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Drama and Theatre with Children

International perspectives

Edited by
Charru Sharma



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Vicensia Shule, apart from teaching theatre at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, has immense research experience, particularly in the area of performing arts, gender and children. Her areas of interest include the political economy of theatre and dramaturgy. As an actor and director, she also participates in the production of various plays and films. She is a regular contributor on the trend of theatre practices in Tanzania and Africa and a renowned scriptwriter for stage plays, film, radio and television drama.

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17 Trans-performative theatre

Sharpening skills and knowledge in schools

Vicensia Shule

Introduction

Looking at the way children, especially young girls, are treated in many African societies, it is important to state that boys are in an advantageous position to perform well and acquire power more than girls. The history of countries like Tanzania is marked by the contingencies of oppression and underdevelopment. With such historical tragedies, which continue to put weak economies at the mercy of capitalism, Tanzanians, like other Africans, continue to suffer the consequences of the 'development of underdevelopment'. As Lihamba (2007, p. 2) says:

> Systems define the limits as well as the opportunities that individuals and groups have in exercising the various manifestations of power. It goes without saying that most systems favour ways of exercising power that display inequalities between groups and individuals. One of the sites where the unequal exercise of power is displayed is in gender relations and factors that relate to gender issues.

In such power struggle, women's marginalization is evident in their being deprived of basic needs such as education, which in principle should be provided to all citizens irrespective of their gender. This chapter, therefore, aims at demonstrating the possibilities of using theatre as a transformative and performative process to improve the learning environment for both girls and boys and perhaps solve the historical imbalances in power relations between the sexes. The chapter describes the possibilities of using theatre in various school environments and the resultant benefits of such a revolutionary approach to child education.

Most of the information in this chapter is derived from my personal experience as an artist, especially during the period I worked as an assistant project administrator for theatre projects with children (between 2002 and 2006). The projects were run by the Department of Fine and Performing Arts, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. My experience during these years enables me to give a thorough description of the process and to relate it to the transformative and performative values of theatre.

Tuseme: a trans-performative theatre

The term 'trans-performative' is a combination of two distinct words: trans-formative and performative. The aim of colligating these two words is to provide a framework for describing a theatre process known as *Tuseme*. *Tuseme* is a Kiswahili word meaning 'Let's speak out'. *Tuseme* started in 1996 as a project by Professors Amandina Lihamba and Penina Mlama under the auspices of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at the University of Dar es Salaam. The initiative to come up with *Tuseme* was the result of research which showed girls' performance in secondary schools as lower in comparison to that of boys. The following statement confirms this assertion:

> *Tuseme* was a response to issues of girls in secondary schools. There were clear signs and evidence that the few girls who managed to enter secondary education either dropped out before completion, did not perform as well as the boys or completed with a number of problems which acted as obstacles to their future development. Research had shown that girls dropped out of school due to unwanted pregnancies, pressure to enter into early marriages, sexual harassments within and outside schools and the factor of poverty.
>
> (Lihamba, 2007, p. 10)

Therefore, in general, *Tuseme* aimed at increasing the enrolment rate, developing the retention abilities and improving the performance of girls in secondary schools. As a theatre process, *Tuseme* envisions a society in which girls excel in academics and are self-confident and able to fight for their basic rights, both in their communities and in the country as whole (Nyoni *et al.*, 2004, p. 6). Mlama (2005, p. 15) clearly points out that

> many women display characteristics of disempowerment which include lack of self confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem, inability or reluctance to make decisions, fear to challenge injustices, helplessness in fighting the injustices meted out to them and lack of courage to fight for their rights or to speak out.

Considering women's disadvantaged upbringing and the disempowerment they suffer as a result of this, it becomes important for artists to intervene in their educational development.

The research also showed the role played by colonialism and socially constructed attitudes towards gender and sexuality and how these become a stumbling block to girls' education (Nyoni *et al.*, 2004, p. 5). Women's exclusion from public politics is therefore the result of both colonial and cultural patriarchy:

> Where women had status and exercised some power in the pre-colonial era, colonialism strengthened the disenfranchisement of women by defining

> women's roles and status with the least progressive factors of patriarchy combined with imposed notions of European ideas on women and men's roles. There has always been a close relationship between patriarchal gender ideologies, sexual division of labour and capitalism in Africa that have resulted in the oppression of men and women but especially women and the exclusion in socio-political participation of many social groups.
>
> (Lihamba, 2007, p. 5)

As Lihamba notes, in some societies, for example, the attitude towards son preference, girls' domestic work, pregnancies, sexual taboos, HIV/AIDS, armed conflicts, gender insensitive teachers, non-gender responsive school environment and the rural–urban gap contribute immensely to the poor state of girls' education. Most young girls are not offered an opportunity to enjoy their freedom and right to education (UNESCO, 2003, pp. 115–153). This trend contributes immensely towards the high rate of girls dropping out of school before university, as compared to the lower rate of boys. The socialization structures in society are primarily responsible for the disempowerment that women suffer:

> Women acquire this status of disempowerment very early on in life. From a very early age the socialization processes raise the girl child to be subservient to boys and men, to leave decision making to the boys and men, not to speak out or to challenge them or the status quo. This is reinforced in the home, in school, by religious institutions and by the society at large. By the time the girls have reached teenage, the socialization processes have put them in an inferior place to boys and men and have disempowered them to accept the situation as given.
>
> (Mlama, 2005, p. 15)

Hence, *Tuseme* was used to address these social constraints placed on girls and act as an interlink to bridge the gap between boys and girls.

On the other hand, *Tuseme* was prompted by the positive outcomes of the Children Theatre Project (CTP), which started in 1989, coordinated by the same Professors: Amandina Lihamba and Penina Mlama. CTP, which targeted pupils in primary schools, proved that theatre plays a crucial role in the development of children – mentally, socially, physically and psychologically. 'The experience from that programme [CTP] taught us that in the contemporary Tanzanian society children were not provided with enough opportunities in which art and culture were part of their education and development' (Lihamba, 2007, p. 8). Therefore, *Tuseme* was geared towards addressing socio-cultural practices which hindered girls' performance in secondary schools.

Holistically, *Tuseme*'s mission was to create an environment that motivates the development of a child, especially a girl child, to enable her to acquire freedom of expression, self-confidence, self-esteem and a desire to fight for

her rights (Nyoni *et al.*, 2004, p. 6). *Tuseme* has three major objectives. First, it aims to empower girls to understand and overcome problems that hinder their academic and social development as identified by the girls themselves. Second, *Tuseme* gives girls a voice to express their views about the problems which they face. Third, *Tuseme* focuses on finding ways through which the girls themselves can actively participate in the process of solving the identified problems. As it is widely known:

> a major factor impeding the elimination of gender constraints in education is the lack of empowerment of the girls and women themselves to challenge and effectively fight the forces of their oppression, discrimination and unequal treatment. Brought up in structures, systems, values, attitudes and practices in which they are always the underdogs, women often internalize their inferiority and accept it as given, even if they may be suffering gravely.
>
> (Mlama, 2005, p. 14)

During the first project phase (1996–1998), *Tuseme* was experimented in seven different schools in Tanzania, of which five were girls' only schools and two were co-education schools. The aim was to measure the effectiveness of the process in enabling behaviour changes and attitudes for both male and female students. The experiment used both control and intervention groups in all schools. In Tanzania, the ordinary secondary education system has form one to form four classes. The students included in the experimental group were from form two class.

Because of the success registered during the first phase, seven other schools were added to the project in 1999, of which four were girls' only schools and two were co-education schools. These schools recorded more stories of success. For example, girls became comfortable in taking science subjects, which were termed 'male subjects'. Moreover, they re-appropriated the lost 'talking space' and began to air their views about issues pertaining to their academic success. More schools were being gradually added to the project. Through *Tuseme*, students learnt to be independent, to become critical thinkers and to develop leadership skills. Teachers who were trained under the same project were able to influence change among persons who had negative attitudes towards young girls.

After ten years as a pilot project, *Tuseme* was mainstreamed in the Tanzanian education system in 2005. Thus, it was adopted as the best practice not only to facilitate the Education for All (EFA) goal of 2015 but also to serve as a tool for the attainment of the national *Vision 2025*. *Vision 2025* is a Tanzanian developmental vision which mapped Tanzania as a developed country both socially and economically through assumed processes and objectives. At the time of mainstreaming, 25 schools in all mainland regions in Tanzania were already introduced to *Tuseme*.

Specifically, 23 schools were coordinated by the Department of Fine and Performing Arts of the University of Dar es Salaam, while two schools

(Mgugu and Mafinga) were supervised by the Tanzanian Chapter of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). FAWE is an African organization dedicated to the promotion of girls' education in Africa. FAWE aims at forging intellectual links and networks with scholars, activists, students and policy makers inside and outside Africa, and participating actively in continental and global debates on issues specifically relevant or related to African women.

Apart from the *Tuseme* theatre process, which is the heartbeat of *Tuseme*, the implementation of *Tuseme* is complemented by various activities such as formation of clubs, production of newsletters, *Tuseme* radio/TV, festivals, *Tuseme* school visits by animators (sensitization workshops) and training of *Tuseme* teachers.

Tuseme theatre process

The *Tuseme* process follows a model similar to the Theatre for Development (TfD) process, which takes into account the social and economic situation of the community involved.

> Basing its methodology on experiences gained working in Theatre for Development *Tuseme* had as its objective not only in the enhancement of art and culture education for the girls but also to situate the arts at the centre of the process.
>
> (Lihamba, 2007, p. 10)

Since *Tuseme* operates within the school system, it targets not only students but also the surrounding school community, which includes teachers, workers, school management as well as the neighbours of the school.

The stages of the *Tuseme* process are preliminaries, familiarization, data collection, individual exploration, data analysis, theatre creation, theatre performance, post-performance discussion, action plan and report writing. The process also includes life skills training, which enables children to take action in solving their own problems (Ndomondo *et al.*, 2005, pp. 3–7; Nyoni *et al.*, 2004, pp. 13–17). The following description uses *Tuseme* theatre process conducted in Bwiru Girls Secondary School in Mwanza in 2005, in which I participated as a lead animator (Shule, 2005).

Preliminaries

The information about the intention to carry out the *Tuseme* process was sent to the school a month before. The school community, including the teaching and non-teaching staff, was well informed and was aware of the essence of the process. Bwiru was among schools where *Tuseme* process was already established, so this was more or less a sensitization workshop. This means there were already two trained *Tuseme* teachers and these teachers were the

ones with whom we collaborated to run the process. In total, the process was implemented over four days (7–10 March 2005), at an average of three to five hours a day.

Familiarization

Both animators and the students involved familiarized with the social set-up of the school community. The observation was on the major groups that constitute the school community, such as students and teachers, and also the relationship of these groups with the school's neighbours. The observation also was on the physical set-up of the school, the buildings, the terrain and borders, as well as the services provided by the school to its students, such as library facilities, sports grounds and so on. The latter exercise in particular enabled the animators to determine whether the school's services were sufficient in relation to the number of students the school has. However, the animators' primary focus was on the academic performance of the school in general and on the performance of students in specific subjects, especially those perceived as 'not' for girls subjects. Since the entire process was considered as both artistic and academic, it was important to employ creative dramatics which created a rapport and a conducive working atmosphere. Before moving to the next stage, both animators and students were thoroughly familiar with the school environment as well as the working environment.

Data collection

In order to carry out the data collection exercise, the participants (both students and staff) were divided into small research teams and assigned to interview a certain number of community members about issues related to the goals and objectives of *Tuseme*. The data collected focused on showing both the strengths and the constraints of the existing systems and covering issues of concern that impede the social and academic development of students. The participants submitted their findings in writings.

The findings showed both achievements of *Tuseme* and the existing problems. Some of the achievements included decreased pregnancies and school dropouts, increased number of students who have joined science subjects and also students building confidence and the ability to express themselves. Vibrant *Tuseme* club and study groups were other achievements. The *Tuseme* club established a barbershop and secured funds from the school administration to build a structure which has several shops for renting (Shule, 2005, p. 2).

Individual exploration

At this stage animators used various life skills methods to enable the students to go through a process of self-exploration. The aim was to enable students to

have a chance to conceptualize the collected data and focus on them to see if they were connected in any way to their social and academic well-being. The use of various life skills exercises was intended to offer a set of skills that empowers students to deal with gender-based impediments to their education and self-development in and outside the school environment. Various performative life skills exercises were done, all of which were designed to address basic skills, such as assertiveness, communication, interpersonal relationships, negotiation, decision-making, leadership, reproductive health and sexuality.

These skills promote self-confidence and self-esteem and strengthen interpersonal relationships. They help children to cope with violence, economic pressures and the challenges of nation building. They enable children to deal with sexual and drug abuse. All this was accomplished through the promotion of healthy sexual behaviours and the prevention of negative behaviours, such as substance abuse and sexual promiscuity, which leads to the spread of STIs, HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies.

Data analysis

The aim of data analysis was to get a deeper understanding of the issues at hand, to acquire skills in analysing those issues and to better understand the students' potential in solving some of the problems/issues. In order to avoid the diversion of the *Tuseme* objectives and aims, the process of data analysis followed a systematic way of analysis. First, all the findings (collected in the data collection stage) were listed. Second, the findings were clustered and all unrelated findings were left out. The authenticity of the findings was verified by the participants themselves. The findings were prioritized in order of urgency and classified according to their similarities and differences. The root causes of the problems and possible solutions to the problems were provided by the students.

Table 17.1 summarizes the data analysis stage.

Table 17.1 Data analysis

s/n	*Problem*	*Root cause*	*Solution*
1	Desensitized school neighbourhood community about *Tuseme*	• School timetable complexities	• To put more efforts into educating surrounding communities
2	Poor performance of some students (15 out of 108 students failed their form two national exams)	• Lack of close monitoring of students • Poor understanding of English	• To pass the regulation about group discussion • To put an emphasis on English • To have internal and external weekly and monthly tests

Theatre creation and rehearsals

Before moving to theatre creation, animators discussed with groups the issues (based on data analysis) to be included in their performance. Based on this, they selected forms of art which they were competent and comfortable to use, ranging from *ngoma* (traditional dances), hip hop and drama to poetry and storytelling. During the process of creating these performances, animators helped students who needed assistance in creating their performance.

The students chose *manju* (joker) to lead the discussion after the performance. This is the person whom Augusto Boal refers to as the 'master of ceremony' (Boal, 2000, p. 182). The chosen student was the one who was conversant with the performances' content to handle the discussion. Boal (2000, p. 162) describes the joker's function as magical, omniscient, polymorphous and ubiquitous. In comparison to Theatre for Development, Christopher Odhiambo (2008, p. 186) shows the need to have 'a skilled facilitator [*manju*] to intervene through asking questions, to interrogate social realities and perspective, or to invite other participants to provide their perspectives on the same experience'. All necessary costumes, props and scenery were prepared a day before the performance. Information about the date, time and venue of the performance was sent one day before the performance. The school authorities informed other potential members of the school community to participate in the performance.

Performance

This is the stage Odhiambo (2008, p. 185) refers to as codification (using Paolo Freire's term). According to Odhiambo, after research has been carried out, the collected information has to be processed into the theatre work. Codification means the researched information is presented in the form of a problem to engage participants to discuss and solve the problem (Odhiambo, 2008, p. 30). Regardless of its effective nature, theatre:

> is very sensitive, because it is the stimulus for critical debate in the audience; it is the starting point of involvement of the 'spect-actors'; it is also the agent provocateur of critical consciousness and collective social action in the wider community.
>
> (Odhiambo, 2008, p. 185)

The performance was done in the fourth day of the process in the school dining hall. During the performance, students followed the performance schedule which they created. After the performance, *manju* led the discussion and one person in each group recorded the discussion. The discussion involved all participants and the joker kept on challenging the audience to answer the posed questions in the performances.

Plan of action (PoA)

The recording of the post-performance discussion was done using a table similar to that used during data analysis, but this time apart from showing problems and solutions, the table included columns for (1) discussion (2) person responsible for the execution of a solution, and (3) timeframe for successful implementation (Table 17.2). The action plan exercise was carried out on the same day of the performance and post-performance discussion so as to ensure that all significant information was included. In some cases, the entire school community was involved in the plan of action process, though sometimes it was left to the group members who participated in the data collection. At the end of the plan of action preparation, the school administration endorsed the action plan to be effected.

Report writing

After going through all these stages in the *Tuseme* process, the report was produced. The report included, among others, the methodology, data analysis, post-performance discussion, plan of action and recommendations. Copies of the report were kept by the school administration, *Tuseme* teachers and students in their club.

Other *Tuseme* activities

Tuseme club is a student-based body at the school level and was created with the aim of improving students' academic performance and providing a forum for students to speak out as a way of empowering themselves. Within the *Tuseme* club, students critically discuss their academic and social problems in order to find solutions. In addition, the club organizes artistic activities, such as school performance of songs, dance, drama, poetry and so on for gender sensitization and in preparation for festivals (Ndomondo *et al.*, 2005, p. 9). The specific function of the *Tuseme* club is to link students with teachers and school administrators when it comes to the discussion of issues pertaining to students' welfare.

Tuseme club is also the place where students share experiences with students from other schools and produce materials for the *Tuseme* newsletter and other youth magazines. It is within the *Tuseme* club that students develop leadership qualities and create role models (Ndomondo *et al.*, 2005, p. 7). *Tuseme* radio/TV is another school-based activity. Various schools have developed either *Tuseme* radio or television to communicate with their students and school administration. Although run without advanced technology, students use theatrical presentations on radio or TV to disseminate information about specific subjects. *Tuseme* radio/TV remains one of the easiest activities to be carried out in schools as it uses the least resources.

Table 17.2 Plan of action (PoA)

s/n	*Problem*	*Discussion*	*Responsible person*	*Timeframe*
1	Desensitized school neighbourhood community about *Tuseme*	• It was observed that there are still misconceptions about *Tuseme*. • There was a need to sensitize the school neighbourhood about *Tuseme*. Students agreed to start the sensitization by introducing *Tuseme* to their neighbours, the Bwiru Boys Secondary School.	• School administration • Students	Six months
2	Poor performance of some students (15 out of 108 students failed their form two national exams)	• Some students are not in the study groups. Therefore, there should be a regulation about group discussion to make it mandatory. • Exams are in English. Most of the students find difficulties in understanding the language. *Tuseme* students will put an emphasis on English by speaking it throughout their conversation so as to set as an example to other students in the school. • Students are not examined on regular basis. Therefore, there should be a mechanism to have internal and external weekly and monthly tests so as to increase competition amongst students.	• School administration • Students • Teachers	Continuous

Before the mainstreaming of *Tuseme* in the Tanzanian education system, *Tuseme* festival was another major activity. This was an annual forum that brought together students and teachers from different backgrounds and with varying experiences from all the schools in which *Tuseme* operated to the University of Dar es Salaam. During the festival, each school brought 15 students and two teachers, who met to share experiences, ideas and skills. The festival also attracted parents and children, as well as students from non-*Tuseme* schools, who came to listen, watch and participate in some of the activities. During the festival, theatre performances were core activities. It empowered students to express themselves on problems they face and share their experiences and testimonies with a larger audience (Ndomondo *et al.*, 2005, p. 8).

During the project period (1996–2005), external animators monitored the execution of *Tuseme*. Animators visited schools twice a year to monitor, evaluate and carry out sensitization workshops following the *Tuseme* process. Performances created during these workshops were brought to the annual *Tuseme* festival. The aim of the school visits was to monitor the implementation of the action plan to solve administrative problems as they occurred. During the school visits, animators also collected the terminal examination results of *Tuseme* members.

The results were processed and analysed to determine the academic progress made, as well as the best performers, who would receive awards during the annual *Tuseme* festival. During the period between 1996 and 2005, *Tuseme* trained two teachers from every participating school in theatre and student empowerment skills as these were not part of the teachers' training curricula. The trained *Tuseme* teachers conducted training of trainers (TOT) for *Tuseme* teachers in their respective schools.

Performative reflexivity of *Tuseme*

Performative reflexivity occurs when people identify themselves with the performance and do reflexive actions related to the performance. With such efficacy, those people tend to adopt new ways of living in their environment (Conquergood, 1991, p. 188). Clearly, the focus of *Tuseme* is on transformation or reflexivity through performance. '*Tuseme* gave the girls and boys a voice that countered the culture of silence imposed culturally by society. Through *Tuseme* art and culture education is facilitated and given a gender perspective' (Lihamba, 2007, p. 10). This means that *Tuseme* transforms not only girls but also boys and moves the whole school community to become gender responsive.

After being taken through the *Tuseme* process, many students start to open up and talk. The process provides individual students with life skills, such as decision-making, freedom of expression, assertiveness and leadership skills. Even those who seemed to be shy or uncomfortable to talk in front of their teachers are now in a position to act in front of them instead. Socially, girls

have been empowered through the development of their confidence levels and critical thinking skills. This is because *Tuseme* allows students to express themselves without hindrance. On a broader perspective, *Tuseme* provides students with a critical tool of analysis as it trains them to analyse problems that affect them and to find possible and practical solutions to these problems (Lihamba, 1997, pp. 31–32).

Talking about the role of *Tuseme* clubs, Ross (2010) states the following: 'The *Tuseme* Club is no ordinary school society. Its achievements are unimaginably significant for the pupils and their community.' Taking the example of Senegal, where *Tuseme* and *Tuseme* clubs have been introduced, the achievements are vivid. Consider the following report:

> *Tuseme* club at Soum middle school in the rural community of Djilor [Senegal] identified the burden of domestic chores as one factor affecting girls' academic performance. The club acknowledged that girls were often responsible for performing chores due to the perception that men and boys should not partake in these responsibilities. Consequently, girls at Soum middle school were spending less time on their studies and were suffering academically. The *Tuseme* club prepared an action plan which sensitized the community to this problem and encouraged other family members to share the burden of household chores. Since the plan was put into place in June 2008, several families have reallocated the distribution of responsibilities in the home so that girls have more time for studies. Through the *Tuseme* process, students, teachers, parents and community members are shifting their attitudes toward girls' education. The *Tuseme* model has created numerous success stories in other schools as well.
>
> (Ziegler, 2009)

Academically, *Tuseme* has proved to be a successful model, helping to improve the academic performance of girls by enabling both teachers and students to discuss academic issues in a friendly manner. *Tuseme* has also reduced the problem of drop-outs and pregnancies. The process also provides opportunities for thinking imaginatively and creatively, and as such it stimulates intellectual growth in students. *Tuseme* offers new experiences and modes of self-expression through which students can communicate their emotional and social experiences and ideas to fellow students and to teachers.

Talking about the experience of students after going through the *Tuseme* process, Mlama (in Ross, 2010) notes: 'It was amazing. Girls who normally just sit silently at the back were getting up and telling us exactly what their problems were.' This indicates that the girls and boys were not only empowered by the process but also acquired a sense of direction, which enabled them to direct their energies and potentials towards constructive utilization. *Tuseme* helps girls and boys to grow in body and mind, to express themselves, to concentrate and to build self-confidence (Ndomondo *et al.*, 2005, pp. 9–10).

In the education sector, *Tuseme* has emerged as one of the models to 'develop competence pedagogies' (Barrett, 2001, p. 291). As a result of its outstanding success, *Tuseme* is demanded by teachers who wish to introduce it in their schools. In Tanzania, *Tuseme* has been adopted as one of the best education practices to reduce gender disparities through the promotion of gender equality and equity, particularly in secondary education. 'It is a unique project that provides an arena for girls' self-expression to counteract gender discrimination in childhood and adolescence' (Booth *et al.*, 2001, p. 79). Beyond Tanzania, *Tuseme* has proved to be an effective strategy to build confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem in girls. Girls' ability to analyse difficult situations, take correct decisions and challenge the systems, decisions and situations that impact negatively on their welfare has also been significantly enhanced.

In addition, students participating in *Tuseme* have recorded significant improvement in academic performances. The success stories of *Tuseme* have crossed the borders to many African countries south of the Sahara (Barrett, 2001, p. 290). Ministries of Education in Africa have also adopted this process to empower women and promote gender equality at all levels of education, following the Education for All (EFA) vision for 2015 (Ross, 2010). Apart from Tanzania, other African countries that have used the *Tuseme* model are Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Gambia and Ethiopia (Mlama, 2005, p. 15).

Any challenges?

During the decade of its implementation, *Tuseme* encountered several challenges owing to the historical stereotyping of the arts as a discipline for hooligans and of girls as good for nothing but administrative work. For example, *Tuseme* did not have any reference materials, and animators simply used experiences acquired through TfD practice to implement *Tuseme* in schools. This problem was rectified when the *Tuseme* project, in collaboration with FAWE and other stakeholders, embarked on a serious publication of both training and learning materials for *Tuseme* animators (Mlama, 2005, p. 16).

At the beginning of the *Tuseme* project in 1996, most of the teachers in Tanzania were not trained in the use of methodologies that empower students. *Tuseme* process and its empowerment methodology seemed to contradict other teaching methodologies. The dominance of teaching methods which are teacher centred rather than learner centred is one of the examples. Barrett (2001, p. 291) argues that 'rather than relying on personalization of learning programmes', there is a need to use methods such as *Tuseme* which 'value peer cooperation, use complex extended collaborative group activities and assess groups whilst recognizing the distinct contribution of individuals'.

As noted earlier, in the first years of the implementation of the *Tuseme* project, some schools rejected the project. The other problem was that theatre was not one of the examinable subjects in schools, not until 2008.

Due to which many school administrators saw it as an extra-curricular activity which contributed nothing to the academic progress of students.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown clearly the role that theatre can play in people's lives. *Tuseme* as a programme to empower both young girls and boys has provided a significant transformation. Such evidence shows clearly that most of the gender-related challenges are socially constructed; hence they can be managed once identified.

With economic 'turbulences' in many countries like Tanzania after the Western nations' economic crisis, the implementation of the *Tuseme* programme in school becomes a challenge. Lack of political will and donor dependence syndrome continues to halt the mainstreaming of *Tuseme* in all schools in Tanzania as stipulated in various national development policy guidelines.

However, looking at the successes of the *Tuseme* project, one has to acknowledge that theatre plays a major role in enhancing both the social and the academic lives of children in school. Apart from it being a theatre process, *Tuseme* also signifies the role of theatre in community building, especially in the twenty-first century, when the challenges of neoliberal policies are ever more compounding.

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