed. Adrian Jackson, 2nd ed (London: London : Routledge, 2002), xxiv.

518 Sruti Bala and Aristita I Albacan, “Workshopping the Revolution? On the Phenomenon of Joker Training in the Theatre of the Oppressed,” *Research in Drama Education* 18, no. 4 (2013): 390.

calls metaxis.⁵¹⁹ Second, Boal claims that it transforms the spectators from ‘passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action’.⁵²⁰ Herein hinges the entire concept of the Theatre of the Oppressed; Boal argues that it creates a safe aesthetic space within which the spect-actors can rehearse their envisioned change preparatory to taking relevant action(s) in the face of real existential challenges. In effect, Boal avers that until spectators overcome their ‘passivity’ by stepping onto the stage to intervene in the dramatic action – a rehearsal for life - they remain objectified ‘paralysed spectators’.⁵²¹

As I hinted above, Boal’s concept of the passivity of the spectator which essentially connotes that ‘a spectator is...separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act’⁵²² has been interrogated by scholars. For instance, Sruti Bala in discussing the de-stultification of spectatorship in the Theatre of the Oppressed dismisses the distinction between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ spectatorship as not only abstract but also an assumption in view of the fact that ‘the characteristics of each cannot be empirically demonstrated’.⁵²³ Similarly, Jacques Rancière’s ‘The Emancipated Spectator’ challenges the opposition between ‘viewing and acting’ and asserts that ‘[E]very spectator is already an actor in her story’.⁵²⁴

Boal’s assertion that viewing means passivity which can only be overcome by stepping onto the stage to intervene in the dramatic action fails to take into cognisance the thought processes which accompany viewing. These thought processes, irrespective of whether or not they lead to ‘action’ on stage, are, in themselves, actions which the audience performs. Thus, Boal’s spect-actors only continue on stage the actions they had commenced in the audience as spectators.

The Forum Theatre method, as Babbage notes, operates within a community of people unified by their common idiom of oppression the solution to which they rehearse by testing different options.⁵²⁵ As a consequence of sharing the same idiom of oppression they are able to offer alternative solutions, being as they are personally acquainted with the oppression.⁵²⁶ This enhances the weight of the solutions proffered. Boal realised that ‘sometimes the oppression is actually rooted within the law’⁵²⁷ and, therefore, ordinarily outside the scope of the oppressed person’s capability to tackle. These were

519 Alessandro Tolomelli, “Theatre of the Oppressed: Linking Research, Political Commitment and Pedagogical Perspectives,” *INTERthesis: Revista Internacional Interdisciplinar* 13, no. 3 (2016): 46.

520 Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 97.

521 Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 11.

522 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London and New York: Verso, 2009), 2.

523 Sruti Bala, *De-Stultifying Spectatorship in the Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. ASCA, 2012, 229.

524 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 17.

525 Frances Babbage, *Augusto Boal* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 24.

526 Translator’s Introduction to First Edition Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, xxiv.

527 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 8.

institutionalised oppressions that would necessitate either the formulation of new legislation or change in existing ones. That realisation gave birth to the Legislative Theatre.

Thus, in its various ramifications the Theatre of the Oppressed, and the Forum and Legislative Theatres especially, seek to set aside conventions that privilege expert knowledge in both social and political life, a point underscored by Howe in her notion of embodied think tanks.⁵²⁸ But the objectives of the Legislative Theatre extend beyond acquiring knowledge and proffering solutions to having direct bearing on the laws that govern a society. Boal noted that ‘law is always someone’s desire...the desire of the powerful’⁵²⁹ the input to which should therefore be democratised to accommodate the yearnings of the common people. Through Legislative Theatre, those desires are codified into proposals of law which are presented to a legal system either as new laws to be promulgated or as amendments to extant laws.⁵³⁰

Boal’s theatre seeks to provoke in its public ‘a certain energy of dissatisfaction’⁵³¹ with the prevailing oppressive system and, in the case of the Legislative Theatre, express that dissatisfaction through the drafting of laws meant to be voted on by the legislature. The outcome of the proposal might not be easy to determine at the outset leading Howe to suggest that the impact of a Legislative Theatre project should not necessarily be measured on the scale of the quantum of legislation that the project produced but instead on its epistemological import.⁵³² This is also the premise of my position that while working towards, and anticipatorily awaiting, the promulgation of the proposed laws, other derivable benefits, including the opportunity for political education, are crucial motivations for embarking on Legislative Theatre interventions.

Operationally, Boal’s Legislative Theatre experiment took its bearing first from his office as *Vereador* which functioned as the Central Directorate. Attached to the Directorate were Jokers and other cultural animators who worked closely with the ‘nuclei’, that is, Theatre of the Oppressed groups collaborating with the Central Directorate in a systematic way. There were nineteen groups in all.⁵³³ A nuclei was either community-based or thematically-based, or a combination of both. The critical index in the formation of the groups was the commonality of oppressive circumstances. Apart from the nuclei, there were also the ‘links’, a group of people from the same community. Working in concert with the links through the Chamber and the Interac-

528 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 239.

529 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

530 Eduardo Salvador Acevedo, “Legislative Theatre: Art for Community Conflict Resolution. From Desires to Laws,” *Journal of Conflictology* 5, no. 1 (2014): 3.

531 Salvador Acevedo, 5.

532 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 240.

533 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 31–32.

tive Mailing list, on the one hand, and through the Theatre of the Oppressed groups in collaboration with the Jokers, on the other hand, Boal's mandate harvested inputs in which the citizens made known their stakes on new legislations to be promulgated or old legislations to be amended.⁵³⁴

The inputs were then tendered to the Metabolising Cell which would sift through the proposals and collate them for voting. During the period of this experiment, Boal could not function as a cultural animator but it was his responsibility to present the proposals at the Chamber of the *Vereadores* for debate and possible approval. In his new capacity, Boal was able to provide employment for fifteen (five as full-time, and ten as part-time) members of his theatre ensemble, the CTO. After Boal's re-election bid fell through, Legislative Theatre re-emerged as what Boal termed 'Legislative Theatre Without Legislator'⁵³⁵, that is, Legislative Theatre in which no member of the theatre company doubled as a legislator. This should not be misconstrued to suggest that Legislative Theatre dispenses with elected members of the legislative arm of government. Legislative Theatre as praxis is a bridge between theatrical practice and legislation, and both are, therefore, interdependent one on another. Following Boal's later example, Legislative Theatre continues to gain wider application in various countries mainly as Legislative Theatre without Legislator. The instances of this will be discussed later in this chapter. In the immediate next section, I examine the impact of Boal's practice of the Legislative Theatre model in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

3.1.4. Impact of Boal's Practice of Legislative Theatre

As Boal states, the fundamental objective of the Legislative Theatre is to engender social transformation by employing the theatrical process to enact performances often based on participants' lived experiences. This process created room for the citizens to broaden the scope of their political awareness and to exploit their pedagogical and political agency as 'embodied think tanks' as Howe puts it. In this section, I examine the impact of Legislative Theatre in Brazil during Boal's tenure as a member of parliament.

Boal's years of doing Legislative Theatre as Legislator in Rio, Brazil, produced a total of thirteen legislations.⁵³⁶ I put the legislations under rough categories as follows: In the health services delivery category, there were four legislations three of which had direct impact on the elderly citizens. One of the legislations provided for doctors specialising in geriatric problems and diseases to be deployed in all municipal hospitals. Another specifically prescribed the provision of beds for geriatric attendance. The last of the

534 Boal, 31–32.

535 Boal, 90.

536 Boal, 81–82.

three allowed friends and relatives of the elderly to keep company with the elderly while they are being rehabilitated in the hospital. The fourth law under the health category prohibited all forms of treatment for the mentally ill that had irreversible consequences such as ‘imprisonment’ in high-security cells, electric shock treatment and any other form of physical or psychological aggression.⁵³⁷ Also, with respect to mental health, another legislation declared ‘The House of Palms’ (Casa das Palmeiras), a mental health facility as ‘public utility’. This granted some legal privileges such as tax exemption to the inmates.⁵³⁸

Another category of two laws sought to reduce the difficulties associated with mobility in public places for people with impaired sight. The laws stipulated that all public telephone kiosks must have raised concrete platforms below to make them easily detectable to the visually impaired who mostly depend on their canes for ease of movement and for safety. For the same reason, all suspended rubbish bin bags were also to have raised platforms.⁵³⁹

In solidarity with the people of East Timor, two legislations were promulgated, one named a Rio State school as ‘Free Timor’ and another declared December 7 every year as Day of Solidarity with the people of East Timor. Three other legislations addressed three social problems: all motels must charge the same price for all couples irrespective of their sexual preferences; all state schools must have crèche facilities for children of teachers, workers and students.⁵⁴⁰ Another legislation made the City Council to supply plastic bin bags to street traders to clean their pitch after a market session. The thirteenth law was two-pronged in its effect; it brought about a constitutional amendment in order to allow for the promulgation of a law that protects the witnesses of crimes. Boal considered this the most significant legislation promulgated under his mandate.⁵⁴¹

In the absence of information about their actual implementation,⁵⁴² the number and nature of the legislations produced under Boal’s mandate within a space of four years are suggestive of the extensive reach of the Legislative Theatre engagements undertaken by his mandate through the ‘nuclei’ and links. A close look at the legislation reveals a tilt in favour of the demographic sections of society that are usually neglected such as the youth, the elderly, and the visually impaired. Thus, both in spread and quantum,

537 Boal, 81.

538 Boal, 82.

539 Boal, 81.

540 Boal, 82.

541 Boal, 82.

542 It is crucial to note that information about the implementation of the legislations could be available, not in English language, but in Brazilian Portuguese and therefore not accessible to me due to language barrier.

the legislations bear a reflection of the legislative leverage achievable through the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology.

However, Baz Kershaw argues that Boal's claim that citizens are transformed into legislators through the Legislative Theatre process is not only 'inflated' but 'manifestly untrue' insisting that in Boal's practice, Rio citizens could only 'suggest'⁵⁴³ laws. Kershaw states that Boal's claim is tantamount to 'proclaiming that a net-maker is a fisherman even though he never goes to sea'.⁵⁴⁴ Frances Babbage extends Kershaw's argument by espousing the view that contrary to Boal's claim, Legislative Theatre 'represents not an advance from Theatre of the Oppressed's early radicalism but a regression'⁵⁴⁵ as, in her estimation, it tends to pander to the whims of the power holders viewed as oppressors within the context of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Boal in conceptualising the Theatre or Poetics of the Oppressed submits that the method seeks 'another poetics!' that would stimulate 'revolutionary action' thus wresting power from oppressive forces within the society.⁵⁴⁶ It is on this premise that Kershaw suggests, and Babbage agrees, that Legislative Theatre is a capitulation to the forces of oppression which the Theatre of the Oppressed was originally set up to contend against.

Kershaw premises his views on the fact that Theatre of the Oppressed upholds the notion of a binary distinction between the 'oppressed' and the 'oppressor'. In this distinction, those who bear the rule are perceived as the oppressors against whom the oppressed must fight to regain their freedom. Kershaw's concern is that instead of vanquishing operation, Legislative Theatre might be perceived as an inadvertent acquiescence and reinforcement of the same by those presumed to be fighting against it. Against Babbage and Kershaw's positions I argue, instead, that rather than being a capitulation or an inversion of the objectives of the Theatre of the Oppressed, Legislative Theatre represents a leap forward in that it is an attempt to take the battle of liberation, as it were, to the actual battleground. Legislative Theatre is a direct engagement with the law which, as referenced earlier, represents a governmental control system⁵⁴⁷ or, to vary the metaphor, represents the forces of oppression. My submission, therefore, is that Legislative Theatre engages with oppressors at the fundamentally crucial point of law which is critically central to the well-being of any group of people.

In line with Kershaw, Babbage also sees the concept of Legislative Theatre as capitulation on Boal's part as it involves a delegation of power by the citizens to the legislators

543 Baz Kershaw, "Legislative Theatre By Augusto Boal," *Theatre Research International* 26, no. 2 (2001): 219.

544 Kershaw, 219.

545 Babbage, *Augusto Boal*, 28.

546 Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 42.

547 Watts and Roberson, *Law and Society: An Introduction*, 6.

which, Babbage notes, is Boal's major criticism against the Brechtian theatre. Boal had criticised Brecht's poetics as one in which the spectator retains his right to think but delegates his power to act to the character.⁵⁴⁸ Babbage sees a similarity between Brecht's poetics and Boal's Legislative Theatre in that although the Rio citizens engage in a thinking process 'albeit on their feet', they ultimately delegate 'the power to act' to the legislators.⁵⁴⁹ In essence, Babbage espouses the view that although Boal is wont to interpret the spect-actor's intervention as 'action', this action does not, in concrete terms, determine the fate of the proposals made by the citizens, consequentially.

On his part, Ben Fink argues that the Legislative Theatre which is aimed at mitigating institutionalised oppression by ensuring the emplacement of more humanistic legislations must necessarily connect directly with the structures of government in order to have the desired effect. Fink is concerned, therefore, that in so doing, Legislative Theatre invariably treads on slippery ground. On that premise, Fink suggests that the 'siege on the castle' aesthetic of retaining the useful elements of confrontation with state power while building public relationships with elected officials in the bid to realise the objectives of the Legislative Theatre calls for caution on the part of the practitioners of the methodology.

Nevertheless, Legislative Theatre is doubtless a move away from the usual trend in a typical representative democracy where legislators operate as 'powerful strangers' oblivious of the lived realities of the electors. The Legislative Theatre approach ensures that, at the point of promulgating laws, the electorate are made 'present again' through their articulated positions presented by their representatives. This makes Legislative Theatre potentially relevant within the Nigerian democratic milieu where the gulf between the elected and the electorate is eminently evident.

Boal's major objective in creating the Legislative Theatre was to change the manner in which political activities are conducted by making the political platform accessible to everyone affected or who could potentially be affected by the provisions of any law to have an input in the contents of the legislation. Beyond using performance to draw attention to a problem, Legislative Theatre elicits solutions to social problems that 'official circles of doctors, politicians, reporters, lawyers, businessmen and other professionals generally do not envision'.⁵⁵⁰ As a branch of theatre, Legislative Theatre serves as a point of convergence in the scenic arts between social responsibility and political commitment.⁵⁵¹ Boal's seminal experiment in Brazil, as I have discussed

548 Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 30.

549 Babbage, *Augusto Boal*, 28.

550 Elizabeth S Hawley, "Art, Activism, and Democracy: WochenKlausur's Social Interventions," *Peace & Change* 40, no. 1 (2015): 84, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pech.12112>.

551 Salvador Acevedo, "Legislative Theatre: Art for Community Conflict Resolution. From Desires to Laws," 3.

above, demonstrates that synergy. To broaden the scope of reference from which Nigerian theatre practitioners could draw in their application of the Legislative Theatre methodology for the benefit of Nigeria's democracy, I will in the next section explore other applications of the methodology.

3.2. Adoptions of Legislative Theatre

I noted in the previous section that following Boal's seminal experiment with the Legislative Theatre, the method has been adopted in various parts of the world mainly, but perhaps not exclusively, as 'Legislative Theatre without a Legislator'. 'Legislative Theatre without a Legislator', as observed, does not mean dispensing with the role of legislators. It only indicates that no member of the theatre company doubles as a legislator as was the case during Boal's mandate. 'Practicing Democracy', a Legislative Theatre project by Headlines Theatre Company in Canada is one example. The project was aimed at using theatre to create a forum for public dialogue and thereby elicit the participation of the public in the creation of policy and law.⁵⁵² Historically, it marked the first adoption of Boal's Legislative Theatre methodology in North America.⁵⁵³

3.2.1. 'Practicing Democracy': Legislative Theatre Debuts in North America

The first significant date was February 27, 2003, when Vancouver City Council 'voted unanimously to endorse the Headlines Theatre's "Practicing Democracy" Project'.⁵⁵⁴ Headlines Theatre's consultation with the City Council had identified for intervention a central issue that would be relevant to Council's agenda in March and April 2004. The identified issue was, 'How can the City of Vancouver respond to the results of the cuts to welfare?'⁵⁵⁵

Poverty as the major aftermath of the cuts in social welfare assistance had resulted in homelessness, insecurity and prostitution. The twenty-minute-long performance was based on the lived experiences of thirty workshop participants. In the performance, Trade, a homeless character, parodies Premier Gordon Campbell's February 2004 speech to the BC Chamber of Commerce: 'We're number one...in job creation; in small business confidence; in consumer confidence; in foreign investments; in housing starts'⁵⁵⁶ as he lays down in the dumpster (his 'house') for the night. Trade

552 Carrie Gallant, "Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project" (Vancouver, Canada, 2004), 1.

553 Geraldine Pratt and Caleb Johnston, "Turning Theatre into Law, and Other Spaces of Politics," *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 1 (2007): 92, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474007072821>.

554 Gallant, "Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project," 1.

555 Gallant, 1.

556 Gallant, 2.

thus emphasises the dissonance between the Premier's speech and the lived reality of Vancouver citizens represented through the performance.

The major question concerned what the Vancouver City council might do to create safety after many years of cuts to welfare and social services. The forum session revealed the jurisdictional dynamic to the question. The cuts which were largely imposed by the federal and provincial governments had an impact mainly in the local municipalities. However, the local municipalities, in this case the Vancouver City Council, had no jurisdiction over welfare policies, hence the jurisdictional dynamic to the question of cuts on welfare.

In specific terms, the reformed policy stipulated a maximum period of 24 months of welfare assistance for employable adults within any given 60-month period. With that, British Columbia became 'the first Canadian province to introduce a benefit time limit'.⁵⁵⁷ With total disregard for 'employment barriers...caused by social exclusion, sexism, racism and classism'⁵⁵⁸ the British Columbia provincial government insisted that '[T]hose who are able to work must do so'⁵⁵⁹ or bear the punishment by way of reduced benefits. Thus, after due consultation with City Council and with Vancouver citizens within her extensive network, Headlines Theatre, through 'Practicing Democracy', asked the question, 'How have years of cuts to welfare and social services created danger in the city of Vancouver?'⁵⁶⁰

In discussing the outcome of Headlines Theatre's 'Practicing Democracy', Howe, as well as Pratt and Johnston, notes that although the project was endorsed by Vancouver City Council before its execution, no direct policy shift could be linked to the project. While I do not equate the absence of any direct policy change with the failure of the project, notwithstanding, it is pertinent to reflect on why the project failed to produce any definite policy shift despite being endorsed by City Council before execution. The reflection is critical to apprehending the challenges which often confront Legislative Theatre projects.

First, on account of jurisdictional ambit, both the Canadian federal and British Columbia provincial governments were implicated in Vancouver City Council's failure to implement the policy inputs which 'Practicing Democracy' birthed. Vancouver City Council lacked the jurisdictional powers to implement the policy changes. Another

557 Chris Schafer and Jason Clemens, "Welfare Reform in British Columbia: A Report Card" (Vancouver, B.C., Canada, 2002), 3.

558 Scott Graham et al., "The Best Place on Earth?: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on Poverty Reduction Policies and Programs in British Columbia" (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2009), 15.

559 Schafer and Clemens, "Welfare Reform in British Columbia: A Report Card," 3.

560 Gallant, "Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project," 1.

problem, as Howe observes, is that Legislative Theatre deconstructs the hegemonic notions of expertise by conceiving expertise as not always ‘detached’ but ‘embodied’ through experience.⁵⁶¹ In analysing Headlines Theatre’s ‘Practicing Democracy’, Howe asserts that ‘everyday life installs expertise in bodies’.⁵⁶² In other words, experience confers cogent knowledge that could assist in addressing existential problems. This feature of Legislative Theatre put Practicing Democracy at odds with Vancouver City Council as the members of the Council apparently perceived Legislative Theatre as putting a question mark on their competence.

As argued by a Council member, it would smack of failure in the discharge of their duties for Council to implement the input from ‘Practicing Democracy’. In effect, since, in the Council member’s reckoning, Council was creditably acquitting itself in its duties, there was no place for Legislative Theatre. The Council member concluded that it was most unlikely that the project will ‘tell us something that we haven’t already thought of’⁵⁶³ thus dismissing Headlines Theatre’s Legislative Theatre project as a futile venture. This could provide a good idea about how the disposition of the legislature apparently affected the outcome of ‘Practicing Democracy’ and what such attitudinal bent portends for Legislative Theatre projects.

Pratt and Johnston provide another attitudinal dimension to ‘Practicing Democracy’s’ failure to achieve any policy change. According to them, this was partly hinged on Council’s differentiation between ‘rationality’ and ‘emotions’ in their assessment of the ‘Practicing Democracy’ report. Council members insisted that the input made by participants was ‘too simplistic’,⁵⁶⁴ based on sudden outbursts of emotions, lacking in rationality and therefore unworthy of being relied upon in the serious matter of policy formulation. This attitudinal proclivity negatively impacted upon the outcome of the Practicing Democracy project. However, the absence of any definite policy shift traceable to Practicing Democracy does not equate to the failure of the project. Howe observes that the project provided the avenue for ‘communication between participants and a government body that literally legislates citizens’ bodies’.⁵⁶⁵ Also, on the strength of the ensuing report from the project the Council resolved to make provincial and federal governments aware of ‘the extent of the impact of years of social service cuts’.⁵⁶⁶ The Council also resolved to attend to the mental health challenges of urban bush dwellers.

561 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 240.

562 Howe, 241.

563 Pratt and Johnston, “Turning Theatre into Law, and Other Spaces of Politics,” 98.

564 Pratt and Johnston, 97.

565 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 251.

566 Gallant, “Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project,” 24.

Howe further claims that the report and the ensuing exchanges between Headlines Theatre and Council served to clarify public policy with respect to public buildings that homeless citizens could use for the purpose of registration to vote. More importantly, perhaps, Howe notes that the report serves as a record of protest and documentary evidence of how the Vancouver City Council was failing its citizens at that time.⁵⁶⁷ Howe also suggests that the world-views and future decisions of Council members could reflect incremental, (howbeit) unconscious impact of the project. This view is perhaps corroborated by the fact that some Council members, for sustained impact, mused over the possibility of staging 'legislative theatre right in the space of the Council Chambers'.⁵⁶⁸ Thus, what 'Practicing Democracy' presumably failed to achieve in numerical or quantitative outcome with respect to legislation, it accomplished in qualitative intangible impact.

'Practicing Democracy' exemplifies the role theatre practitioners could play in interfacing between citizens and government. Having noted the impact of welfare cuts on Vancouverites and in view of Council's agenda for the coming year, Headlines Theatre embarked on the project anticipative of addressing the negative impact of the cuts. Also of particular relevance to the Nigerian situation is the jurisdictional question which was identified as one of the factors that hindered 'Practicing Democracy' from effectuating definite policy shifts. Similar to the Canadian situation, Nigeria runs a 3-tier system of government. Loopholes in the 3-tier system could be exploited by any arm of government in order to shirk responsibilities to the citizens.⁵⁶⁹ Thus, the 'Practicing Democracy' project demonstrates the negative impact which jurisdictional ambit in a 3-tier system of government could exert upon Legislative Theatre interventions.

3.2.2. Legislative Theatre in Afghanistan: Afghan Women's Voices for Human Rights

The title of the intervention, 'The Legislative Theatre: Democratizing Women's Rights' makes evident its gender-specific nature. Coordinated under the aegis of the Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization (AHRDO), the project was born out of the apprehension that the modicum of gains recorded with regard to the protection of the rights of women during the post-Taliban era could be traded off at the negotiating table between the Afghanistan government and the international funding agencies. Under Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001 women and girls were,

567 Howe, "Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre," 251.

568 Pratt and Johnston, "Turning Theatre into Law, and Other Spaces of Politics," 109.

569 A notable instance was a notice to motorists once placed by a state government on an extremely bad portion of a Nigerian highway which read 'Sorry, this road belongs to the Federal Government. Please bear with us'. This was regardless of constant road accidents caused by the bad state of the road.

among other deprivations, banned from attending schools and universities.⁵⁷⁰ The return of the Taliban in August 2021 appears to portend a precarious future for Afghan women and a confirmation of AHRDO's fears.

The AHRDO Legislative Theatre project of 2010 and beyond commenced with the objective of involving 'ordinary Afghan women in the elaboration of suggestions for legislation and public policies that promote and protect women's rights'⁵⁷¹ in Afghanistan. To achieve the set objective, the project adopted three complementary theatrical elements as follows: Playback Theatre, Legislative Theatre Workshops and Legislative Theatre performances. With a total of twenty performances, the project identified and carefully documented the lived experiences of over 100 women. The experiences represented the most dominant forms of violence perpetrated against Afghan women. The ten six-day community-based theatre workshops organised in the five regional centres (Kabul, Bamyan, Herat, Nangarhar and Balkh) provided space for women drawn from all spheres of life to engage critically with women's issues in their regions. The sessions produced five plays, one in each state, developed and performed by workshop participants. In a total of 39 performances, the plays brought together, approximately, about 4,000 audience members made up of high school and university students, members of various Afghanistan women organisations and the general public to deliberate and chart a course for Afghan women.⁵⁷² The project was intended to give voice to the Afghan woman in order to ensure socio-political and/or economic transformation.

Afghan women's rights (or lack thereof) reflect a contention among at least three layers of authority - the central state elites who hold the reins of political power, Islamic *ulama* wary of encroachment from the state into what they consider their rightful territory and the tribal figures 'intent on safeguarding its autonomy'.⁵⁷³ A conflation of these indexes has, from centuries past, made the Afghan woman visible only in her 'almost complete social invisibility'.⁵⁷⁴ The period of near complete invisibility is followed by a checkered history of freedom characterised by 'contention, false promises and failed attempts to reform the deeply patriarchal system'.⁵⁷⁵

The unstable history of the freedom of the Afghan woman continued until the reign of the Taliban (1996-2001) when the deprivations of the past seemed to pale in

570 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), "Afghanistan: Taliban Announce New Rules for Female Students," BBC News, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58537081>.

571 Khudadad Bisharat, "Afghan Women after the Taliban: Will History Repeat Itself?," 2012, 11.

572 Bisharat, 21.

573 Deniz Kandiyoti, "Old Dilemmas or New Challenges? The Politics of Gender and Reconstruction in Afghanistan," *Development and Change* 38, no. 2 (2007): 173.

574 Bisharat, "Afghan Women after the Taliban: Will History Repeat Itself?," 12.

575 Bisharat, 4.

significance in comparison to their lot under the Taliban. The nature of the reforms introduced by the Taliban impacted on the private and public lives of Afghans with an apparently more deleterious effect on women. Juan Cole notes that under the Taliban ‘public punishments of miscreants inscribed the power of the state on the body of the offender’.⁵⁷⁶ This is perhaps a graphic - and gruesome - exemplification of Howe’s statement about ‘a government that literally legislates citizens’ bodies’.⁵⁷⁷

The state of the Afghan woman under the Taliban attracted international criticism in which she was noted as the face ‘behind the burqa’.⁵⁷⁸ This image of Afghan women lingered and, apparently, neither the fall of the Taliban in 2001 nor the so-called liberation efforts of international organisations did much to meaningfully change their experiential realities with regard to forced marriages, mutilation by husbands, rapes and suicide.⁵⁷⁹ These were the fundamental factors that necessitated AHRDO’s Legislative Theatre project for Afghan women.

The politics of the freedom (or denial thereof) of the Afghan woman till after the Taliban dictatorship could lead one to the conclusion that the Afghan woman has circuitously, and perhaps unknown to her, been the force behind the policies that have governed Afghanistan since the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, beyond creating awareness about the peculiar realities of Afghan women, the Legislative Theatre sessions identified possible solutions to the issues raised and drew up recommendations. The final report was entitled ‘Afghan Women after the Taliban: Will History Repeat Itself?’⁵⁸⁰ It consisted of a total of 24 recommendations classified under two broad categories thus: 12 policy recommendations and 12 legislative recommendations.

The policy recommendations included measures to strengthen women’s political participation, provision of opportunities for women to enjoy their right to higher education through the provision of scholarships in foreign and domestic institutions, and the need for the Afghan government to not only defend women’s rights but institute well-defined mechanisms and policies that would enable women to, in actuality, exercise their clearly defined rights. Also, the recommendations identified an article of the Afghan penal code as ‘inherently crime-generating and provides space for the abuse and violence of women’⁵⁸¹ and therefore recommended its urgent amendment to ensure that accused persons are prosecuted by Afghan judicial institutions instead

576 Juan R.I. Cole, “The Taliban, Women, and the Hegelian Private Sphere,” *Social Research* 70, no. 3 (2003): 781.

577 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 251.

578 Huma Saeed, “Empowering Unheard Voices through ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’: Reflections on the Legislative Theatre Project for Women in Afghanistan-Notes from the Field,” *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 7, no. 2 (2015): 299.

579 Saeed, 300.

580 Bisharat, “Afghan Women after the Taliban: Will History Repeat Itself?”

581 Bisharat, 8.

of being punished by their relatives. With respect to Article 41 of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law, the Legislative Theatre project noted that the law stipulated reparation for victims of criminal acts but was unclear about the reparation amount. The project, therefore, recommended that the precise reparation amount for each criminal act should be clearly stated.

The Afghan women's project claims to have recorded remarkable transformations in the lives of individual participants in the workshops. The project made apparent the ignorance of Afghan women about their rights as enshrined in the extant laws of Afghanistan. As a participant put it: 'I thought women must always stay at home but now I learnt that we have the right to do work outside the house'.⁵⁸² This buttresses my position that knowledge about laws is in itself a good reason to embark on Legislative Theatre projects. Reflecting on the impact of the project, Huma Saeed reports about a participant who became the only woman in her family 'to marry a man of her choice'.⁵⁸³ Specifically, the project left its imprint with respect to clarifying extant laws and this translated into transformation for individual Afghan women. The project portended the possible freedom of Afghan women from the strictures of practices that hinder their involvement in democratic processes in Afghanistan.

Saeed notes, however, that the project did not necessarily lead to 'structural changes in the lives of Afghan women at large'.⁵⁸⁴ Saeed argues that such structural changes would require time as well as investment in the education and provision of employment opportunities for girls and women. Notwithstanding, I posit that the project left a positive imprint in the lives of Afghan women through knowledge about extant laws which the project afforded. The knowledge thus acquired translated into personal transformation for the participants. In anticipating the practice of Legislative Theatre in Nigeria, the Afghan women's project is significant. The many cultural and religious strictures placed on Nigerian women⁵⁸⁵ suggest a possible area of robust intervention through Legislative Theatre. To end the examples of Legislative Theatre interventions drawn from other climes which could enrich the practice of Legislative Theatre in Nigeria, I reflect on the Legislative Theatre engagements of a New York based Theatre of the Oppressed company.

582 Bisharat, 24.

583 Saeed, "Empowering Unheard Voices through 'Theatre of the Oppressed': Reflections on the Legislative Theatre Project for Women in Afghanistan-Notes from the Field," 319.

584 Saeed, 320.

585 Many studies have been carried out in this regard some of which include Josephine Effah, Mbachu Dulue, and Onyegbula Sonny, "Unequal Rights: Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women in Nigeria: Constitutional Rights Project" (Lagos, Nigeria, 1995); Teresina V.C. Agunwa, "Bad Widowhood Practices in Nigeria: It's Adverse Effects on Widows," *Journal of Research and Development* 3, no. 1 (2011); Oluchi Joyce Igili, "Widowhood and Attempted Forced Levirate Marriage as Precursors of Female Madness in Julie Okoh's *Our Wife Forever*," in *Schizo: The Liberatory Potential of Madness*, ed. Irina Lyubchenko and Fiona Ann Papps (Oxford, United Kingdom: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2015).

3.2.3. Legislative Theatre in the US: Theatre of the Oppressed New York City (TONYC)

Founded in 2011 by Katy Rubin, Theatre of the Oppressed New York (TONYC) was born out of Rubin's desire to combine interactive theatre with socio-political advocacy and activism. An activist and facilitator, Rubin trained with Augusto Boal at the Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO) in Rio de Janeiro where she apprehended the power inherent in connecting Theatre of the Oppressed methodological practices with government agencies and officials. Rubin established TONYC as a non-profit organisation that partners with communities around New York City which are facing discrimination in order to spark transformative action through theatre.⁵⁸⁶ After overseeing the affairs of the theatre company for 8 years (2011-2019), Rubin has relinquished the position of executive director of TONYC in order to concentrate her efforts on placing the Legislative Theatre practice in the USA on a national pedestal.

The Legislative Theatre interventions by TONYC underscore Rubin's understanding of the various ways of implementing Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methodology which she gained through her training under Boal. Rubin had observed, on return to the United States after her training, that although Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed was being practiced in the USA, the prevailing approach emphasised the *sharing* of the tool rather than real advocacy. Rubin claims that in the US Boal's methods of the Theatre of the Oppressed were, at that time, circulating within academic and/or privileged spaces through university programs and workshops.⁵⁸⁷

Douglas Paterson in analysing the roots of both pedagogy and theatre of the oppressed in the US corroborates Rubin's view by asserting that the US academy of higher education is partly implicated in the multiplication of Boal's methods in the US through the hosting of Theatre of the Oppressed conferences and workshops.⁵⁸⁸ This, Paterson notes, is partly due to the fact that academic institutions were able to generate both the participation and the financial support necessary to sustain Boal's conferences and workshops in the US.⁵⁸⁹ However, although TO was flourishing in the academia and among limited privileged circles, Rubin observed that among communities facing real oppression, the TO methodology was not being applied in an impactful and sustainable way.⁵⁹⁰ This lacuna spurred Rubin into founding the Theatre of the Oppressed,

586 Katy Rubin <https://www.katyrubin.com>

587 Katy Rubin, "Theatre of the Oppressed NYC: Radical Partnerships on the Ground in New York City," in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. Kelly Howe, Julian Boal, and Jose Soeiro (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019), 414.

588 Douglas Paterson, "Early Conferences in the US: PTO and Its Roots in the Academy," in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. Kelly Howe, Julian Boal, and Jose Soeiro (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019), 279.

589 Paterson, 279.

590 Rubin, "Theatre of the Oppressed NYC: Radical Partnerships on the Ground in New York City," 414.

New York (TONYC) in order to create awareness of, and address, genuine concerns of oppression within New York City.

TONYC's mode of operation is somewhat analogous to the CTO Rio's working relationship with the links and the 'nuclei' during Boal's mandate as a member of parliament. Through a strong partnership base with existing theatre troupes, TONYC engages with immigrant communities, formerly incarcerated people, veterans, as well as people living with HIV/AIDS and LGBTQ communities. TONYC uses the plays generated from the lived experiences of the members of the communities to raise awareness about pressing matters, build solidarity by identifying the collective effects of real existential problems and generate concrete ideas about how to tackle them.⁵⁹¹ Specifically TONYC employs the methodology of the Legislative Theatre in order to engage with officials of city, state and federal governments in interactive sessions during which the officials feel the pulse of those most impacted by the decisions they make. Commenting on the impact of one of the Legislative Theatre sessions organised by TONYC, Craig Levine, Director of Public Policy Reform acknowledges that 'Legislative Theatre broadened my thinking in terms of collaboration... We sometimes don't go to the next concentric circle of working directly with community groups, which we should'.⁵⁹²

TONYC's goal, à la Boal's the CTO, is to catalyse positive changes in New York City. To this effect, between 2013 and 2017, TONYC organised yearly Legislative Theatre Festivals in New York City. The Festivals produced notable policy shifts. For instance, the 2013 Festival tagged, 'Spring to Action: Save the Drama' which focused particularly on homeless LGBTQ youths led to the creation of the Federal Interagency Working Group for Homeless and LGBT Youth in order to meaningfully understand and address the needs of runaway and homeless LGBT youth.⁵⁹³ TONYC's 2014 Legislative Theatre Festival 'Can't Get Right' examined, among other themes, the challenges faced by transgender persons. This engendered policy proposals among which was the exigency for change in birth certificates to reflect people's preferred pronouns and the creation of municipal IDs for New Yorkers. This further resulted in a legislation which created a municipal ID for New York City that took into account LGBT and gender non-conforming individuals.⁵⁹⁴ The 2015 Festival emphasised the challenges faced by ex-offenders (particularly those of Black extraction) in securing employment and scholarship fund. The ensuing policy proposal was partly instru-

591 Rebecca Kelly-Golfman, "Watch, Act, Vote: The Impact of Theatre of the Oppressed NYC Legislative Theatre on New York City Policy and Civic Engagement" (New York City, n.d.), 4.

592 Kelly-Golfman, 21.

593 Kelly-Golfman, 7.

594 Kelly-Golfman, 8.

mental to the 2017 free education policy for New Yorkers with family income below \$100,000 at CUNY.⁵⁹⁵

Tagged 'Housing Circus', the 2016 TONYC Legislative Theatre Festival interrogated the experiences of veterans with the criminal justice system and the long wait of home seekers for permanent housing which often leads to homelessness. This produced a proposal to support the veterans and the homeless with 'Housing Ambassadors' who visit housing facilities before tenants sign the agreement. TONYC's 2017 Legislative Theatre Festival produced the following policy shifts: an increase in the support for the cultural life of low-income underrepresented communities, an increase in support for individual artists, and the coordination and promotion of engagements between the City (New York) and its cultural community.⁵⁹⁶

In the foregoing sections, I have analysed Boal's seminal experiment with the Legislative Theatre in Brazil, and the adoption of the method by various practitioners in other countries. In the next session, I will discuss what I foresee as the benefits accruable from the application of the methodology in Nigeria as well as consider the problems and limitations inherent in this mode of praxis. I intend, therefrom, to validate the hypothesis that despite the problems and limitations, the Legislative Theatre methodology remains a potentially worthwhile politico-theatrical interface between citizens and their representatives in a representative democratic government.

3.2.4. Adopting Legislative Theatre in Nigeria: Foreseeable Benefits and Limitations

From the above discussion on the execution of Legislative Theatre projects in Brazil, Canada, Afghanistan and the USA, it is evident that the application of Boal's Legislative Theatre methodology has its share of problems, limitations, and benefits. On the one hand, the outcome of some of the projects makes apparent the possibility that a Legislative Theatre project could be stalled by the attitudinal disposition of the authority or arm of government vested with the power of promulgating Legislative Theatre proposals into laws. On the other hand, other projects evidenced the positive influence that could potentially be exerted on the process and outcome of legislation through the adoption of Legislative Theatre. In this section of the chapter, I intend to closely consider to what extent the challenges and limitations as well as the benefits of Legislative Theatre could apply within the Nigerian context.

Earlier I noted the two basic approaches by which a theatre company could interface with the legislative arm of government in its adoption of the Legislative Theatre

595 Kelly-Golfman, 12.

596 Kelly-Golfman, 20.

methodology: ‘Legislative Theatre with Legislator’ and ‘Legislative Theatre without Legislator’. Where the legislator is a member of the theatre company, as was the case during Boal’s mandate, the fear that the legislative referenda could be tampered with is either nonexistent or, at least, significantly diminished. The same might not apply when the approach adopted is Legislative Theatre without Legislator. In adopting the Legislative Theatre methodology in Nigeria, it appears more circumspect to assume that the ‘Legislative Theatre without Legislator’ method would apply. In practical terms, this demands that the representative would be sufficiently invested in the referenda and guard it jealously. It also requires that adequate precautionary measures are put in place to ensure that the referenda are not tampered with and, to proactively devise the means of holding representatives accountable in the event that proposals are tinkered with.

Also, irrespective of the approach adopted, the eventual passage of the proposal into legislation presents yet another challenge. Boal himself hints at this by noting that in the Brazilian context promulgated laws are not automatically enforced. Boal observes that pressure is usually needed in order to get persons and institutions to abide by the dictates of the law. This reinforces Chantal Mouffe’s argument in which she forecloses the possibility of non-adversarial democratic politics.⁵⁹⁷ As Boal notes, the law is ‘only a tool to be used by the oppressed, to help apply this pressure’.⁵⁹⁸ This is another challenge inherent in the use of Legislative Theatre that needs not be glossed over.

While it is appropriate and expected to engage in Legislative Theatre projects with the anticipation that laws enacted through the projects will be implemented, it is, perhaps, also expedient to realise that in practical terms implementation of the laws might sometimes be delayed. This is not to suggest that necessary pressure should not be applied to ensure the implementation of promulgated laws. Rather, the understanding that the implementation of some promulgated legislation might be delayed reinforces my standpoint in this dissertation that while awaiting the promulgation and implementation of laws, the opportunity afforded by Legislative Theatre sessions for the clarification of policies that operate within the polity is already a cogent reason to embark on Legislative Theatre projects. The cumulative effect of such positive imprints could potentially yield more definite policy shifts in future.

A critical matter associated with the practice of Legislative Theatre is premised on one of Boal’s fundamental claims regarding Legislative Theatre. Boal claims that Legislative Theatre facilitates transitive exchange between the actors and the spectators (spect-actors). The exchange is, of necessity, mediated by the provocateur or Joker. Boal’s

597 Chantal Mouffe, “Art as an Agonistic Intervention in Public Space,” *Art and Democracy*, 2007, 3, onlineopen.org.

598 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 82–83.

claim is predicated on an envisaged seamless ventilation and exchange of opinions between participants and actors in the forum session in a democratic ambience that affords participants equal access. However, Howe, as I have previously noted, sounds a cautionary note about the dangers of an uncritical equation of forumming with democracy and democracy with equal access.⁵⁹⁹ Howe avers that a Joker's disposition is capable of influencing the level of freedom with which participants express their opinions during a forum session. This, in turn, will shape the knowledge which the forum session generates.

This challenge is not site-specific and is therefore expected to apply in the Nigerian context. It places great demand on Jokers to ensure that the forum space is devoid of any tendency from themselves or other participants that is capable of stifling freedom of expression. These problems and limitations notwithstanding, there are many envisaged benefits derivable from the employment of the Legislative Theatre methodology in the interface between the electors and the elected in Nigeria's representative democratic government.

An examination of the benefits of Legislative Theatre compels a consideration once again of the argument on the criteria to adopt in assessing the impact of a Legislative Theatre project. I have noted earlier the divergent views in this regard as exemplified by Fink's and Howe's postulations. While Fink insists that a Legislative Theatre project should necessarily culminate in the promulgation of legislation in accordance with the term *Legislative Theatre*, Howe holds the view that the value of a Legislative Theatre engagement could be located outside the quantum of legislation produced through the process. Howe argues further that Legislative Theatre sessions provide the requisite atmosphere for collective knowledge generation on public policy.⁶⁰⁰ I reason that both arguments have their merit. Therefore, my stance in considering how Nigeria's democracy might benefit from the application of the methodology is that while Legislative Theatre projects should be embarked upon with the ultimate target of producing legislation and ensuring that they are implemented, the delay that often accompanies this process should not be allowed to pose as a deterrence in engaging in Legislative Theatre projects. The education about the provisions of extant laws and the consciousness that citizens have the agency to make input into the laws are already highly rewarding outcomes of the Legislative Theatre process.

While acknowledging that the capacity to provide an ambience conducive to information sharing is not exclusive to Legislative Theatre since all forms of the Theatre of the Oppressed (and theatre in general), provide an opportunity for the dissemination

599 Howe, "Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre," 241.

600 Howe, 240.

of information, Howe argues that Legislative Theatre frames information-sharing as ‘an act of citizenship’.⁶⁰¹ The import of citizenship transcends membership of a community. It involves participation in the democratic processes.⁶⁰² Fundamentally, therefore, Legislative Theatre provides a pedestal on which members of a community can participate as effective citizens. I reckon that this is very relevant to the Nigerian situation particularly in view of Samuel Kafewo’s position that Nigeria’s democratisation process raises crucial questions about citizenship on account of the ‘country’s huge social diversity and deep ethnic, religious, and regional divisions’.⁶⁰³

Legislative Theatre creates the opportunity for an interface between the citizens and the government bodies that legislate their existence, to borrow Howe’s phraseology. Typical of representative democracy is what Guinier denotes as electocracy; a process that thrives on sacred moments of choice and in which the elected is more powerful than the electorate which ultimately produces what Tocqueville denotes as powerful strangers. In conceptualising the Legislative Theatre, Boal sought not only to bridge the gulf between the electorate and the elected but also to restore to the electorate the political agency that in most representative democracies usually dissipates at the point of casting a vote. Stevenson Omoera’s argument that Nigeria ‘has not had a true taste of democracy’ partly due to what he describes as ‘political dictatorship’⁶⁰⁴ further underscores the necessity for Nigerian theatre practitioners to test the utility of Legislative Theatre within the Nigerian context.

Legislative Theatre is also beneficial in creating room for the clarification of government policies. The significance of this is double-fold. First, it exposes inequalities contained - and often hidden - in state policies. These hidden inequalities make it difficult for citizens to be equipped with the tools that could enable them to perform as ethical members of their communities.⁶⁰⁵ Similarly, clarification of policies equips citizens with knowledge about their privileges as contained in extant laws. This is yet another potential utility of the Legislative Theatre methodology within the Nigerian context where the level of illiteracy is considered remarkably high. A 2019 assessment by the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) claims that about 35% of Nigerian adults are illiterate and this, according to NMEC, ‘accounts for the low level of development in Nigeria’.⁶⁰⁶ NMEC further

601 Howe, 245.

602 Heller, “Democracy, Participatory Politics and Development: Some Comparative Lessons from Brazil, India and South Africa,” 645.

603 Kafewo, “Discussion, Intervention, Processing: Theatre and Citizenship in Nigeria,” 178.

604 Ibagere and Omoera, “The Democratization Process and the Nigerian Theatre Artist,” 67.

605 Jacqueline Kennelly, “‘Acting Out’ in the Public Sphere: Community Theatre and Citizenship Education,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 29, no. 2 (2006): 552.

606 Editorial, “The Challenge of Illiteracy in Nigeria,” *ThisDay NewsPaper*, 2019, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/08/01>.

observes that, ‘the growth and development of any nation depend largely on the quantity and quality of all segments of its population’.⁶⁰⁷

I have noted that Legislative Theatre facilitates the participatory involvement of citizens in the formulation of new laws or, where necessary, in the amendment of extant laws. This was exemplified in Boal’s seminal experiment which birthed thirteen legislations passed by the Rio City Council between January 1993 and December 1996. The Legislative Theatre interventions by Theatre of the Oppressed, New York (TONYC) instantiates the replication of Boal’s example through the policy shifts they effected in the New York City Council. Legislative Theatre’s capacity to effect policy shift, therefore, serves as another crucial incentive for the application of the methodology within the Nigerian context.

I reason with Gianpaolo Baiocchi that Legislative Theatre births social transformation and indisputably better legislations made possible through the experiential input of citizens. Therefore, I consider it worthwhile for Nigerian theatre practitioners to incorporate the method in the effort to place Nigeria’s democracy on a firmer footing. In order to test the viability of the method within the Nigerian context, I carried out an experimental Legislative Theatre project on sexual harassment at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. The discussion of that seminal effort will henceforth engage my interest in this chapter. This will be followed by my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play.

3.3. Legislative Theatre: The AAUA Intervention and Theorisation as Play

I find in Legislative Theatre features which make it relatable to the concept of play hence my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play. Different conceptual frames have been postulated with respect to play, one of which argues that play is a fundamental way by which creatures coherently articulate their possibilities for acting in the world.⁶⁰⁸ Also, Derrida conceptualises play as *passé-partout*, that is, an instrument with which the crossing of territorial borders is made possible.⁶⁰⁹ Thus, I argue that, as play, Legislative Theatre facilitates the entry by the participants into the terrain of law-making; a terrain which is otherwise not accessible to them. From here, participants innocuously function as lawmakers and determine the nature of laws which prescribe

607 Editorial.

608 Thomas S. Henricks, “Play as Self-Realization: Toward a General Theory of Play,” *American Journal of Play* 6, no. 2 (2014): 190.

609 Katarzyna Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art* (London and New York: Tauris I.B, 2015), 63.

their existence. I further argue that through the play process the participants are able to articulate possibilities open to them in the real world and are consequently able to take their place as equal members of their communities thereby guaranteeing their political and democratic well-being.

To test my hypothesis about the role the Legislative Theatre methodology could play in strengthening democratic culture and to assist in my theorisation of the methodology as play, I carried out a laboratory Legislative Theatre project at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. The objective of the project was to test how the praxis of Legislative Theatre might be implemented in Nigeria and what the methodology might contribute towards democratic, participatory processes in the Nigerian context. The thematic thrust of the intervention was sexual harassment in Nigerian universities with specific interest in Adekunle Ajasin University. As will be further discussed, the choice of this theme was informed mainly by its timelessness, its contemporaneity in Nigeria around the time of the project on account of an undercover investigation carried out in some West African Universities by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC),⁶¹⁰ and the hypothetical conjecture about its existence in the Adekunle Ajasin University.

Crucially, the project provided the opportunity to put to test some of the perceived challenges of the implementation of Legislative Theatre as noted earlier in the chapter. The challenges include the attitudinal disposition of relevant authority and the onus on the Joker to ensure equal democratic ownership of the performance space. The manner in which the challenges played out in the laboratory project and my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play are part of the focus of the rest of this chapter. To begin with, I explore the contiguity between Legislative Theatre and TfD in order to elucidate on why I advocate the adoption of the former by TfD practitioners in Nigeria.

3.3.1. Legislative Theatre and the Practice of TfD in Nigeria

My discussion in Chapter 2 of this dissertation attests to the considerable presence of TfD in Nigeria. As previously noted, TfD is viewed as a mode of theatre practice which focuses attention on various matters within communities with a view to celebrating the human person as a being capable of using his cultural forms for individual and societal transformation. In like manner, Legislative Theatre harnesses the embodied experiences of participants described by Howe as ‘embodied think tanks’.⁶¹¹ Thus,

610 BBC News, “‘Sex for Grades’: Undercover in West African Universities,” BBC News Africa, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-49907376>.

611 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 240.

both TfD and Legislative Theatre are unanimous on the innate capabilities which the human person possesses and which she could utilise for her benefit.

Also, TfD's conceptual premise of 'the power of the people and power to the people'⁶¹² finds concrete expression in the praxis of Legislative Theatre. This is owing to the ambience created through Legislative Theatre for communities to participate in the making of the laws that circumscribe their daily existence. To partake in enacting the laws under which one lives bespeaks not only of being a recipient of power to the people but, more fundamentally, it is also a demonstration of the inherent power of the people being put into effective use.

Lawmaking, as Boal observes, should not be the exclusive preserve of a section of the community.⁶¹³ Transforming the political system that strips members of the society of the power to decide their fate and creating the ambience for them to change the narrative through laws appear to be the most fundamental way to alleviate the burdens of those at the lower rungs of the societal ladder who often bear the brunt of repressive laws. Laws, Boal notes, are always the desire of the powerful.⁶¹⁴ Thus, Boal's Legislative Theatre is conceptually a means of recalibrating the source and course of power in order to accommodate the desires of those placed at the fringes of political power by the systemic structure of society.

In Chapter 1, I noted the connection between democracy and law, and the necessity for laws to be made by the people who are most affected by the dictates of the law. I argued that this is a fundamental component of democracy. Also, in Chapter 2, I dwelled on the conceptual connection between TfD and democracy. I noted the policy position which stipulated that TfD was innovated as the theatrical arm of the developmentalist project designed to catalyse the actualisation of a democratic culture for developing countries. This is therefore another crucial premise on which I propose the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology to be employed apace with the already widespread TfD in Nigeria. On the one hand, the correlation between development and democracy has been established.⁶¹⁵ On the other hand, democracy and law serve each other.⁶¹⁶ Therefore, the application of Legislative Theatre along with TfD will support the building of a healthy democracy as TfD was originally primed

612 Abah, "Vignettes of Communities in Action: An Exploration of Participatory Methodologies in Promoting Community Development in Nigeria," 445.

613 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

614 Boal, 16.

615 M.D. Litonjua, "Democracy and Development: Theoretical Unity, Practical Split," *International Review of Modern Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2011): 51.

616 Klein, Yusuf, and Bafaki, *Concepts and Principles of Democratic Governance and Accountability: A Guide for Peer Educators*, 21.

to do. The Legislative Theatre methodology will complement the function of Tfd by being a tool in the fashioning of people-oriented laws.

3.3.2. Legislative Theatre: A Tool for Deepening Democratic Culture

Some critics have identified what they describe as the lack of an enabling atmosphere for democracy to thrive in Nigeria. For instance, Ibagere and Omoera contend that 'there have only been attempts at democratisation'⁶¹⁷ implying that in Nigeria, democracy, as a political culture, is yet to take deep roots. One of the ways of deepening the democratic culture of any society is by training the muscle of the citizens for political discussion and participation. As referenced earlier, Kelly Howe while arguing that Legislative Theatre sessions could be sufficiently rewarding irrespective of whether or not the interventions produce legislation, submits that Legislative Theatre sessions are 'a site for corporeal policy analysis'; an environment where participants 'could build knowledge collectively about public policy and how it might be profitably revised'.⁶¹⁸ Howe thus avers that Legislative Theatre sessions provide the setting for the generation and circulation of knowledge, and for enlightenment on political matters. I deem such political exercise indispensable to the growth and enculturation of democracy in Nigeria. Howe's position aligns with my submission that while waiting for a Legislative Theatre project to produce legislation, the knowledge about extant laws which it affords and the political consciousness it creates already serve as sufficient incentive to engage in it. My experimental Legislative Theatre engagement at the Adekunle Ajasin University lends credence to this claim.

In addition to affording the opportunity for the discussion of extant laws and policies, Legislative Theatre sessions also provide participants opportunity to deliberate on topical issues that bear relevance to democracy. Again, my project at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria, instantiates this. As already stated, the project explored the grave issue of sexual harassment in Nigerian universities which, around the time of the project, gained currency due to an undercover investigation into sexual harassment in some West African universities conducted by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). This provided the gateway to explore how Adekunle Ajasin University might be implicated in the situation. The lived experiences of the Adekunle Ajasin University students which served as the material from which the performance skit was built further strengthened the topicality of the chosen theme, that is, sexual harassment.

617 Ibagere and Omoera, "The Democratization Process and the Nigerian Theatre Artiste," 67.

618 Howe, "Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre," 240.

3.4. Laboratory Legislative Theatre Project on Sexual Harassment at AAUA

In order to justify my proposal for the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology by Nigerian theatre practitioners, it was practically expedient for me to conduct a laboratory experiment of Legislative Theatre as part of the research. This was intended to situate the methodology within the Nigerian context and thereby provide practitioners with a Nigerian (miniature) instance of Legislative Theatre to which they could relate.

The choice of sexual harassment as the subject of the intervention at Adekunle Ajasin University was predicated on a number of factors. Sexual harassment has been described as a worldwide problem in and around schools with serious implications for educational attainment.⁶¹⁹ The peril of sexual harassment is claimed to have stripped educational institutions of their glory as ivory towers and have reduced them to arenas for sexual victimisation.⁶²⁰ Also, sexual harassment of female students is viewed as rampant within educational settings in sub-Saharan Africa⁶²¹ and widespread in Nigerian institutions of higher education.⁶²² Notwithstanding this pervasiveness, Paul Bello in a research on combating sexual harassment in Nigerian universities, declares that little is known about institutional measures to address the menace of sexual harassment of female students in Nigerian universities.⁶²³ While cases of sexual harassment are said to be under-reported, victims often find the courage to make formal reports when policies and procedures are put in place to combat sexual harassment.⁶²⁴

Spurred, perhaps, by the claims of the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in sub-Saharan Africa the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) undertook undercover investigations at the University of Ghana and the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The investigations revealed that BBC undercover 'female reporters were sexually harassed, propositioned and put under pressure by senior lecturers at the institutions'.⁶²⁵ Following the report, the Nigerian Senate reintroduced⁶²⁶ a bill aimed at the prevention

619 Regis Chireshe and Excellent Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 80 (2009): 89.

620 Janice Joseph, "Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions: A Comparative Perspective," *TEMIDA*, 2015, 126.

621 Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 89.

622 Paul Oluwatosin Bello, "Combating Sexual Harassment in Ivory Tower in Nigeria: Mixed Feelings," *Bangladesh E-Journal of Sociology* 17, no. 1 (2020): 173.

623 Bello, 174.

624 Gruber & Smith 1995 cited in Sandy Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999): 182.

625 News, "'Sex for Grades': Undercover in West African Universities," 1.

626 'The fact of being 'reintroduced' indicated that the bill had previously been introduced unsuccessfully.

of sexual harassment of university students.⁶²⁷ Recognising its import, the United Nations (UN) implored media houses and civil society groups to lend their unalloyed support to the bill to ensure its passage into law.⁶²⁸

Taking into particular account Bello's submission above that little is known about institutional measures to address the ill of sexual harassment of female students in Nigerian universities, I thought it apposite to use the Legislative Theatre methodology to investigate how Bello's assertion might apply to the Adekunle Ajasin University. With the hypothetical assumption that institutional measures to address sexual harassment are in existence in the university, the project looked forward to using Legislative Theatre to strengthen the presumed existing measures. Thus, the expectation with which the project commenced was to enable female students who fall victim to sexual harassment to muster sufficient boldness to make formal reports and subsequently to receive justice as I presumed was already provided for in the institution's regulations.

3.4.1. Sexual Harassment: Contours and Consequences

The definition and occurrence of sexual harassment have often been labelled as 'contextualized'.⁶²⁹ Classified as 'sex discrimination', sexual harassment is an inappropriate sexual gesture that is 'unwanted', 'unreciprocated', and mostly characterised by unequal power relations.⁶³⁰ Sexual harassment has been denoted as being 'pervasive'⁶³¹ in Nigeria. Its prevalence notwithstanding, specific laws on sexual harassment in Nigeria have been late in coming.⁶³² However, Section 46 of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPPA, 2015) defines sexual harassment as the 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex or gender which is persistent or serious and demeans, humiliates or creates a hostile or intimidating environment and this may include physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct'.⁶³³

The socio-cultural theorisation of sexual harassment perceives it as a product of differentiation in the cultural socialisation of men and women which privileges

627 The Bill was passed into law by the Nigerian Senate in the year, 2020. However, it still requires both assent by the Nigeria's President and adoption by the 36 state governments to become applicable nationwide.

628 Aishat Babatunde, "UN Seeks Support for Nigeria's Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill," Premium Times, 2020, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/378406-un-seeks-support-for-nigerias-anti-sexual-harassment-bill.html>.

629 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 186.

630 Frazier Benya, "Treating Sexual Harassment as a Violation of Research Integrity," *Issues in Science and Technology* 35, no. 2 (2019): 56; Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 88; Christopher Uggen and Amy Blackstone, "Sexual Harassment as a Gendered Expression of Power," *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 1 (2004): 66; Catharine MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 1.

631 Olamide Abudu, "Sexual Harassment in Nigeria: It's Everybody's Problem," *The Guardian*, 2017, <https://guardian.ng/issue/sexual-harassment-in-nigeria-its-everybodys-problem/>.

632 Paul A. Ejembi et al., "The Trajectory of Nigerian Law Regarding Sexual Harassment in the Workplace," *AJLHR* 4, no. 2 (2020): 4.

633 Ejembi et al., 2.

masculinity.⁶³⁴ This view suggests that men are socialised to dominate while women are acculturated to function as minions. Also, the organisational-level theorisation of sexual harassment connotes that individuals with formal organisational power may use their position to harass subordinates.⁶³⁵ Formal organisational power would, in the context of my laboratory Legislative Theatre experiment at the Adekunle Ajasin University, reflect the relationship between male teachers and their female students.

Broadly, two categories of sexual harassment exist - the quid pro quo and the hostile environment. Hostile environment sexual harassment involves behaviours such as sexual jokes, comments, and touching which interfere with an individual's ability to do their job or that create an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.⁶³⁶ The quid pro quo harassment makes a demand; 'sleep with me or...'⁶³⁷ Within the context of the relationship between a teacher and a student, the threat would mean, 'sleep with me or you fail'. A study on the sexual harassment of female students in three Zimbabwean high schools suggests that most cases of sexual harassment go unreported⁶³⁸ due to fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, fear that accounts of sexual harassment may be dismissed as untrue, fear of worsening the situation and fear of being blamed for the assault.⁶³⁹ Women's responses to sexual harassment have been represented as a continuum of 'avoidance, diffusion, negotiation, and confrontation'.⁶⁴⁰ A cultural belief holds that women 'control' male sexuality through their comportment⁶⁴¹ and should therefore be held responsible for the assault they suffer from male predators.⁶⁴² Beliefs such as this are critical to research into sexual harassment.

Sandy Welsh in a study of the multifarious dynamics of gender and sexual harassment declares that for some victims sexual harassment could mark a negative turning point which alters their progression through life-course sequences.⁶⁴³ Within a learning environment, students who are victims of sexual harassment often show signs of withdrawal by skipping or dropping classes, changing either their course of study or their advisers, or dropping out of school altogether.⁶⁴⁴

634 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 176; Uggen and Blackstone, "Sexual Harassment as a Gendered Expression of Power," 67; Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 88.

635 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 177.

636 Welsh cites US EEOC 1980 Welsh, 170.

637 Benya, "Treating Sexual Harassment as a Violation of Research Integrity," 56.

638 Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 94.

639 Chireshe and Chireshe, 94; Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 182.

640 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 182.

641 Kethusegile et al., 2000: 159 cited in Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 92.

642 Amy Grubb and Emily Turner, "Attribution of Blame in Rape Cases: A Review of the Impact of Rape Myth Acceptance, Gender Role Conformity and Substance Use on Victim Blaming," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 17 (2012): 444.

643 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 183.

644 Benya, "Treating Sexual Harassment as a Violation of Research Integrity," 57.

These deleterious consequences attributable to sexual harassment necessitated the intervention. It was therefore gratifying to embark on the Legislative Theatre project in my academic community (Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria) being mindful, however, of the probability that the project could present some challenges not only due to the subject matter of the intervention (sexual harassment) but also due to the novelty of the methodology (Legislative Theatre).

3.4.2. The Intervention: Getting Set

The Legislative Theatre project was domiciled within the Department of Performing Arts. In order to elicit and sustain the cooperation of the students, it was deemed necessary to hinge the project on one of the courses taught in the department. After a survey of the courses offered in the department during the semester in which the project was executed, PFA 401 titled 'Topics in Theatre Studies' appeared suitable for the domiciliation of the project. The course was co-taught by the researcher and two other lecturers. One of the topics addressed by the course, Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre (handled by the researcher) offered a springboard from which to launch the discussion of Boal's Legislative Theatre, which the students were hitherto unfamiliar with.

Departing from Piscator's anti-illusionist political theatre which viewed complex socio-political and other factors as changeable⁶⁴⁵ attention was shifted to Bertolt Brecht's theatre of discussion which, in its treatment of contemporaneous concerns, emphasised emotional distancing and critical consciousness as requisites for social transformation. Brecht's theatre of discussion exerted a degree of influence on Augusto Boal. However, Boal, in his conceptualisation of the Theatre of the Oppressed, contends that in order to actualise social transformation, theatre should transcend mere discussion. Brecht's insistence on a theatrical form which would critically arouse the consciousness of the audience is partly the impetus for Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed which seeks to transfer to the oppressed the political tools with which to transform their condition. From that perspective, the fundamentals of Legislative Theatre both as applied theatre and as a politico-theatrical tool potentially utilisable for socio-political transformation were discussed. Beyond the department, I also had interactions with the Legal Unit of the university, the Women Studies and Development Centre, and the Faculty of Law. Also, I put the University's Guidance and Counselling Unit on notice in case any participant would need their services in view of the personal experiences that the participants would be sharing during the project.

645 Herbert Knust, "Piscator and Brecht: Affinity and Alienation," in *Essays on Brecht: Theater and Politics*, ed. Siegfried Mews and Herbert Knust (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1974), 46.

Having discussed the rudiments of Legislative Theatre with the forty-one (41) students (male and female) enrolled for PFA 401, the project was then introduced stating its specific focus, that is, sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers within the university. The male students were clearly informed that the gender specificity of the project would automatically preclude them from participation. The male students, whose interest in the project had apparently been elicited perhaps due to its novelty, resented their exclusion from the project. Their exclusion, however, is in tandem with the *modus operandi* in applied theatre projects in which, of necessity, participants comprise persons impacted by the issue at stake⁶⁴⁶ which, in this case, was sexual harassment of female students. It was, therefore, necessary to restrict the participation of the male students whose inclusion could have jeopardised the interest of the population group delineated by the project. Therefore, only a few male students were allowed as audience members during the performance.

To avoid possible stigmatisation, participation in the project was not predicated on having been sexually harassed rather the opportunity to partake in a novel theatre engagement was flagged as the main pivot of interest. It was however hoped that in the course of the project participants who had experienced sexual harassment from lecturers would willingly share their experiences. With this understanding, interested female students were invited to a preliminary meeting which held on 3rd February, 2020. At the meeting, attended by eighteen female students, the unconditionally voluntary nature of their involvement and the fact that they were therefore not being coerced into enlisting in the project was made explicitly clear.

After the inaugural meeting of 3rd February, 2020, another meeting was held on the 5th. The two-day intervening period was intended to afford the students ample latitude of time to make informed decisions about their continued involvement in the project.⁶⁴⁷ On the same day (5th) the students were made to sign the Informed Consent form and to watch a short video *Legislative Theatre: Animated Presentation*⁶⁴⁸ which afforded them an audio-visual illustration of the processes of a Legislative Theatre engagement including the voting process. With these, the students were allowed a one-week period

646 Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton, *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2009), 6.

647 To further educate the students the following reading materials were made available to them: Gopal Midha's *Theatre of the Oppressed: A Manual for Educators*, which includes a brief introduction to the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology, was deemed a background knowledge necessary for the understanding and appreciation of Legislative Theatre. Eduardo Salvador's 'Legislative Theatre: Art for Community Conflict Resolution. From Desires to Laws'; Salvador's article gives a general overview of Legislative Theatre, highlights its Brazilian origin and outlines its rationale and processes of execution. A section of Boal's *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics* was considered necessary to afford the students a firm grasp of Boal's vision in innovating the Legislative Theatre methodology.

648 Lucija Smodis and Brina Fekonja, *Legislative Theatre: Animated Presentation*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xx-CHhzR2s>.

to study the literature.⁶⁴⁹ The meeting was attended by fifteen students, a shortfall of three students from the eighteen who had attended the inaugural meeting.

3.4.3. The Workshop Sessions

Bearing in mind the need to sustain the commitment of the participants, the entire project was envisaged to last no longer than three (3) weeks altogether from the point of its introduction to the students to the performance/intervention.⁶⁵⁰ As the workshop facilitator, I drew inspiration from my study of Boal's writings and other literature which dwell on the Legislative Theatre methodology. Also, with inspiration drawn from previous participation in Theatre of the Oppressed workshops, I structured the workshop to commence with creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and trust.⁶⁵¹ This crucially envisaged the ambience for the willing sharing of personal stories. Subsequently, the sessions would proceed to Image Theatre representation of the shared intimate stories. Furthermore, it was envisaged that a utilisable drama sketch would be devised which would then be properly rehearsed for performance on the day of the intervention. However, my participation in previous workshops – and experience gathered over the years in theatre engagements – notwithstanding, I approached my seminal Legislative Theatre project with a degree of apprehension over what the overall outcome could or would be.

When the group reconvened one week later (on 12th February) to commence the creative sessions there were thirteen participants in attendance indicating that after signing the Informed Consent form, two other students voluntarily withdrew from the project. No attempt was made to ascertain the reason for the attrition as this could be interpreted by the students as subtle pressure. The remaining thirteen students continued, voluntarily, with the project to the end. The workshop sessions included games such as 'In a Circle',⁶⁵² 'Joe Egg' also known as 'Trust Circle'⁶⁵³ and the two variations of 'Pushing against each other',⁶⁵⁴ drawn from Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*.⁶⁵⁵ As the workshop facilitator, I employed the games with the intention to engender a relaxed mind and body, and to ensure warmth and camaraderie among the participants. The games were also intended to build trust which was necessary in

649 The students were at this point given the Informed Consent form to complete. It was however made clear to them that notwithstanding that they had to sign the Informed Consent form at that stage, they were still at liberty to opt out of the project at any time they so wished during the period of the project.

650 The project could have been executed within a shorter span of time. The period of 3 weeks was however deemed appropriate in view of the students' other engagements.

651 Between 2018 and 2019 I participated in Theatre of the Oppressed workshops facilitated in Amsterdam by Uri Negra, and in Berlin by Barbara Santos under the auspices of Migrant Women Theatre Collective, Amsterdam and Kuringa, Berlin respectively.

652 Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 75.

653 Boal, 62.

654 Boal, 58.

655 Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*.

order to have productive sessions. The exercises not only fostered an atmosphere of conviviality among the participants but they also helped to familiarise the students with the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology and engendered a conducive aura for the creative process.

Feminist scholars argue that on account of their experience ‘marginalized groups hold a particular claim to knowing’⁶⁵⁶ but have also contended that relations of power have the capacity to pose a hindrance to the generation of knowledge from among the marginalised groups.⁶⁵⁷ This, they posit, is in view of the fact that relations of power inflict fear, shame, and other uncomfortable emotions on potential informants, deprive them of their resources to communicate and undermine trust between researchers and potential informants.⁶⁵⁸ However, the inhibitions which could be engendered by skewed power relations are usually overcome when the marginalised are able to move away from an individualised to a collective articulation of their social experiences.⁶⁵⁹ In other words, inhibitions are overcome when the marginalised come to the realisation that their personalised social experiences are, in reality, not peculiar to them.

I countenanced the fact that although the power differential was apparently skewed in my favour, it was capable of exerting an adverse effect on the research project. Thus, to proceed in the workshop and in order, crucially, to enhance the generation of the needed experiential knowledge I thought it expedient to initiate the process by sharing with the participants my own experience of sexual abuse by my teacher as a young Sixth Grader. By doing so, I drew the participants away from an individualised to a collective articulation of their sexual harassment experiences. In other words, by sharing my personal experience with the participants, I created a space for myself in their world. From that standpoint of collective rather than individualised experience of sexual harassment,⁶⁶⁰ I succeeded in challenging the power differential which my positionality as a researcher might have bestowed on me. Also, I impressed upon the participants the fact that personal experiences of participants which applied theatre often uses as materials must, for ethical reasons, not be divulged to anyone outside the group. As Richard Schechner submits, performance workshops should be treated as ‘well-defined safety nets’⁶⁶¹ where safety and trust thrive.

656 Doucet & Mauthner, 2006, cited in Lina Gurung, “Feminist Standpoint Theory: Conceptualization and Utility,” *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 2021, 107.

657 Kristina Rolin, “Standpoint Theory as a Methodology for the Study of Power Relations,” *Hypatia* 24, no. 4 (2009): 222; Gurung, “Feminist Standpoint Theory: Conceptualization and Utility,” 109.

658 Rolin, “Standpoint Theory as a Methodology for the Study of Power Relations,” 222.

659 Rolin, 224.

660 Gurung, “Feminist Standpoint Theory: Conceptualization and Utility,” 107.

661 Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2004), 27.

Subsequently, the participants were broken into sharing circles where members, knowing fully well the aim of the performance, shared their personal stories. The participants had the liberty to either openly identify with their stories or to anonymise as they deemed fit. Some participants who had assumably overcome the inhibitions usually associated with sexual harassment shared various experiences of sexual harassment which they had suffered at one stage of life or the other. A participant recounted how a male colleague (student) with whom she had previously shared a platonic relationship had attempted to take advantage of her for his sexual gratification when she paid him a visit at his residence. Some others recounted their experiences in other settings outside the university community. There were then Image Theatre representations of the recounted stories where each circle presented to the entire group.

However, in order not to deviate from the focus of the project, there was the need to establish from students' personal encounters the existence of sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers within the University community. In this regard, a student recounted an anonymised encounter of a final-year female student whose male Long Essay supervisor had propositioned for a sexual relationship which she declined. The supervisor then handed her two options of either sharing his bed with him or paying him a huge amount of money. This real case account, an ongoing crisis faced by the affected student at the time of the intervention, was embedded within fictionally thought-out scenarios. The real case account however served as the spine of the drama sketch which was devised for the performance. The participant's decision to recount this encounter as anonymised was not challenged.

3.4.4. The Devised Story

The drama sketch opens with a female student named Susan who goes to the office of a male lecturer (Dr Makanaki)⁶⁶² to lodge a complaint about the non-inclusion of her score on the results published for one of the courses in the department. Dr Makanaki checks through his records after which he claims that the student performed poorly in the course. The student has no ready access to her examination script and is, therefore, unable to affirm or refute the lecturer's claim. However, the lecturer informs her that her poor score is not cast in iron. In other words, the poor performance notwithstanding, something could still be done, favourably, about her scores to make it 'look up'. There in his office, Dr Makanaki takes sexual advantage of Susan in a manner which exemplifies an organisational-level form of sexual harassment which stipulates 'sleep with me or you fail' after which he alters her score upwardly. When Susan informs Kate and Ene about her excellent performance, they are puzzled over what might have transpired and lament over the unhealthy situation in which students often have to meet lecturers in person to obtain clarity over their results.

662 Makanaki is a fake name which in Nigerian parlance denotes a lecherous man.

The story continues with Dr Labalaba, (the Long Essay Coordinator in the department) allocating Kate (one of the intelligent students) to Dr Makanaki for the supervision of her Long Essay on Dr Makanaki's request. On Kate's first visit to Dr Makanaki's office in his capacity as her supervisor, Dr Makanaki exudes noticeable excitement to Kate's surprise. Dr Makanaki who apparently has no time to waste, moves stealthily towards Kate and begins to caress her arm and hair, a move which Kate immediately rebuffs. Infuriated by Kate's reaction, Dr Makanaki walks her out of his office wondering if she thinks 'good supervision' comes on a platter of gold. A distraught Kate meets two other friends of hers who, on getting to know why she is troubled, narrate similar experiences and how, with a sense of helplessness, they eventually caved in to pressures from male lecturers. According to them, they felt incapacitated before a system in which lecturers appear not to feel the restraint of the legal (or moral) consequences of demanding sexual gratification from students. In their estimation, yielding to the sexual demands of the lecturers appeared to be the only guaranteed way of scaling through the university system without encountering serious academic challenges. They advise Kate to do the 'needful' and move on with her studies.

At this point, Kate recalls Susan's encounter with Dr Makanaki over Susan's missing result and expresses her scepticism over what could have transpired between Susan and Dr Makanaki. Kate and Ene later meet Susan and asked to know what transpired between her (Susan) and Dr Makanaki. After much persuasion, Susan eventually admits to having had forced sex with Dr Makanaki. She advises Kate to acquiesce to Dr Makanaki's demand so as to relieve herself of pressure from him. Kate threatens to lodge official complaint but Susan warns her against such a 'foolish' move. In Susan's view, not only will Kate not obtain justice, she would have also earned the ire of other lecturers in the department who could then gang up against her.

Susan further suggests, in the alternative, that Kate offers money to Dr Makanaki. At this point, Kate, despite her confidence in her academic capability, is at a loss about what step to take. She declares her willingness to pay her way through but her poor financial state forecloses this option. Ene then suggests that Kate calls Dr Makanaki to plead with him to carry on the supervision without placing any demands on her. When Kate contacts Dr Makanaki through a phone call, he tells her to either pay him cash or get under his sheets. Dr Makanaki insists, 'It is either your body or your money'; this is another instance of organisational-level sexual harassment. The play is nipped off at this climactic moment in order that Kate's dilemma could serve as a take-off point for the audience's intervention.

Critical views on sexual harassment oscillate between two functional terms; whether the action is 'severe' or 'pervasive'. This takes into account whether the action was a

single serious incident or a pattern of less severe, but repeated behaviours.⁶⁶³ It has however been argued that sexual harassment need not be repeated, rather, a single offensive incident is sufficient to constitute harassment.⁶⁶⁴ Also, a single instance of sexual coercion inflicts the same professional and psychological damage as repeated cases.⁶⁶⁵ Thus, Kate's singular encounter with Dr Makanaki is deemed sufficient to provoke adverse psychological and other effects of sexual harassment. This one-time experience leads Kate to seek to change her supervisor thus supporting Frazier Benya's submission that part of the effects of sexual harassment is the resolve by victims to change majors or advisers.⁶⁶⁶ In this instance, Kate's effort to change her supervisor is thwarted by the complicity of Dr Labalaba, the Long Essay Coordinator.

3.4.5. The Intervention

Having concluded the workshop sessions and having also taken other preliminary steps, the day of the performance/intervention finally came. It was 20th February, 2020 and the location of the seminal Legislative Theatre session was the Dance studio of the Performing Arts Department, Adekunle Ajasin, University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. As noted earlier, the objective was to use the project as a test case of how Legislative Theatre methodology might fare in the advancement of participatory democratic practices in Nigeria.

Before the commencement of the drama presentation, the participating audience (audience members drawn from across the university community)⁶⁶⁷ was made to engage in some Theatre of the Oppressed games. These included 'Good Day',⁶⁶⁸ which is usually employed when the audience at a Forum Theatre is composed mainly of people who are unfamiliar with one another. In this instance where the participants comprised students who, to some degree knew one another, the game was used in view of the unfamiliarity of the audience with the Forum Theatre methodology. Another game used was 'The Cross and The Circle'⁶⁶⁹ which was varied as 'The Circle and Name'. As is traditionally the norm during Theatre of the Oppressed engagements, the games were used to create an atmosphere of friendliness among the participants.

The participants (about 90% of whom were female students) were asked to momentarily envision themselves as lawmakers saddled with the responsibility of proposing

663 Uggen and Blackstone, "Sexual Harassment as a Gendered Expression of Power," 65.

664 M.J. Booker, "Can Sexual Harassment Be Salvaged?," *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, no. 11 (1998): 1173.

665 Benya, "Treating Sexual Harassment as a Violation of Research Integrity," 57.

666 Benya, 57.

667 The university community was notified about the event through various university-based platforms with a caveat that in view of the gender specificity of the project, priority of admittance into the venue will be given to female students. The audience composition was therefore preponderantly (over 90%) female.

668 Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 85.

669 Boal, 50.

laws against sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers in the University and to write down their proposals. These were collected and handed over to the members of the Metabolising Cell before the commencement of the drama presentation. The Metabolising Cell consisted of the Director of the Legal Unit of the University (male), another member of staff of the Legal Unit (male), the Ag. Director of the Women Studies and Development Centre (female), a lecturer in the Faculty of Law (male), and a fourth-year female student of the Faculty of Law and founder, Coalition for Legal Education and Rights Protection (CLERP).

In the composition of the Metabolising Cell, the expertise of the members, as it would serve the interest of the project, was taken into consideration. Thus, while the lawyers were to bring to bear their professional insight as lawyers, the involvement of the Ag. Director of the Women Studies and Development Centre was deemed crucial in view of the statutory involvement of the Centre with women related concerns and consequently its connection with the focus of the intervention, that is, sexual harassment of female students. The consideration of the expertise of members of the Metabolising Cell produced a gender distribution of three males and two females. This, however, did not seem to have wielded any adverse influence on the task they had to perform. None of the members of the Metabolising Cell, who were all entirely new to the Legislative Theatre methodology, participated in the workshop. They were however properly briefed about the objectives of the intervention, that is, to generate input into the University's regulations for the apprehension of sexual predators among the male lecturers. They were made to understand that their duty was to collate the proposals submitted by the participants and organise them in a way that would easily facilitate the voting process.

During the deliberations which ensued after the presentation, some participants argued that academically weak students often create the setting which encourages sex predators to seek to have sexual engagement with them for the mutual benefit of both parties. The participating audience contended that Susan (the student with the missing result), through her dressing and deportment, portrayed her desire to be propositioned by Dr Makanaki in order to trade sex for marks. Such victim blame theory tends to deny, justify or even defend male sexual aggression against women and postulate that men are only being led on by women.⁶⁷⁰ One of the theories often invoked in the justification of the victim-blame stance is the *just world theory* which

670 Grubb and Turner, "Attribution of Blame in Rape Cases: A Review of the Impact of Rape Myth Acceptance, Gender Role Conformity and Substance Use on Victim Blaming," 445; Christine L. Hackman et al., "Slut-Shaming and Victim Blaming: A Qualitative Investigation of Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Sexual Violence," *Sex Education* 17, no. 6 (2017): 703.

in essence argues that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get.⁶⁷¹ This implies that victims of sexual harassment are justifiably so harassed for failing to take proper precautions thus making themselves an easy target of sexual harassment.⁶⁷² The theory also upholds the perception that sexual harassment happens to women who are 'sluts' or 'flirts'.⁶⁷³ However, this attitudinal disposition has been challenged as it tends to create a dilemma⁶⁷⁴ for women while exonerating the male predators.

Kate's (the protagonist) predicament is further compounded by the Long Essay Coordinator's (Dr Labalaba) complicity. The Coordinator is representative of the University's authority. In a study on why faculty sexual misconduct is prevalent in institutions of higher learning in the USA, Young and Wiley aver that universities and other higher education systems are institutionally designed to support a culture of complicity and complacency with respect to sexual misconduct.⁶⁷⁵ This assertion is pertinent to the Nigerian situation where, as noted earlier, little is known about institutional measures to address the challenge of sexual harassment of female students in Nigerian universities. The importance of these measures is underscored by the fact that without sanctionable laws which expressly categorise sexual harassment as a criminal offence or liable to civil action, checkmating the menace within the Nigerian society might be a difficult task.⁶⁷⁶

As earlier observed, women's responses to sexual harassment fall within a continuum of avoidance, diffusion, negotiation and confrontation. Kate, unable to avoid encounters with Dr Makanaki, her supervisor, and uncertain about the repercussions of making an official report, attempts to diffuse the harassment by pleading with Dr Makanaki to let her off the hook. Dr Makanaki's attempt to draw her into a negotiation to pay in cash fails only due to her dire financial condition. Were Kate to have the financial capability she would most probably have opted to pay her way through.

Cultural requirements of silence often force abused women to suffer and resort to silence and submission as survival skills.⁶⁷⁷ This is exemplified in Kate's mates who describe how they were forced into submission to sexual harassment as the only foresee-

671 Grubb and Turner, "Attribution of Blame in Rape Cases: A Review of the Impact of Rape Myth Acceptance, Gender Role Conformity and Substance Use on Victim Blaming," 444.

672 Hackman et al., "Slut-Shaming and Victim Blaming: A Qualitative Investigation of Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Sexual Violence," 703.

673 Hackman et al., 702.

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675 Sarah L. Young and Kimberly K. Wiley, "Erased: Why Faculty Sexual Misconduct Is Prevalent and How We Can Prevent It," *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 2021, 1.

676 Adetutu D. Aina-Pelemo, M.C. Mehanathan, and Pradeep Kulshrestha, "Sexual Harassment at Workplace: Judicial Impact in Nigeria and India," *Indian Journal of Law and Human Behavior* 4, no. 2 (2018): 209.

677 Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 94.

able means of remaining in good academic standing. As Chireshe and Chireshe note, females already conditioned by the culture of silence tend to regard sexual harassment as inevitable hence the powerlessness they feel in lodging reports as appropriate.⁶⁷⁸ This attests to the need to devise means of ‘unsilencing’⁶⁷⁹ female students, listen to their voices and take into account their everyday experiences and needs. The Legislative Theatre intervention at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria, afforded the female students of the University the occasion to articulate their experiences and be heard. It marked the first time female students of the University came together on the platform of a theatrical intervention to articulate their experiences of sexual harassment and to proffer solutions. Legislative Theatre could therefore be a veritable means of ‘unsilencing’ the silenced especially as it potentially could provide a legal spine to the liberated voices of the oppressed.

3.4.6. The Outcome

As earlier indicated, I commenced the Legislative Theatre project at the Adekunle Ajasin University presuming the existence of regulations against sexual harassment. I presumed that the project would only uncover any lacuna(e) in the extant regulations on sexual harassment in the university and would thereafter explore the means of strengthening those regulations and ensuring that they are implemented. However, I made a critical discovery about the non-existence of any regulation against sexual harassment in the university. Instead of being categorically named as an offence and thereby clearly stating its legal consequences, sexual harassment is assumed (without being so stated) to be subsumed under ‘misconduct’ in the Rules and Regulations of the University. This - overtly or covertly - creates a window of escape for offenders. As Welsh notes, it is necessary to properly delineate sexual harassment within the legal system⁶⁸⁰ in order to ensure that offenders are prosecuted within the ambit of the law.

After the performance was nipped off at the climactic moment when Kate, the protagonist, finds herself faced with the dilemma of choosing between sharing Dr Makanaki’s bed and gratifying him financially, I took over as the Joker in order to launch the forum into the discussion of the issues raised by the performance thus opening up the space for the participatory involvement of the audience. Being neither fully an actor nor fully a member of the audience, I played an intermediary role between the actors and the participating audience in the analytic discussion of pertinent issues. In view of Howe’s cautionary note about the uncritical equation of forum theatre with democracy and democracy with equal access,⁶⁸¹ I was mindful to ensure that all shades of opinion were equally recognised and accommodated, and that the performance

678 Chireshe and Chireshe, 93.

679 Chireshe and Chireshe, 94.

680 Welsh, “Gender and Sexual Harassment,” 175.

681 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 241.

space was made accessible to every participant who was willing to mount the stage. Also, in my capacity as the Joker, I facilitated the democratic process of voting which produced the Referendum adopted by the participants. Details of the Referendum will be discussed shortly.

Using interventions from spect-actors as a springboard, the participants raised for discussion several issues bordering on sexual harassment in the university. For instance, based on one of the interventions, and bearing in mind the need for concrete evidence in the prosecution of allegations of sexual harassment, the participants were of the opinion that any female student being propositioned against her wish could furtively obtain incontrovertible video evidence against the predator by installing the Background Video Recorder (BVR) application on her smartphone. In this regard, participants were of the view that awareness should be created about the existence of the BVR. This indicates that the students acknowledge the role technology could play in ameliorating the problem of sexual harassment in the University.

The session afforded the participants the opportunity to become more acquainted with the regulations of the university. Specifically, the project made the participants aware that sexual harassment escaped specific mention as an infraction in the university regulations. Rather, it is assumed (without being so stated) to be classified as misconduct. The omission, as the Director of the University's Legal Unit claims, 'is not peculiar to the institution'.⁶⁸² This submission by the Director invariably validates Paul Bello's assertion that little is known about institutional measures to combat the ill of sexual harassment of female students in Nigerian universities.⁶⁸³ According to the Director, the omission is also applicable to the Nigerian laws which make no definite pronouncement on sexual harassment.

The Director further stated that the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPPA, 2015) is incapable of addressing the situation due to the fact that the Act is yet to be adopted as law by the Federal Government of Nigeria and would further need to be adopted by the various states in the federation. Only one state in Nigeria (Lagos State), the Director notes, has specific laws against sexual harassment. The education provided during the interaction validates Howe's position that Legislative Theatre sessions are veritable sites for policy analysis and corroborates my position in which I argue that while working with the consciousness of producing legislation (as Fink insists a Legislative Theatre project must necessarily do) the knowledge of the provi-

682 The Director of the Legal Unit of the University provided these information orally during the discussion which followed after the drama presentation.

683 Bello, "Combating Sexual Harassment in Ivory Tower in Nigeria: Mixed Feelings," 174.

sions of the law which Legislative Theatre sessions affords serves as an indispensable incentive for which to embark on Legislative Theatre interventions.

Having sifted through the submissions by the participants and discarding those considered as not justiciable,⁶⁸⁴ members of the Metabolising Cell selected the proposals deemed justiciable which participants then voted on. The prejudgment exhibited by the members of the Metabolising Cell in predetermining what could or could not be voted on exemplifies the limitations of the Legislative Theatre methodology. It speaks to the challenges of electoral democracy in miniature and to the influence which the members of the Metabolising Cell could wield on the outcome of a Legislative Theatre project. Also, it directs attention to the unwillingness of the ruling class or lawmakers to subject the provisions of extant laws to questioning by the citizens as well as to the bigger challenge which the application Legislative Theatre methodology might have to grapple with in the larger society.

The experimental project at the Adekunle Ajasin University underscored some of the potential benefits of the Legislative Theatre methodology as a tool that could be adopted for the creation of a more robust democratic culture. To begin with, within the perimeters of the course (PFA 401) on which the project was hinged, the Legislative Theatre experiment was made accessible to as many female students as were willing to participate. As noted previously in this dissertation, unfettered participation is a basic prerequisite of democracy. True democracy is unthinkable without the active participation of the members of the democratic body. Also, the forum session was conducted in a manner that ensured the participation of everyone who expressed willingness to contribute to the discussion. Notwithstanding the novelty of the method and its unfamiliarity with the participants, as the Joker I endeavoured to facilitate the session in a way that granted fair recognition and space to every participant.

Also, the session prefigured the bridging of the gap between Nigerian policymakers, represented in this instance by the Legal Unit of the University and the Directorate of Women Studies and Development, and the students who, in this case, represent Nigerian citizens who are directly impacted by the policies and laws promulgated by the lawmakers. The experiment demonstrated the potential that on the platform of Legislative Theatre the gulf between lawmakers and citizens could be bridged. By giving voice to the yearnings of the students, it also underscored a fundamental point about popular sovereignty which is the bedrock of democracy. Thus, it symbolised the restoration of the voice and agency of Nigerian citizens. The ambience created through the methodology for the students to engage in debate over the laws to which

684 An instance of submissions that were deemed to be non-justiciable was the proposal by some participants that male lecturers found guilty of sexually harassing female students should be castrated.

they subscribe prefigured the restoration of the Nigerian people's power. In other words, it was indicative of the reformulation of the source and course of power. The Referendum which the participants produced stating their proposed input into the University's regulatory provisions on sexual harassment bespeaks of a shift in the trajectory of power in favour of the students. This reflects and prefigures the recalibration of the source of power which the Nigerian theatre practitioners could achieve through the application of the Legislative Theatre methodology. This, as I argue, could serve as a boost to the democratic culture in Nigeria.

The Referendum adopted at the end of the voting exercise stated the following core demands: sexual harassment should be recognised and distinctively categorised as an infraction on its own terms instead of being subsumed - or assumed to be subsumed - under 'misconduct'; the University should put in place institutional framework for the detection of cases of sexual harassment in order to make it possible for victims to prove their cases beyond any shade of doubt; lecturers found guilty of the offense should be sacked; and any sacked offender should be handed over to the law enforcement agencies for prosecution.

Although not captured in the Referendum the participants expressed the view that the Nigerian government should mandate institutions and organisations to set up rules and regulations that will serve not only as punitive but more crucially as preventive measures against sexual harassment. They also upheld the notion that institutions should be held vicariously liable for the sexual offences of their employees. The employees should be sufficiently (periodically) orientated to understand the gravity (psychological, social and academic) of sexual harassment of female students and the legal implications thereof.

To the extent that the events of the day (20th February, 2020) are at issue, the project enjoyed the support of the University as attested to by the presence of relevant officials representing various arms of the University and the proposal by the Ag. Director of the Women's Studies and Development Centre for a collaboration between the Centre and the project facilitator to ensure that the Referendum is adopted as part of the University's Regulations. However, it could be said that the institutional framework under which the experimental project was carried out could have aided its successful execution. Therefore, it seems circumspect to assume that the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology in the larger society could prove more challenging. It is also crucial to note that effort to realise the inclusion of the Referendum in the University's Regulations has so far been hampered by the instability of the University's academic calendar. Two major factors are notable in this regard; the global lockdown in 2020 occasioned by COVID-19. The lockdown happened apace with an industrial

action by university teachers which led to the shutting down of activities in Nigerian universities until January, 2021. This was followed, about one year later, by another strike by which lasted from February 14, to October 17, 2022. This goes to confirm my position that in the execution of Legislative Theatre interventions, practitioners should be mindful of a possible delay in the realisation of a policy shift.

The intervention, through the participating students, prefigured the interrogation of Nigeria's seemingly absolute democracy. The Legislative Theatre experiment provided empirical evidence about the potential of the methodology for the advancement of democratic values and culture. More specifically the participants, through the Referendum, questioned the seemingly inalterable nature of the University's regulatory provision on sexual harassment. By that token, the participants steered the regulation in favour of not those who *make* the law but those who *live* the law. Also, it demonstrated Derrida's conceptualisation of play as *passé-partout*, that is, an instrument which facilitates the crossing of territorial borders.⁶⁸⁵ In this case, it facilitated the crossing into the territorial borders of lawmaking. This is the fulcrum of my contemplation of Legislative Theatre as play which I expound on in the next section.

3.5. Theorising Legislative Theatre as Play

Earlier in this dissertation I made a connection between the concept of play and the application of myth by Nigerian dramatists. I argued that the application of myth in the passage of veiled, yet pungent, political messages bespeaks of the 'apparent purposelessness' which Brown links with play. I argued that by adopting what ordinarily seems like a mere historical account with no seeming contemporary relevance, and therefore meant apparently only for entertainment purposes, the dramatists drove home critical political messages. However, whereas an interface exists between myth and play in the Nigerian political theatre, such interplay is lacking in the Tfd. This, perhaps, further buttresses my point that Nigerian Tfd could be classified as 'puppet' or 'police' theatre as it is bereft of the ingredients that ruffle the social structure of the society. In this section of the dissertation, I intend to fully develop my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play.

In theorising Legislative Theatre as play, I note first the existence of a myriad of definitions, theories and perspectives on the concept of play.⁶⁸⁶ To begin with, play is regarded as one of the instinctual inclinations of man. Theoretically located within

685 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 63.

686 F. David Lancy, "Play in Species Adaptation," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9 (1980): 471.

aesthetics, play is also often viewed from biological, cultural or social perspectives.⁶⁸⁷ For instance, in a study of the connection of the body, brain and culture, Victor Turner discourses the lateralisation of the cerebral hemispheres and the division of control functions between the left and right hemispheres.⁶⁸⁸ Turner avers that while, among other functions, the left hemisphere controls the production of speech and linear analytic thought and also processes information sequentially, the functions of the right hemisphere include recognising spatial and tonal perception and also recognising patterns including those constituting emotion and other states in the internal milieu. Moving away from the binary distinction of the two hemispheres regarding their functions, Turner avers that specific acts involve complementary shifts between the functions of the hemispheres and claims that play does not fit anywhere in particular.⁶⁸⁹ According to Turner, play, a joker (or wild card) in the neuroanthropological act, is both transient and recalcitrant to localisation, placement or fixation.⁶⁹⁰ Thus from the biological viewpoint Turner underscores the freedom inherent in play.

Departing from the biological underpinning of play, I note in particular two major conceptualisations of the value of play. While some scholars (Johan Huizinga, Bernard Suits and Jean Piaget, for instance) espouse the view that play has no value outside the activity, others (Lev S. Vygotsky and Patrick Bateson among others) argue that play has utility beyond itself. To begin with, Huizinga defines play partly as an activity which stands quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious', connected with no material interest and by which no profit can be gained.⁶⁹¹ Huizinga denotes play as a social construction which, in his view, is present everywhere. While, on the one hand, Huizinga deems as problematic the neat demarcation between 'the serious' and 'the non-serious' in the determination of the features of play, on the other hand, however, his stance tilts in favour of the view that play could rise to heights of beauty and sublimity that leaves seriousness far beneath.⁶⁹² To reiterate, play, in Huizinga's estimation, is a voluntary, disinterested activity engaged in for the sake of the accruing fun and pleasure which yields no practical or material interest.⁶⁹³ In sum, to Huizinga, play is useful only within its own confines.

Huizinga notes various other critical views which have been advanced about the origin and fundamentals of play which include that play is premised on the discharge of superabundant vital energy, the satisfaction of imitative instinct, the need for relaxation,

687 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 2.

688 Victor Turner, "Body, Brain and Culture," *Performing Arts Journal* 10, no. 2 (1986): 26.

689 Turner, 26.

690 Turner, 30.

691 J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 4.

692 Huizinga, 8.

693 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 12.

as wish-fulfilment and as a fiction designed to keep up the feeling of personal value.⁶⁹⁴ Huizinga worries that these views about play are hinged on the assumption that play must serve other purposes which are *not* play and argues that such conceptions of play miss the crucial point of the *fun* inherent in play. In other words, Huizinga's position favours the autotelicity of play.

Bernard Suits also dwells on the autotelic nature of play but argues that although necessary, autotelicity alone is not sufficient in the determination of what qualifies as play. According to Suits, while all play may be categorised as autotelic activity, not all autotelic activities fit into the category of play. Suits proceeds to define play as 'a temporary reallocation to autotelic activities of resources primarily committed to instrumental purposes'.⁶⁹⁵ To Suits, play occurs when there is an inversion in which resources that are otherwise reserved for purposive use are applied in a manner that has a purpose *in* and not *apart* from itself.

Jean Piaget's conceptualisation of the value of play is analogous to those of Huizinga and Suits. With regard to the satisfaction derivable from play Piaget submits that the pleasure of the phenomenon is contained within the activity itself.⁶⁹⁶ In Piaget's view, play is an activity directed at itself which goals are immersed within itself. Gary Izzo also toes the same path when he asserts that the only real motive for which the player engages in play seems to be the sheer enjoyment derivable from it.⁶⁹⁷ In summary, therefore, Huizinga, Suits, Piaget and Izzo, while retaining their individually nuanced conceptualisations on play seem to be unanimous on its autotelicity.

Conversely, other scholars see merit in play beyond the confines of the phenomenon itself. Les S. Vygotsky for instance draws a correlation between play and the development of the individual. In his analysis of the impact of play in the development of the child, Vygotsky suggests that play has emancipative qualities that free a child from situational constraints.⁶⁹⁸ Vygotsky's submission is evidently in relation to children's play. However, the utility of play might not only be associated with children. According to Thomas Henricks, 'in play, people envision and enact the possibilities of living in their societies; and for that reason, play is an important agency of social and cultural change'.⁶⁹⁹ Thus, Henricks's submission clearly suggests that play has utility beyond the (developmental) needs of children.

694 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, 2.

695 Bernard Suits, "Words on Play," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 4, no. 1 (1977): 124.

696 Jean Piaget (1962) 92 cited in Lasse Juel Larsen, "Play and Space - Towards a Formal Definition of Play," *International Journal of Play* 4, no. 2 (2015): 180.

697 Gary Izzo, *The Art of Play: The New Genre of Interactive Theatre* (Portsmouth (N.H): Heinemann, 1997), 8.

698 L.S. Vygotsky (1978) 99 cited in Larsen, "Play and Space - Towards a Formal Definition of Play," 181.

699 Henricks, "Play as Self-Realization: Toward a General Theory of Play," 194.

Also, Bateson states that play is a mechanism for generating novel solutions.⁷⁰⁰ Specifically, Bateson argues in favour of a connection between play, on the one hand, and creativity and innovativeness in humans, on the other hand. To instantiate his claims, Bateson associates the musical genius of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and the scientific discoveries of Alexander Fleming and Richard Feynman with a playful disposition to their musical and scientific enterprise which spurred their creativity and ingenuity.⁷⁰¹ Beyond these individual cases, Bateson further reports a survey involving 1536 persons which, according to him, established a significantly massive correlation between ‘Acting playfully’ and ‘Coming up with new ideas’.⁷⁰² Also, the ability of humans to think about things that are not actually present, to be inventive and to think of new possibilities have all been linked with the innate disposition and capability of humans to play.⁷⁰³

To summarise, while some scholars uphold the autotelic argument about play, viewing it as a concept which has no utility beyond itself, others argue that play is both serious and useful beyond its borders. Thus, in my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play, I take into account the utilitarian qualities which Vygotsky, Henricks and Bateson, among others, have associated with play. I see Legislative Theatre as a *playfully serious* engagement which utility transcends the act itself. My conceptualisation of Legislative Theatre as a *playfully serious* engagement resonates with Peter Gray’s position that play is ‘serious, yet not serious’; trivial, yet profound...real, (yet) it takes place in the fantasy world; ...childish, yet it underlies many of the greatest achievements of adults’.⁷⁰⁴ This seeming ambivalence in Gray’s placement of play reinforces Turner’s argument about the transience and recalcitrance of play to localisation or fixation in the cerebral hemispheric division. Thus, my conceptualisation of Legislative Theatre as play countenances the fact that it moves from being a theatrical performance, a ‘play’ by a class of citizens who are usually not associated with lawmaking, to potentially engendering a binding law. Thus, it exhibits the freedom which Turner associates with play.

Also, in his conceptualisation of play Hans-Georg Gadamer underscores a special relation between play, on the one hand, and what is serious, on the other hand. Drawing inference from Aristotle who avers that we play for the purpose of (bodily) recreation, Gadamer submits that play contains its own, even sacred, seriousness.⁷⁰⁵ Gadamer’s views on the ‘seriousness’ of play is not exteriorised but delimited within the world of play itself. To Gadamer, seriousness in play is necessary to make the play wholly

700 Patrick Bateson, “Play, Playfulness, Creativity and Innovation,” *Animal Behavior and Cognition* 1, no. 2 (2014): 104.

701 Bateson, 108.

702 Bateson, 109.

703 Peter Gray, “What Exactly Is Play, and Why Is It Such a Powerful Vehicle for Learning?,” *Topics Language Disorders* 37, no. 3 (2017): 218.

704 Gray, 217.

705 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Rev (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 102.

play. In other words, Gadamer sees seriousness as a requisite element for play which, howbeit, does not relate to any utility beyond the confines of the activity. To him, play exists where there are no subjects who are behaving 'playfully'.⁷⁰⁶ Thus, Gadamer submits that anyone who engages in, but denies, play of its seriousness is a spoilsport.⁷⁰⁷

Put simply, Gadamer's conception of seriousness in play is in relation to the disposition towards the act. It is a form of seriousness which has no material value outside the act itself. This differs from my conceptualisation of seriousness in play which points to its utility beyond the borders of the play world. My conceptualisation of the seriousness of play is in line with the utilitarian worth of play beyond itself as attested to, as I have noted above, by Vygotsky and Bateson, among others.

To proceed in my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play, I will hence examine some features which, as I argue, are common to both concepts. According to Gray, humans are species that are able to think of things that are not actually present. In his view, therein lies 'the foundation of our inventiveness, our ability to think of new possibilities, to create hypotheses, to reason deductively, or even to think about tomorrow.'⁷⁰⁸ Gray associates these aptitudes to human play. Also, Henricks argues that play is an important agency for social and cultural change being that through play the players envision new possibilities of living in their societies.⁷⁰⁹ Similarly, Legislative Theatre is a process through which citizens exercise their aptitude or capacity for exploring new possibilities. In this regard, new possibilities in the form of new laws (and the review of extant laws) are explored. Also, the creation of new laws or reviews of extant ones represent, in effect, a way of articulating new possibilities for the future.

Gray declares that participation in play is *voluntary*. According to him, no one is obligated to participate in play. In other words, players not only choose *to* play but they also choose *what* and *how* to play.⁷¹⁰ This is relatable to Legislative Theatre in which participation is voluntary. This freedom of choice regarding participation is however not peculiar to Legislative Theatre being, as it is, a common feature of other forms of participatory theatre. With specific reference, in this case, to the Legislative Theatre processes participants exercise their liberty on how to participate as well as the laws to propose. Participants also have the freedom to quit when they so decide. The freedom to quit playing, according to Gray, makes play democratic.⁷¹¹ Gray's argument that the foundation of human inventiveness and ability to think of new possibilities lie in

706 Gadamer, 103.

707 Gadamer, 103.

708 Gray, "What Exactly Is Play, and Why Is It Such a Powerful Vehicle for Learning?," 218.

709 Henricks, "Play as Self-Realization: Toward a General Theory of Play," 194.

710 Gray, "What Exactly Is Play, and Why Is It Such a Powerful Vehicle for Learning?," 220.

711 Gray, 220.

man's ability to play suggests that the ability to invent is not the exclusive preserve of a special class of human beings. Gray's argument could be summarised thus; anyone who can play can invent. All humans can play therefore all humans have the innate capacity to invent. This resonates with Kelly Howe's stance which states that expertise in making input into laws in the Legislative Theatre is not always 'detached'. Rather, it is primarily a consequence of 'embodied' experience.⁷¹² In other words, Howe argues that 'common' people, by reason of their embodied experiences, are well positioned to make needed and relevant input into laws.

Play, according to Bateson, has features that make it especially suitable for finding the best way forward in a world of conflicting demands. Bateson stresses that in deliberately moving away from what might appear to be the 'final resting point',⁷¹³ there is the possibility of arriving at something better. Legislative Theatre is representative of a deliberate move away from *what* and *how* laws are made thereby moving away from what might appear as the 'final resting point' in the provisions of the law. Bateson argues further that play fulfils a crucial probing role which makes possible the escape from false end-points or 'local optima'.⁷¹⁴ Practically speaking, this means that the activities involved in play create room for the discovery of better opportunities than those arrived at without play. I argue in this regard that Legislative Theatre is that form of play used in interrogating 'false end-points'; the false veneer of the inalterability of laws and of the category of persons who can make laws. Bateson's argument on the possibility of arriving at something better through play resonates with Gianpaolo Baiocchi's assertion that Legislative Theatre processes make possible the birthing of 'indisputably better legislation'.⁷¹⁵

Lasse Larsen notes the view among Scandinavian scholars which 'sees play as the dynamo for social development in which understanding of oneself and others is of primary concern'.⁷¹⁶ Part of the fundamental purposes of Legislative Theatre is the use of theatrical performances to facilitate an understanding of how the provisions of some laws (or the absence thereof) impact on the citizens. Thus, through the performances, the conventional makers of laws are potentially made to understand themselves and their actions in relation to how the laws they enact impact on the citizens and therefore made to share the concerns of those for whom they institute the laws. Carlos Menchaca's (Council Member, New York, City) submission after participating in a Legislative Theatre session under the auspices of Theatre of the Oppressed, New York City, attests to this. According to Menchaca, 'Legislative Theatre offers a practical

712 Howe, "Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre," 240.

713 Bateson, "Play, Playfulness, Creativity and Innovation," 104.

714 Bateson, 104.

715 Baiocchi, "Performing Democracy in the Streets: Participatory Budgeting and Legislative Theatre in Brazil," 83.

716 Larsen, "Play and Space - Towards a Formal Definition of Play," 182.

experience for both the constituent participants and the elected or administrative officials present... We need to continue to increase the number of opportunities for elected officials, agency personnel, and City staff members to participate directly in Legislative Theatre'.⁷¹⁷

My theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play tends, however, to push against the boundaries of some of the theories on play. To instantiate, Gray contends that although play often has goals, the goals, according to him, are experienced as part and parcel of the activity, not as the primary reason for the activity.⁷¹⁸ To the extent that play has goals, my conceptualisation agrees with Gray's. Legislative Theatre operates with goals. However, contrary to Gray's position Legislative Theatre, as I argue, is a play which has its goal(s) as its primary reason; the goal of incorporating the citizens into the process of lawmaking and possibly creating more people-oriented laws. The goals serve as the primary reason for which Legislative Theatre processes are embarked upon. Gray further contends that play is the ideal context for practicing new skills or trying out new ways of doing things precisely, as he avers, considering that 'play has no real-world consequence'.⁷¹⁹ Gray's submission is arguably ambivalent in that it begs the question about the need for practicing new skills if no modicum of real-world value whatsoever could be attached to it. I argue that Legislative Theatre as play has tangible real-world value(s) attached to it.

Gray's stance that goals are not the primary reason for engaging in the play activity echoes Scott Eberle's submission that players do not 'aggressively' seek out some other purpose to play. According to Eberle, trying to twist play to an end vitiates it, making it less and less like play. Eberle further contends that it is hard to imagine as play an 'overly purposeful'⁷²⁰ activity. In the case of Legislative Theatre there is an envisaged end, a goal. However, whether the journey to the goal could be termed 'aggressive' or 'overly purposeful' is arguably subjective.

Therefore, Legislative Theatre, as I posit, is a politico-theatrical play with the goal of effectuating tangible real-world outcomes. Being fully a political activist theatre, its transience and recalcitrance to localisation or fixation makes it accommodative of elements of a parliamentary session in which there is robust debate on policy matters, and voting on proposed legislative positions. It is a form of play employed in exploring new opportunities and activating creativity and innovativeness in fashioning new

717 Kelly-Golfman, "Watch, Act, Vote: The Impact of Theatre of the Oppressed NYC Legislative Theatre on New York City Policy and Civic Engagement," 14.

718 Gray, "What Exactly Is Play, and Why Is It Such a Powerful Vehicle for Learning?," 221.

719 Gray, 221.

720 Scott G. Eberle, "The Elements of Play: Toward a Philosophy and Definition of Play," *Journal of Play* 6, no. 2 (2014): 215.

laws. It enables citizens living under a democracy to envision and possibly realise new opportunities of living in societies through the creation of people-oriented laws thus becoming a necessary agency for change in social and democratic culture through more robust democratic citizenship participation.

As a form of play, Legislative Theatre is not discriminatory with respect to the class or calibre of participants it accommodates. Rather it acknowledges and places worth on the input of every participant. As play, Legislative Theatre is a tool for political activism especially suitable for finding the best laws in a world where there are conflicting interests and where lawmaking has been the exclusive preserve of the 'powerful'. Legislative Theatre is a deliberate move away from *what* and *how* laws have usually been made. Legislative Theatre is a type of play which serves as an instrument of political activism aimed at interrogating the false end-points or the seeming inalterability of (some) laws, and of the category of persons empowered to make laws. Legislative Theatre is beneficial for social development. It creates room for empathic identification with the existential realities of those who live under the weight of the law by those who traditionally make the laws. Legislative Theatre seeks to exploit such opportunities to device laws in favour of those usually on the wrong end of the effects of laws. It is a politico-theatrical play which primarily sets out to achieve goals that ultimately have tangible real-world values and consequences for citizens living under a democracy.

A feature of play which facilitates its foray into confines beyond itself is role-playing. Play shares this crucial feature with theatre, hence its relevance to Legislative Theatre. Zimna is deliberate in linking this feature of play to contemporary participatory practices and describes role-playing games as 'collaborative and interactive storytelling' in which viewers, who are turned into active participants, invariably become the 'artists' playmates'.⁷²¹ Zimna asserts that as a metaphor for participatory artistic projects, role-playing games suggest attempts to experience possibilities.⁷²² Thus, I argue that as play Legislative Theatre sessions afford actors and spect-actors - or playmates – the space to collaboratively create and experience other possibilities. A Joker's invitation to a spect-actor to mount the stage and play alongside the actors during a Legislative Theatre session is illustrative of the assertion that 'at play we may even become both spectator and actor',⁷²³ thereby granting both parties the opportunity of creating a new and potentially better reality. Thus, on the platform of Legislative Theatre citizens appropriate the freedom provisioned in/by play to articulate demands which effects go beyond the boundaries of play.

721 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 100–101.

722 Zimna, 101.

723 Eberle, "The Elements of Play: Toward a Philosophy and Definition of Play," 214.

A noteworthy characteristic of most African cultural performances, according to Kennedy Chinyowa, is how it expresses itself *in* and *as* play.⁷²⁴ Chinyowa regards play as an aesthetic that is being applied in the execution of the development initiatives being driven by the African Theatre for Development (TfD).⁷²⁵ As already proposed in this research, given the spread of TfD in Nigeria, I deem the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology by TfD practitioners in Nigeria as both expedient and exigent. I argue in this regard that Legislative Theatre will help to enhance the effect of TfD. Chinyowa's argument about the place of play in African TfD reinforces my proposal on the expediency of the adoption of Legislative Theatre methodology along with the Nigerian TfD praxis.

Play means orientation towards a process, experimenting, (and) stepping into different 'realities'.⁷²⁶ Legislative Theatre as a process tests the possibility of a different approach to lawmaking. By assuming the role of lawmakers, participants step into the reality that lawmaking could, putatively, not be the exclusive preserve, neither should laws reflect the desire, of only the 'powerful'.⁷²⁷ This was exemplified when, during the intervention at Adekunle Ajasin University the participants were requested to momentarily assume the role of lawmakers and propose laws on sexual harassment in the University. Thus, the participants envisioned and experimented with creating a different reality not only for themselves but for the entire population of female students within the University. The different reality created by the participants could be made to endure through statutory ratification.

Although Huizinga belongs to the autotelic school of play, his concept of 'magical circle' is of importance in my conceptualisation of play. According to Huizinga, play operates within a 'magical circle' which is hallowed and within which special rules apply. In effect, the 'magical circle' is a metaphorical space within which hitherto unimagined possibilities are explored. Legislative Theatre represents a form of Huizinga's 'magical circle'. Play possesses the quality of freedom and non-obligation which distinguishes it from the 'natural process' or perceivable reality. To play, therefore, is to step out of 'ordinary' or 'real life' and enter into the 'only pretending' mode of behaviour.⁷²⁸ From this 'only pretending' world possibilities emerge. The participants at the intervention who were drawn into that 'only pretending' world of play emerged from that world with regulatory positions on sexual harassment which have the potential

724 Kennedy C. Chinyowa, "Manifestations of Play as Aesthetic in African Theatre for Development" (Griffith University, 2005), 19.

725 Chinyowa, 20.

726 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 1.

727 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

728 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 12.

to exert influence on the lived experiences of the female students thereby attesting to the connection, as Randolph Feezell asserts, between play and a good human life.⁷²⁹

Also, drawing from Zimna's analogy of play as a frame, Legislative Theatre could be likened to that frame which does not possess any content of its own but changes the meaning of what it frames; it changes the contours of a situation presented in a drama by seeking a resolution of the protagonist's predicament. As instantiated by the intervention at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Legislative Theatre changed the contours of Kate's experience from a helpless, oppressed supervisee to (potentially and metaphorically speaking) someone legally equipped through the Referendum to seek legal sanctions against her oppressor, the supervisor.

As I indicated previously, Legislative Theatre could also be related to Derrida's image of play as *passé-partout*, that is, a passport which permits entry into a territory. Thus, Legislative Theatre, as play, allows participants entry into the terrain of lawmaking; a terrain which is otherwise not accessible to them. This was exemplified when, during the intervention, the participants took on themselves the garb of lawmaking by proposing, voting and adopting the Referendum thus producing, putatively, a legal document against sexual harassment of female students in Adekunle Ajasin University.

Legislative Theatre activates the possibility of seeing something 'as something else'.⁷³⁰ In other words, it envisions another reality. By re-configuring the spring of power (not from the centre but from the periphery), Legislative Theatre challenges the notion or practice which makes lawmaking the exclusive prerogative of the perceived 'powerful'. Conceptualised as play Legislative Theatre links - even as it also departs from - the opposites⁷³¹ of what has been, which is unacceptable, with what could be, which is both desirable and achievable through legislation. With reference to the intervention, Legislative Theatre struck a connection between the opposites of the non-existence of regulatory provisions on sexual harassment and the inclusion of sanctions against sexual harassment of female students in the University's Regulations through the Referendum.

Thus, gaining entrance into the world of play via the platform of Legislative Theatre the participants, having moved beyond the autotelicity of play, emerged from the play world with an instrument putatively potent to alter the narrative of the sexual harassment of female students in the University. The participants in the AAUA Legislative Theatre intervention instantiated Boal's argument that lawmaking should not be the

729 Randolph Feezell, "A Pluralist Conception of Play," in *The Philosophy of Play*, ed. Emily Ryall, Wendy Russell, and Malcolm MacLean (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2014), 29.

730 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 69.

731 Zimna, 63.

exclusive prerogative of only a section of society. By producing a legal position potentially capable of birthing justice for every sexually oppressed female student in the university the participants demonstrated the inherent potential of Legislative Theatre as a political instrument for democratic participation and a means to ensure justice for female students within the university community. The experimental project, as I noted previously, exemplified the bridging of the gap between policymakers and the citizens, and the right of the citizens to interrogate the provisions of the law.

3.6. Conclusion

The core preoccupation of this chapter has been to exemplify the possibility of a type of theatrical enterprise in which citizens fulfil part of their citizenship role through their involvement in the political processes of lawmaking. The chapter has demonstrated a move away from the kinds of theatre discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. From the theatre studied in Chapter 1, in which citizens could only register their protests against detestable laws through the playwrights, to the theatre discussed in Chapter 2 which is a demonstration of what I describe as the loss of the citizens' political agency, the type of theatre under focus in this chapter has shown the possibility of the regaining of political agency by the citizens. In the first part of the chapter, I discussed the possibilities using Augusto Boal's seminal example in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil along with other instances in Canada, Afghanistan and USA, respectively. In the second part of the chapter, I demonstrated the possibilities using my practice-informed research - a Legislative Theatre experiment on sexual harassment at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria.

The types of theatre discoursed in the various chapters make clear the crucial role practitioners play (or could play) in realising the utility of theatre in society. The discourse in Chapter 1 exemplified a theatre in which practitioners apprehended the need to identify with the yearnings of the citizens and to employ their art in fighting the cause of the citizens. The chapter demonstrated this concern with specific reference to laws and policies which were deemed insufferable. In the theatre under focus in Chapter 2, the role of theatre practitioners shifted, as I argue, in favour of the government thus subtly but definitely relegating the voice of the citizens to the background. With the theatre in Chapter 3, the practitioners exemplify not necessarily working *for* but working *with* the citizens in the interest of democratic values.

This chapter has also been a narrative of my personal incursion into the world of Legislative Theatre. In that regard, I argued for the expediency of the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology by Nigerian TfD practitioners bearing in mind the

existing spread of the latter in the Nigerian theatre space. I also argued that Legislative Theatre could serve as a platform for the deepening of democratic culture. I recounted the processes and objectives of my Legislative Theatre intervention at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria as a test case of my hypothesis. That experiment, as I argue, putatively challenged the seeming inalterability of the University's regulatory provisions on sexual harassment. The students who participated in the laboratory project and made proposals on the kind of justice that they want to extract against lecturers who sexually harass female students signified the potential exercise of political agency by Nigerian citizens as could be facilitated by Nigerian theatre practitioners on the platform of Legislative Theatre. The laboratory project illustrated the bridging of the gap between Nigerian citizens and their elected representatives, and prefigured the restoration of political agency to citizens under a democratic Nigeria.

Crucially, I have in this Chapter also articulated my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play. I posit that Legislative Theatre is a politico-theatrical tool which, like Derrida's *passé-partout*, facilitates the navigation of the interstice between play as an autotelic activity which has value *in* and not *apart* from itself, and play as a serious engagement which has real-world impact. I argue that Legislative Theatre as play is crucial as an agent of change in the social, political and democratic culture of a people. I contend that for Legislative Theatre to play these crucial roles, the decisive and deliberate involvement of theatre practitioners is a fundamental necessity.

As this dissertation has established, Nigerian theatre practitioners were actively involved in the political ferment that led to the end of both British colonial rule and military dictatorship in Nigeria. It is therefore expedient that the practitioners should appropriate the Legislative Theatre (a political activist theatre) in collaboration with citizens in exploring ways of enhancing participatory democratic culture through the formation of laws. With this tool, practitioners could work with citizens in discovering the best laws in a world of conflicting interests and where lawmaking has been the exclusive preserve of the 'powerful'. As previously noted, the utility of theatre remains latent until stirred by theatre practitioners.