

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

**PLAYING AND LEARNING: THE
SIAMESE TWINS OF THE THEATRE**

An Inaugural Lecture

By

Professor Faith Ibarakumo Ken-Aminikpo Fta

*CERT; BA, MA, PGDE, M.Ed., PhD (UPH)
Professor of Theatre and Media Arts in Education
Department of Theatre and Film Studies
Faculty of Humanities
University of Port Harcourt*

INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES

No. 211

30th April, 2026

University of Port Harcourt Printing Press Ltd.
University of Port Harcourt,
Port Harcourt,
Nigeria.
E-mail: uniport.press@uniport.edu.ng

© Professor Faith Ibarakumo Ken-Aminikpo

ISSN: 1119-9849
INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES NO. 211
DELIVERED: 30TH APRIL, 2026

All Rights Reserved

Designed, Printed and Bound By UPPL

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

2.45 pm. Guests are seated

3.00pm. Academic Procession begins

The Procession shall enter the CBN Centre of Excellence auditorium, University Park, and the Congregation shall stand as the Procession enters the hall in the following order:

Academic Officer

Professors

Deans of Faculties/School

Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Provost, College of Health Sciences

Lecturer

University Librarian

Registrar

Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Development

Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic

Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration

Vice Chancellor

After the Vice Chancellor has ascended the dais, the Congregation shall remain standing for the University of Port Harcourt Anthem.

The Congregation shall thereafter resume their seats.

THE VICE CHANCELLOR'S OPENING REMARKS.

The Registrar shall rise, cap, invite the Vice Chancellor to make his opening remarks and introduce the Lecturer.

The Lecturer shall remain standing during the Introduction.

THE INAUGURAL LECTURE

The Lecturer shall step on the rostrum, cap and deliver her Inaugural Lecture. After the lecture, she shall step towards the Vice Chancellor, cap and deliver a copy of the Inaugural Lecture to the Vice Chancellor and resume her seat. The Vice Chancellor shall present the document to the Registrar.

CLOSING

The Registrar shall rise, cap and invite the Vice Chancellor to make his Closing Remarks.

The Vice Chancellor's Closing Remarks.

The Vice Chancellor shall then rise, cap and make his Closing Remarks. The Congregation shall rise for the University of Port Harcourt Anthem and remain standing as the Academic [Honour] Procession retreats in the following order:

Vice Chancellor
Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration
Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic
Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Development
Registrar
University Librarian
Lecturer
Provost, College of Health Sciences
Dean, School of Graduate Studies
Deans of Faculties/School
Professors
Academic Officer

PROTOCOLS

- The Vice-Chancellor
- Previous Vice Chancellors
- Deputy Vice Chancellors [Admin., Acad. and Research Development]
- Previous Deputy Vice-Chancellors
- Members of the Governing Council
- Principal Officers of the University
- Provost, College of Health Sciences
- Dean, School of Graduate Studies
- Deans of Faculties
- Heads of Departments
- Distinguished Professors
- Directors of Institutes and Centres
- Visiting Academics and Colleagues
- Esteemed Administrative/Technical Staff
- Captains of Industry
- Cherished Friends and Guests
- Unique Students of UNIPORT
- Members of the Press
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

DEDICATION

To the memory of Late Francis Robinson Samuel Ugo, my
dear father and pathfinder

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

— 1 Corinthians 15:10 (NKJV)

I begin this acknowledgment with profound gratitude to God Almighty, whose sustaining grace has made this moment possible. Every achievement represented in this inaugural lecture is not solely the product of personal effort or intellectual ability, but a clear testament to His guidance, favour, and abiding presence throughout my academic journey. I offer my special appreciation to the University leadership and governing authorities for granting me the privilege of delivering this inaugural lecture. I sincerely thank the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Owunari Georgewill, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Principal Officers, and the entire Management Team for the honour and opportunity accorded me today.

I gratefully acknowledge the Dean of my Faculty, Professor John Yeseibo and colleagues in the Faculty of Humanities, my Head of Department, Dr. Ovunda Ihunwo, and members of the Inaugural Lecture Series Committee for their invaluable guidance, support, and constructive input that made this lecture possible.

My profound gratitude goes to my academic mentors, all my teachers from primary and secondary school through the

university level for laying the solid academic foundation upon which my career stands. At my secondary school level: Mrs. Abbiada Cyril Ibama, Mrs. Jenewari, Mrs. Dawiriye, Mrs. Joy Agumagu, Mrs. Hulda Ilogu and Prof Kaine Okorosaye-Orubite (nee Kaine George Lawson). I thank you all. I remember with nostalgia my certificate programme journey and the pivotal role played by Professor Henry Leopold Bell-Gam, who met me in tears at the Arts Theatre foyer, he introduced me to the late Ola Rotimi and recommended me for admission. I fondly recall the late Ola Rotimi, who called me “**Auntie,**” a name that instilled maturity and responsibility. I also remember Dr. Stanley Obuh, of blessed memory, who helped shape my interest in Children’s Theatre through our shared teaching engagement.

I am grateful to Professor Emmanuel Emasealu, who, upon becoming Head of Department, appointed me Assistant Director of Uniport Children’s Theatre Programme of the Department of Theatre Arts. That experience strengthened my resolve to specialize in Children’s Theatre and Drama in Education that later informed my PhD research. I also sincerely appreciate Professor Femi Shaka for his mentorship and guidance in strengthening my research capacity. I offer special thanks to my academic mother, Professor Julie Umukoro, whose encouragement, discipline, and constructive pressure ensured that this inaugural lecture became a reality.

I remain deeply grateful to Amatu Braide, of blessed memory, for her role in my creative formation. I also acknowledge Professor Innocent Chinyere Ohiri (Willy-Willy); participating

in his production gave me my first direct contact with theatrical practice and reinforced my desire to study Theatre Arts. I am particularly grateful to Dr (Mrs) Linda Diwerenipre Olice-Kemenanabo my immediate elder sister, whose collaboration with me in sneaking out of the house every night to attend rehearsals has paid off richly in my theatre practice. I fondly recall my directing classes with Professor Benjamin Ejiofor, whose definition of pantomimic dramatization remains unforgettable.

I appreciate Professor John Yeseibo, my teacher and elder brother, for your guidance and brotherly support, and Professor Ilami Krama, whose constant question, “If others have done it, why can’t you?” these words have continually pushed me forward. I am particularly thankful to Professor Victor Uche Ukaegbu, who coined the Siamese-styled title of this inaugural lecture; this gesture means a great deal to me.

To my supervisors from undergraduate to PhD levels whose intellectual guidance and discipline, shaped my scholarly development. Professor H.L. Bell-Gam, Professor Baribo Vikoo, Professor Stephen Iteun (of blessed memory), Professor Hycent Dike and Professor Clara Olele Your investment in my training laid the foundation for this milestone.

I sincerely appreciate other colleagues and staff in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies for their cooperation and professional support: Dr. Edward Imo, Dr. Samuel Dede, Dr. Somiari Ikiroma-Owiye, Dr. Nkem Chidi-Ukagu, Dr. Sunday Edum, Dr. Boyle Adikiba, Dr. Patrick Agha, Dr.

Chizenum George Ohia, Dr. Remigius Anyanwu, Ms Margret Ukwu Mr. Kenneth Njoku. I also thank my research collaborators and academic associates who contributed in diverse ways to my work. I also recognize my colleagues from the sister Department of Film and Multimedia: Professor Friday Nwafor, Prof. Innocent Uwah, Professor Emily Godspresence, Dr. Chioma Ekhaeyheme, Dr. Nkechi Bature Uzor, Dr. Emeka Ofora and Dr. Grace Ogbonnaya.

I thank my undergraduate and postgraduate students and supervisees for their contributions to my academic journey. I particularly appreciate my PhD supervisees, research assistants, and mentees, Dr. Nkem Chidi- Ukagu, Dr. Perfecta Eze-Puls, Kelvin Sampson, Godspower Oko-Jaja, Eniye Montgomery Abraham, Joseph Alali and Ms. Jane Ujong for your dedication to scholarship. I value and celebrate all my students.

I recognize the professional groups and associations to which I belong for providing platforms for growth, exchange, and professional development: University of Port Women Association (UPWA), National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioner (NANTAP), Society of Nigerian Theatre Artist (SONTA), National Association of Educational Media and Technology (NAEMT), Association of Theatre for the Young (ASSITEJ), Educational Theatre Association (EDUTA), African Theatre Association (AfTA), Izon Academic Council (IAC), Tai Academic Council, (TAC) and the 1985 Set of Holy Rosary Girls Secondary School (HRSS), Port Harcourt.

I extend appreciation to the management, teachers, and pupils of the University Demonstration Primary School (UDPS), especially Mrs. Grace Umeogu, and Mrs. Winifred Abbah, for granting me the opportunity to experiment and connect my creative works among the pupils of this school. I will say a big thank you.

I dedicate this paragraph to my spiritual fathers, Ven. Dr. S. T. Nbeta, The Very Rev. Israel Nwachukwu, Rev. Onyebuchi Wichie, Rev. Dr. Oko Ume Okorie, past and present Chaplains of Our Saviour’s Chapel, University of Port Harcourt, and Rev. Dr. S. T. Appah, Chaplain of Niger Delta University—for the spiritual fortification they continually provided. I also acknowledge the Church Management Council, Women’s Christian Fellowship, Men’s Christian Fellowship, the Media Unit, especially Professor Chibuike Eze -Nwafor, and the entire congregation of Our Saviour’s Chapel, University of Port Harcourt. I am thankful for the spiritual and moral support received from my faith leaders and worship community.

With a heart full of gratitude and deep emotion, I pay eternal tribute to my late father, Mr. Francis Robinson Samuel Ugo. His absence is profoundly felt, and words can hardly capture the emotions his memory evokes. Though he desired that I study Law or Mass Communication, I chose the path of Theatre Arts. I only wish he were alive to witness how remarkably his **“lost daughter”** has turned out. I also express my profound appreciation to my mother and stepmothers — Madam Giyamu Korikitie, Chief (Mrs.) Josephine Ugo, and

Mrs. Alalawari Ugo, for their unwavering love, sacrifices, and steadfast support through thick and thin.

To my dear siblings, whom I describe as the footpath on which I walk, I remain profoundly grateful. I also appreciate my extended biological UGO Family and cousins, nieces, and nephews. May God bless you all. I love you.

I respectfully recognize members of my extended family, beginning with His Royal Highness, the Paramount Ruler of my community, and numerous relatives whose prayers and support sustained me. To my in-laws, the Aminikpo family, and members of my marital home - Dr. Barisua Ogbubu, Professor Desmond Nbeta, Professor Peter Medee, Dr. Isreal Lebura, Dr. Barine Dinee, and many others. I say thank you for your goodwill and encouragement.

I also appreciate my friends and well-wishers who stood by me in different seasons of this journey. Lady Data Briggs, Professor Ezaal Okowa, Dr. Flora Amaewhule-Ajoku, Dr. Fanny Anikpo, Dr. Caroline Nnabuo, Dr. Onyinyechi Ochuba, Prof. Chinelo Ojukwu, Barrister Esther Igho-Joe, Mrs. Victoria Don-Baridam, Dr. Margret Egbagiri, Mrs. Stella Nnamdi, and host of others. I appreciate your love, care, encouragement and friendship; this cannot be taken for granted.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to Professor Julie Umukoro, Professor Victor Ukaegbu, Professor Emeritus Benjamin Eheazu, Dr. Ovunda Ihunwo, Dr. Edward Imo, Dr. Salem

Ejeba and Mr. Kenneth Okechi Onyenkwere for assisting with the compilation and proofreading of this lecture.

I sincerely thank my beloved children: Barikpe, Dumlumene, Leyira, and Kue; my daughter-in-law Mrs. Modupe Dum Aminikpo, my son-in-law Engr. Richard Etuatimi, my four grandchildren- Legalu Dum-Aminikpo, Samantha and Samuel Etuatimi and Tambari Dum-Aminikpo. I cherish you all deeply for the stability of my mind, encouragement, and support you provided on the home front. To the Hon. Kenude Elijah Aminikpo, our shared marital journey, came these precious children. Thank you for contributing to a life that is rich, meaningful, and worthy.

Finally, I thank everyone present here today and all who contributed, directly or indirectly, to making this inaugural lecture a reality. Thank you and God bless you all.

Professor Faith Ibarakumo Ken-Aminikpo

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Order of Proceedings	iii
The Inaugural Lecture	iv
Protocol List	v
Dedication	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
List of Plates	xvi
List of Figures	xvii
List of Tables	xviii
Preamble	1
Introduction	5
Playing and Learning: A Symbiotic Relationship	9
i. Historical Trajectory	10
ii. Educational Impact	11
iii. Rehearsal Dynamics in the Playing–Learning Process	13
iv. Performance for Audiences in the Playing–Learning Dynamic	14
Theoretical Foundation Underpinning Playing and Learning	18
The Rehearsal Time Prediction Formula:	24
Forms and Functions of Play	27
Why Theatre in Education (TIE) Approach?	30
i. Origins and Evolution of TIE	31
ii. Key Features of Theatre in Education (TIE)	32
iii. Expressive Resources in TIE: Tools of Engagement	33

iv.	The Theatre as a Learning Ground -----	34
	Theatre in Education (TIE) Methodologies: Practice and Pedagogy -----	36
A.	Children’s Theatre Approach (Playing to Learn) ----	37
i.	Institutional Recognition and National Relevance --	40
ii.	Shaping Generations: The Transformative Impact of the Children’s Theatre -----	41
B.	Creative Drama (Learning Through Playing) -----	42
	Contributions to Knowledge (Inaugural Lecturer’s Professional Journey as a Nexus of Playing and Learning) -----	45
	Conclusion -----	48
	Recommendations -----	50
	Personal Thoughts for the University -----	55
	Photo Gallery of My Professional Activities -----	57
	References -----	59
	Citation -----	66

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1 & 2: UniPort Arts Theatre (The Crab) -----	3
Plate 3: Image of Chang and Eng Bunker, 19th Century. Public domain photograph) -----	4
Plate 4: Ken-Aminikpo (1989) as Ineba in Elechi Amadi’s ‘Pepper Soup’ -----	7
Plate 5: Greek Dionysian Festival -----	10
Plate 6 & 7: Rehearsal in Progress, Nurturing Playing and Learning -----	13
Plates 8 & 9: Iria – 2023 Innovation Week (Faculty of Humanities) -----	14
Plate 10: Star Actor – Oru (Orukoro, 1991) At Sheffield, England -----	15
Plate 11: Theatre Word Puzzle Game (Ken- Aminikpo, 2017) -----	19
Plates 12, 13 & 14: The Actor in Storytelling Mode -----	28
Plates 15 &16: Children in Their Creative Play -----	30
Plate 17: Play Workshop at Praque, Czech Republic -----	36
Plates 18 & 19: Children in Dramatic Dance -----	39
Plate 20: Gallery of Productions of UCTP -----	40

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig 1: Tree Chart -----	12
Fig. 2: Graphical Illustrations of the Siamese Metaphor of Playing and Learning of the Theatre -----	17
Fig 3: Pie Chart Showing Rehearsal Time Spent In Hours and Days for Children of Ages 8 -11years -----	26
Fig 4: Story Mapping Technique -----	43

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: General potential and Learning outcomes in Theatre Practice ----- 21

Table 2: Rehearsal Time Spent on Mastery of Multiple Skill Competencies by Children (Ages 8–11) in the Children’s Theatre Programme ----- 24

PREAMBLE

I am honoured to present this inaugural lecture, which is particularly dear to my heart: “*Playing and Learning: The Siamese Twins of the Theatre.*” Today, I invite us to reconsider something we often separate: the act of playing and the act of learning. Are they truly separate?

Join me on this journey as we explore the harmonious relationship between two essential dimensions of theatre: **playing and learning**. A comprehensive approach to learning is indispensable in any academic environment. Among the diverse models employed within educational systems, the integration of play into learning stands out as a foundational component of human development. Over time, the philosophies and methodologies guiding this integration have undergone significant evolution. The synergy between play and learning remains central across various educational paradigms. Although play is often associated with childhood and recreation, it plays a pivotal role in fostering cognitive, social, and emotional growth. This fusion creates a learner-centered educational experience rooted in creativity and active engagement.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, for two decades of my academic journey, I have focused on Costume and Makeup Arts and Theatre in Education, especially as it relates to children through drama, theatre, and media. Echoing Wordsworth’s sentiment that “the child is father of the man” (1802). This lecture is therefore, an invitation to rethink pedagogy, reimagine

performance, and rediscover theatre as a powerful tool for holistic education. The Theatre has been my lifelong classroom, a space where knowledge is not only transmitted but lived, tested, and embodied. I stood within the theatre as a learner from the Certificate Programme of this University, absorbing its disciplines through observation, participation, and practice. I eventually graduated with a Distinction grade in STAGECRAFT. And was retained to work as a Resident Artiste in Costume and Makeup (at the Junior Staff- level), later became an Assistant Producer, to Producer and converted into Academics, rising through the ranks from Assistant Lecturer to a Professor.

My journey affirms that learning must precede teaching. I learned by doing, by failing, by rehearsing, and by reflecting. Practice came before theory, for it was through performance, play, and creative experimentation that theoretical understanding gradually found meaning and structure to me. Play, therefore, became my first pedagogy. Through play, I discovered that learning is deepest when it is joyful, participatory, and imaginative. This philosophy has continued to shape my scholarship, my teaching, and my commitment to theatre as a powerful educational force. I believe that play is a vital educational instrument. Used creatively, it offers the potential to address both the challenges of our educational systems and broader societal concerns. Play breathes life into learning, and learning gives me the purpose to play by forming what I describe as Siamese twins, united in function and meaning. This conviction has guided my research and professional practice, affirming my identity as a theatre

practitioner who deeply values the inherent power of play as a transformative mechanism for learning.

Theatre has long served as a creative and interdisciplinary platform - embracing drama, dance, media, music, literature, and aesthetics. In its purest form, Theatre is both a playground and a classroom. A living space where imagination dances with discipline and joy intertwines with discovery, where learning unfolds through these playful and imaginative interactions. If learning is the process of transforming closed minds into open ones, then play represents a sequence of enjoyable and engaging activities that stimulate this transformation.



Plate 1 & 2: UniPort Arts Theatre (The Crab)

By definition, theatre is the imitation of an action or a re-enactment. In both playing and learning, the essential elements include action, activity, movement, physical expression, and the use of various materials to achieve outcomes such as entertainment, mobilization, and instruction. The human instinct to play is widely recognized as a cornerstone of theatre - just as theatre, in turn, benefits profoundly from this instinct. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, this inaugural lecture presents an innovative methodology that integrates theatrical techniques

into pedagogical practice, viewed through the framework of Theatre in Education (TIE). It advances the argument that playing and learning within the theatrical context are not merely complementary processes but fundamentally inseparable, interdependent, and mutually sustaining, akin to Siamese twins. To illuminate this concept of inseparability, the lecture briefly draws on the historical account of Chang and Eng Bunker (1811–1874), the first recorded conjoined twins. Born in Siam (present-day Thailand), their extraordinary condition and remarkable life journey gave rise to the term “**Siamese twins,**” offering a **powerful metaphor** for theatre itself, an art form in which play and learning breathe as one, move as one, and find meaning only in their togetherness.



Plate 3: Chang and Eng Bunker, 1811-1874 (First Recorded Conjoined Twins)

Similarly, theatre endures as the living symbolic pair of this conjoined essence, permanently bound by the sacred

relationship between **playing and leaning**. Together, they exist as a dynamic and indivisible union. Each is incomplete without the other, reminding us that the stage is not only a place to perform but to grow, to question, and to transform.

Introduction

This topic, *Playing and Learning: The Siamese Twins of the Theatre* is not merely a conceptual discussion for me; it is a lived reality - one that has shaped my academic journey, professional practice, and enduring commitment to the sustainability of theatre as a vital tool for personal, cultural, and societal transformation. Drawing on my professional engagements, I will demonstrate how playing and learning are intrinsically linked in the theatre and how this connection has informed my contributions to the evolving field - both in theory and in practice.

Over the years, Theatre in Education (TIE) has moved from the margins to a more prominent role within educational systems. We are at a critical juncture - transitioning from the conventional chalk-and-talk model to more innovative, interactive pedagogies. Increasing attention is being paid to the integration of artistic forms such as drama, literature, music, and other expressions. Yet, it is crucial to return to the fundamental essence that underpins these forms: play.

A playful approach not only revitalizes the creative process but also leads to unexpected discoveries, groundbreaking performances, and innovative theatrical experiences.

Throughout this lecture, I invite you to delve deeper into the influence of creative drama and to recognize that play is far from being a mere childish pastime. Rather, it is a powerful vehicle for education, transformation, and personal growth. So, I urge you to shed your inhibitions, embrace your inner playfulness, and journey with me as we explore the Siamese twins of the theatre: play and learning.

As human beings, we are all players. To borrow the words of William Shakespeare:

“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women are merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts...”
- *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene VII (1623)

This is a well-known metaphor that highlights the theatricality of life itself, where people assume various roles and pass through different stages of experience. The innate human instinct to play is not only acknowledged as a source of joy but also as a fundamental wellspring of theatre. The theatre is a crucible of human experience, a dynamic space in which we explore and portray a wide range of characters, such as:

- Authority figures like a police officer,
- Complex roles like a wicked mother-in-law or an ambitious salesperson,
- Morally challenging portrayals, such as a sex worker or a criminal,
 - And respected professionals, such as a lawyer or a doctor.

In the theatre, play becomes the language through which stories breathe, characters evolve, and audiences connect; an arena of spectacle, elaborate costumes, and intricate storylines - but it is far more than that; learning becomes the silent partner, shaping skills, deepening insight, and refining artistry.



Plate 4: *Ken-Aminikpo (1989) as Ineba in Elechi Amadi's 'Pepper Soup'*

Consider the actor who convincingly portrays a criminal on stage yet lives an honourable life off-stage. The stage allows this actor to navigate human experience through simulated realities, delivering valuable insights into life's choices and consequences.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, the ability to cry, laugh, or even die on stage is not a task for the untrained. These are acquired skills. As a theatre practitioner and educator, I have had the privilege of engaging deeply with the complexities of this art form, where playing and learning intersect constantly. My journey has taken me through diverse roles - actor, director,

playwright, and educator. Each of these has affirmed a single truth: playing and learning are the lifeblood of the theatre.

I recall a rehearsal of Henry Bell-Gam's *Orukoro*. In a particular scene, I was to portray a character who dies on stage. Bell-Gam, addressing the dead character, said with humorous gravity, "*Faith, stand up and come and die on this part of the stage.*" And indeed, I did. It was in that moment that I realized: dying convincingly on stage is a cherished skill - one that must be learned, refined, and embodied.

Theatre artists do not engage audiences simply for leisure. We aim to stir emotions, question beliefs, and provoke thoughtful conversations that challenge and expand perspectives. Traditionally, play and learning have been viewed as separate domains - one belonging to the innocence of childhood, the other to the formal rigour of academia. But when we reflect on childhood, we remember the joy of imaginative play: building forts out of blankets and chairs, assuming roles, solving problems creatively. This is theatre in its purest form.

Exercise I:

*"Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November;
All the rest have thirty-one,
Except February alone..."*

This nursery rhyme is more than a memory device. It demonstrates how rhythm, repetition, and *play* can facilitate learning. The same applies to other content areas.

Exercise 2: *Nile, Niger, Senegal, Congo, Orange, Limpopo, and Zambezi*

Through music, children can memorize major African rivers - revealing the pedagogical power of creative play.

Actors do not “play” merely to entertain. We use play to **evoke, challenge, and transform**. Play reaches the heart and mind simultaneously. It fosters imagination, social bonding, and a sense of empowerment - skills that are essential for future success. In this context, play within the theatre goes beyond amusement - it becomes a serious act of meaning-making. **WE PLAY IN THE THEATRE, BUT WE DO NOT PLAY WITH THE THEATRE**. Conversely, learning is the ongoing process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and understanding. In the theatre, learning is iterative. We learn from our experiences, from each other, and from our audiences. It is the bedrock upon which we build our craft, our creativity, and our professionalism. Theatre is never static. It is a living laboratory of expression where play and learning interact in every rehearsal, every performance, and every shared moment between actor and audience.

Playing And Learning: A Symbiotic Relationship

The subject matter of this lecture is the inherent connection between playing and learning. As a professor of Theatre/Drama and Media Arts in Education, I wish to critically examine the complex interplay between these two vital concepts and their contemporary expressions in theatre and society at large. To illuminate the nature of this relationship, I have explored it through four interconnected dimensions:

i. Historical Trajectory

From a historical perspective, the symbiotic relationship between play and learning can be traced to ancient civilizations. In Ancient Greece, the origins of drama lie in ritual festivals held in honour of Dionysus.



Plate 5: *Greek Dionysian Festival*

The tragedies and comedies performed during these festivals were not created for mere entertainment. They functioned as moral, political, and philosophical explorations, offering spectators the opportunity to reflect on the human condition.

During the Renaissance, theatre became even more explicitly pedagogical. Through performance, playwrights addressed societal issues, interrogated power, and articulated the complexities of love, betrayal, ambition, and justice. The works of William Shakespeare, for example, offer enduring lessons on governance, ethics, and emotional intelligence - lessons still relevant today.

In many African societies, traditional forms such as storytelling, dance, drumming, and masquerades are also

inherently theatrical. These performances serve dual purposes: to entertain and to transmit cultural values, histories, and communal ethics across generations. I produced and sustained traditional forms through *Duugba Series* (Ken-Aminikpo, 2016), a storytelling session that revives traditional folktales, chants, and proverbs, fostering cultural awareness among children. Also, I produced a children's cartoon titled *The Dog's Trick*, (Ken-Aminikpo, 2017), modeled on traditional African theatre forms. Another notable example of traditional oral folktales was clearly employed in my play *Child's Worth* (Ken-Aminikpo, 2017), inspired by stories told me by my mother. The play explores the metaphor of motherhood through a moral dilemma faced by two women: to choose children and risk "insanity," or remain childless and be "sane." This reflective metaphor explores the societal pressures of parenting, and the sacrifices women endure.

ii. Educational Impact

The artistry of theatre is incomplete without appreciating its educational value - whether in ancient rituals, classical amphitheatres, or today's classrooms. Conversely, education thrives when infused with creativity and performative expression, transforming abstract or "dry" pedagogy into a dynamic organization

For instance, during my teaching practice at the University Demonstration Secondary School (UDSS) in 1999, I taught Poetry, a component of English Literature. I incorporated visual aids such as stream charts, web charts, and tree charts to support comprehension and engagement. This innovative

approach helped simplify abstract concepts, making poetry more accessible and enjoyable for the students.

Graphical Presentation of Poetry (an aspect of Literature in English)

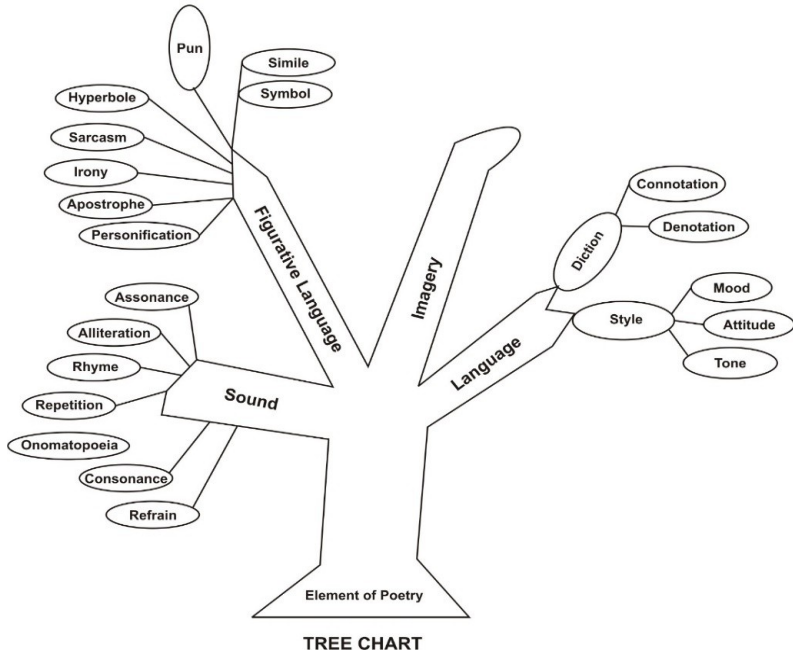


Fig 1: Tree Chart (Source: Ken-Aminikpo, 2004)

This approach was inspired by my biology teacher, who used models to teach the heart’s anatomy, demonstrating parts such as the right and left atria, ventricles, septum, valves, and blood vessels. The use of such models made the complex material comprehensible and engaging. Science teachers, I wonder, do you still maintain this valuable tradition of using models?

Again, I explored the cognitive impact of children’s theatre in one of my plays titled *Perfect Mix* (2016), which advocates for

intellectual development through performance. Together, they advance the dual function of theatre: to entertain and to enlighten. Theatre gives expression to lived realities and imagined possibilities, while education gleans the lessons embedded within those expressions.

iii. Rehearsal Dynamics in the Playing–Learning Process

Rehearsals are structured learning environments that naturally include moments of play. In these moments, actors experiment with character choices, vocal delivery, physicality, and emotional tone - exploring various interpretations.



Plate 6 & 7: *Rehearsal in Progress, Nurturing Playing and Learning*

The scene above captures a rehearsal gathering where the dynamics of playing-learning in 2024, I supervised the grassroots theatre production *The Flood's Fury* under the KoMUNiti Project of the THESPIAN Family and Productions in collaboration with the University of Port Harcourt Theatre. This production highlighted the devastating effects of oil spillage in the Niger Delta. The actors examined the challenges faced by the region, through reenactments drawn from the community's nonchalant attitude to their environment and particularly the consequences of improper waste management. These issues were not only represented but experimented with

throughout the rehearsal process by completing a full cycle of creativity, discovery, and reflection.

In this sense, rehearsal sessions function as a laboratory, where ideas, emotions, and social realities unfold in real time. The most fruitful rehearsals are those that successfully sustain this interaction between them, allowing participants to internalize knowledge while engaging with the world around them.

iv. Performance for Audiences in the Playing-Learning Dynamic

Performance before an audience represents the culmination of the playing-learning dynamics. It is the moment where structure meets freedom, discipline meets imagination, and groundwork meets presence.

Performing Before an Audience Audiences Watching the Performance



Plates 8 & 9: *Iria – 2023 Innovation Week (Faculty of Humanities)*

The vitality I brought to the stage during this performance was not rehearsed in isolation; it was shaped in real-time by the audience’s presence, cracking the performance into a shared act of creation. For the audience, it becomes a space for both

education and entertainment. For the performer, it is a moment of communion, creative liberation, and reflection.

In theatre practice, my contributions have remained both relevant and impactful even outside the shores of this country. In 1991, I played the Star Actress in Bell-Gam's **Orokuro**, representing Nigeria at the World University Cultural Games in Sheffield, England.

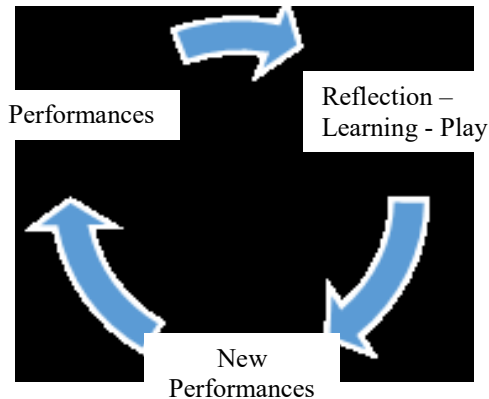


Plate 10: *Star Actor – Oru (Orukoro, 1991) At Sheffield, England*

Theatre is unique among the arts in that it requires an audience to be complete. The audience is not a passive observer, but a co-creator of meaning. They interpret, question, and respond - finding personal relevance, cultural insights, or moral guidance. Though the audience may not witness the performer's learning journey, they experience its fruit in the clarity of gesture, the precision of line delivery, and the emotional resonance of each moment. Every cue, pause, and movement results from choices made during an intensive learning process.

Moreover, the cycle of learning does not end with curtain call. Audience reactions - whether in the form of applause, critique,

or even silence - become new sources of learning for the artist. They provoke reflection, adaptation, and evolution. This continuous feedback loop enriches future performances, deepening the artist's understanding and creative reach.



These activities and practices, demonstrated through theatrical experience, affirm that theatre is a school of life. This inseparable bond recognizes the fact that the act of play is not mere entertainment, but a profound pathway to understanding, empathy, and creative growth. It has consistently illustrated the complex and enduring connection between play and learning.

What, then, is the unifying force that binds playing and learning?



Fig. 2: *Graphical Illustrations of Siamese Twins Metaphor of Playing and Learning of the Theatre*

From the core of the image above, within the heart of the conjoined twins- **lies Theatre: the space where playing and learning converges.** These two elements are interconnected, interdependent and inseparable, forming a symbiotic relationship that fuels imagination, fosters knowledge, and transforms both artist and audience.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, sir, just as Siamese twins share vital organs and experiences, so do playing and learning in theatre draw from a shared source of imagination, creativity, and exploration. Play allows performers and audiences alike to transcend the boundaries of the everyday, offering learning within a safe, imaginative, and transformative space. I therefore argue that it is at the intersection of play and learning that the true magic of theatre happens. **When we play, we learn; when we learn, we play.** This, I submit, is the inseparable and symbiotic bond that defines the essence of theatre.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION UNPINNING PLAYING AND LEARNING

Play, as a central component of learning, has been extensively examined by influential theorists. Jean Piaget, a pioneer of developmental psychology, emphasizes the critical role of play in cognitive development. According to Piaget, play enables children to experiment with their environment, develop problem-solving skills, and construct knowledge through active engagement (Piaget 1962). Drawing on Courtney's concept of 'creative imaginative power' (cited in Freeman, 2000), I created children's educational drama that addresses the challenges faced by post-independence Nigerian children. The play is titled *Thinking Cap* (2014). This drama, inspired by Nigeria's political realities, aimed to foster insight and reshape perceptions while positively impacting participants' character development through experiential learning.

Creative drama, as a distinctive educational method, naturally fosters learning goals through playful engagement. Similarly, Lev Vygotsky, a foremost figure in sociocultural theory, views play as a vital mechanism for learning and development. He argues that play allows children to explore different roles and scenarios, thereby enhancing their cognitive and social skills. Moreover, Vygotsky introduced the concept of the *zone of proximal development*, wherein children perform tasks beyond their current capabilities with guidance from peers or adults (Vygotsky 1978). These theories establish an intrinsic connection between play and learning, suggesting that play is

not merely recreational but a crucial driver of intellectual growth.

Further extending my work in creative drama education, I developed a children's board game called **THEATRE WORD Puzzle Game (2017)** - an innovative instructional board game designed to improve spelling, vocabulary, and subject-specific lexicons. This game encourages leisurely learning at school and home, blending education with play in a uniquely effective way.

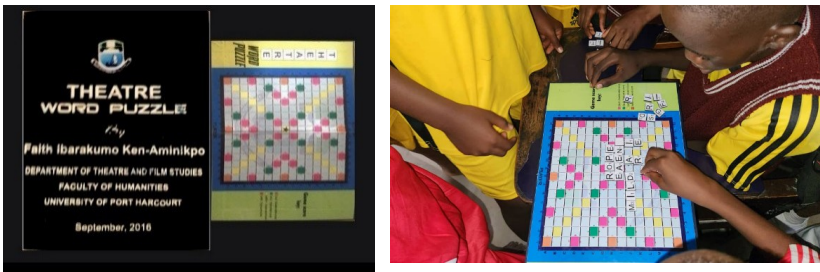


Plate 11: *Theatre Word Puzzle Game (Ken- Aminikpo, 2017)*

The notion of play has also been thoroughly explored within the context of theatre education, particularly through Viola Spolin's theatre techniques. Spolin highlights that play not only develops performance skills but also fosters critical thinking and creativity, which are essential for intellectual development. Spolin (1986) identifies three key aspects of play:

1. Participation (involving fun and games)
2. Problem-solving (enhancing cognitive and physical perception)

3. Catalytic action (providing opportunities for intuitive engagement, spontaneity, and creativity) (cited in Lloyd et al. 30).

Theatre embodies this spirit of playful educational involvement. Actors, as contemporary storytellers, engage in a cyclical process of play characterized by vocal experimentation, characterization, and imaginative exploration within a structured framework. The ongoing process of *playing and learning* has been central to my professional development in theatre. My involvement in these vigorous activities with children and their productions has revealed the profound impact theatre can have on holistic growth. This is to recognize that children often exhibit a wide range of competencies across the various roles involved in theatrical productions. As such, producers or directors may face challenges in sourcing talents capable of fulfilling the multifaceted demands of singing, dancing, stage movement, choreography, recitation, and acting.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, in addressing these challenges and unlocking the full potential of each child, I adopted Howard Gardner's (1993) theory of Multiple Intelligences. I engaged five of the eight intelligences identified by Gardner, applying them to problem-solving and culturally rich theatre creation. This approach emphasizes the inherent diversity of talents within theatrical spaces. According to Gardner, intelligence is not a single, fixed attribute but a pluralistic concept. The key question should not be "*Is this child intelligent?*" but rather "*In what ways is this child intelligent?*" In essence, no child is a dunce. Each individual child possess a distinct cognitive

profile that shapes how they learn, interact, and express themselves. This understanding calls for a personalized approach to both education and creative engagement.

The table below illustrates the individual differences in learning outcomes among children, based on Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences framework.

Table 1: General potential and Their Learning Embedded in Theatre Practice

Children who are strong in:	Think	Love	What does this skill area demand in Theatre?	An Actor Should Be Able To:
Linguistic Skills	In words	Reading, telling stories, playing with words	Use of language, vocabulary, and script-reading	Interpret words clearly, use good diction, project voice, and deliver lines with proper elocution.
Logical–Mathematical Skills	By reasoning	Experimenting, questioning, solving puzzles	Analytical manipulation of roles and situations	Explore and perform roles convincingly, e.g., demonstrate sarcasm, pseudo-crying, and logical interpretation of dialogue.
Bodily–Kinesthetic Skills	Through somatic sensations	Dancing, running, jumping, gesturing, miming	Physical flexibility and stage movement	Navigate stage geography, perform actions like dancing, jumping, falling, and embody choreography or physical storytelling.

Musical Skills	In rhythms and melodies	Singing, humming, clapping, listening to music	Understanding of rhythm and melody in performance	Sing and express emotions musically, adapt tone to suit mood (e.g., sadness/happiness) in pantomime and musical drama.
Interpersonal Skills	By interacting with others	Leading, organizing, cooperating, influencing	Ability to relate and react to others in a performance setting	Sense and respond to co-actors' cues, dialogue, emotions, and character dynamics within a scene.
Intrapersonal Skills	Deeply within themselves	Reflecting, setting goals, meditating	Internalization of roles and emotional depth	Spend time in self-reflection to build character interpretation, using tools like mime, soliloquy, asides, and emotional nuance.

(Source: Ken-Aminikpo, 2011)

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, I incorporated these learning abilities into our theatre approach by language, scripts, vocabulary development, and active reading. Particularly, intrapersonal skills are crucial in drama, as they relate to emotions, character interpretation, and how students respond individually to roles.

In 2011, I conducted a clinical investigation with 200 children participating in the University of Port Harcourt Children's Theatre Programme (UCTP). The goal was to examine how time and attention during rehearsals affected theatre-generated learning and mastery. This study produced a breakthrough: The Rehearsal Time Prediction Model, which was a key part of my PhD research on children's theatre performance skills. This

playful process deepens participants' understanding of the diverse human experience.

The model stems from observing a child's aptitude and interest levels: whether they could master a role within a rehearsal period or lose engagement. A second factor, motivation, was pivotal. I observed how easily children were distracted, provoked, or persuaded, then rated them accordingly. To structure this analysis, I employed Keller's ARCS motivational variables:

- Attention
- Relevance
- Confidence
- Satisfaction

These variables were used to measure the effectiveness of motivational strategies across different age groups.

The Rehearsal Time Prediction Formula:

**Rehearsal Time = Constant + Level of Motivation (X₁) +
Mastery (X₂)**

This formula asserts that rehearsal time directly impacts the clarity and perfection of a performance.

Table 2: Rehearsal Time Spent on Mastery of Multiple Skill Competencies by Children (Ages 8–11) in the Children’s Theatre Programme

Child ID	Rehearsal Hours	Days Spent
001	155.00	6
002	165.00	7
003	152.62	6
004	167.38	7
005	156.00	7
006	164.00	7
007	153.00	6
008	167.00	7
009	165.00	7
010	155.00	6
Total	1,600.00	67

(Source: Ken- Aminikpo, 2011)

From the data presented in Table 2, it is evident that even within the same age group (8–11 years), children demonstrate varying rehearsal time requirements to master multiple theatrical competencies. This observation reinforces Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Theory, which posits that individuals learn and process information differently based on their cognitive strengths.

For example:

- Child 001 required 155 hours, equating to 6 days of rehearsal.
- Child 002, within the same age bracket, needed 165 hours (recorded as 7 days) to achieve mastery.

- Other children displayed similar variability, with rehearsal time ranging between approximately 152.62 and 167.38 hours.

Despite uniform age, **Cognitive diversity** influenced how long each child required to internalize roles involving skills such as acting, singing, stage movement, and character interpretation.

The cumulative rehearsal time for the 10 children in this group amounted to **1,600 hours**, translating to **67 days** of rehearsal across participants. Based on this study, the **estimated rehearsal time required for mastery** of multiple theatrical skills for children aged 8–11 **ranged from 3 to 13 days**, depending on individual learning curves and motivational factors.

This experiment validates the **Rehearsal Time Prediction Model** and underscores needed for **differentiated, learner-centered approaches** in children's theatre training.

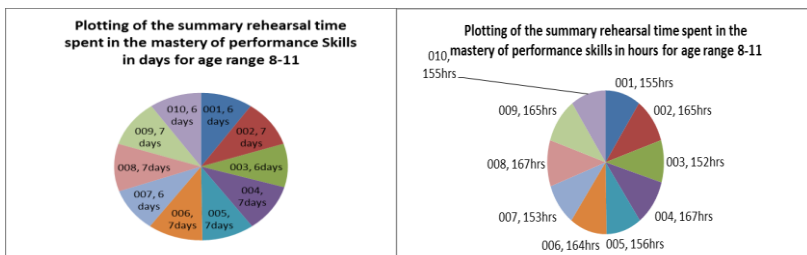


Fig 3: Pie Chart Showing Rehearsal Time spent in Hours and Days for Children of Ages 8 -11years

A producer or artistic director ideally seeks actors who exhibit versatility across all skill areas. For instance, the legendary Michael Jackson (of blessed memory) exemplified this through his mastery as a dancer, singer, choreographer, and actor, showcasing multidimensional performance capabilities.

Bringing it closer home, the Nigerian theatre has nurtured notable Nollywood stars such as Hilda Dokubo, Monalisa Chinda, Julius Agwu, Charles Inojie, Francis Duru, Ejike Asiegbu, Basorge Tariah Jnr., Yibo Koko, among others, who have demonstrated exceptional versatility in their craft. Their foundational training in theatre equipped them with the dynamic skills necessary to adapt and excel in various performance domains.

Play is fundamental to the theatrical experience. It allows actors and directors to experiment, explore interpretations, and push creative boundaries. Theatre play is not limited to performers; directors experiment with blocking or reimagining classic works in contemporary settings, while designers play with light, sound, and space to enhance atmosphere and mood. Theatre may risk becoming rigid, formulaic and predictable without play. By embracing play -sometimes through deliberate overplaying, artists challenge conventions and discover new ways to engage audiences.

i. Forms and Functions of Play

Play in theatre, as categorized by Pellegrini (1995), revolves around four themes: *play as progress*, *play as fantasy*, *play as self*, and *play as power*. These themes manifest clearly in children's theatrical experiences:

- Play as progress: Activities designed to lead to outcomes such as learning.
- Play as fantasy: The process of unleashing creative potential.
- Play as self: Play undertaken for its own sake, without regard to secondary outcomes, reflecting Vygotsky's notion of acting "on the time of greatest resistance" (1976, p. 548).
- Play as power: Contests involving winners and losers (p. 8).

Theatre activities serve as play-based learning across educational contexts, from early childhood to primary schools. Such curricula incorporate imaginative play, games, and hands-on exploration to develop children's critical thinking, creativity, and social skills.

I have adopted the themes of play as Progress and Self in **Acting and Storytelling** play forms, designed to unleash creative potential of children aged seven and were introduced to acting, which built confidence, creativity, and self-expression. Through improvisation and theatrical exercises, they explored emotions, character roles, and storytelling techniques appropriate for younger learners aged 5–7. Storytelling sessions focused on interactive narratives,

folktales, and fables drawn from diverse cultures. These sessions enhanced listening skills, expanded imagination, and improved language comprehension while conveying important moral lessons.



Plates 12, 13 & 14: *The Actor in Storytelling Mode*

Similarly in Finland, for instance, this form of play is known for its high-performing education system - play is central to early childhood education, nurturing curiosity and resilience essential for lifelong learning (Sahlberg). Likewise, the Reggio Emilia approach from Italy emphasizes play's role in fostering collaboration and communication. In Reggio Emilia schools, children engage in projects that merge play with learning,

allowing them to explore complex concepts through experimentation and dialogue (Edwards et al.).

These examples demonstrate that play-based learning is both practical and adaptable to diverse cultural and educational contexts. However, implementing play-based learning is not without challenges. In many countries, formal education prioritizes standardized testing and academic achievement, often at the expense of holistic development. This emphasis on measurable outcomes tends to reduce playtime, favouring structured, teacher-led activities (Hirsh-Pasek et al.). Critics argue that this undermines the developmental benefits of play, such as creativity and problem-solving skills, which are less easily quantified but essential for success in the twenty-first century.

Maria Montessori's educational philosophy further demonstrates the significance of self-directed play in fostering independence and curiosity. This Montessori approach was applied on children aged 3–5, was both educational and engaging activities. Using catchy tunes, the sessions introduced foundational concepts such as numbers, colours, shapes, and letters in a way that supported early childhood development. The playful nature of rhyme and rhythm fostered memory retention and language acquisition.



Plates 15 & 16: *Children in Their Creative Play*

Montessori posited that children learn best when they explore their interests at their own pace (Montessori). This aligns with contemporary research on intrinsic motivation, which finds that learners are more engaged and retain knowledge better when they exercise autonomy over their learning (Ryan and Deci). Collectively, these theoretical foundations highlight play's vital role in promoting active, self-directed, and meaningful learning.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, my use of these forms of play served as a key element of my creative exploration within theatre - encompassing physicality, vocal delivery, and emotional expression. Improvisation enhances creativity and problem-solving skills, yet it must be balanced with the discipline and structure that formal theatrical education requires.

Why Theatre In Education (Tie) Approach?

The educational landscape in Nigeria has historically been shaped by a blend of traditional and Western systems. Traditional education, grounded in indigenous practices, prioritized the transmission of essential survival skills such as agriculture, craftsmanship, and community leadership. With the advent of colonialism, Western education was introduced, emphasizing the triad of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Since

then, successive Nigerian governments have sought to reform the education system to address evolving societal challenges.

At the heart of this reform effort lays the Nigerian Educational Philosophy, which aims to holistically develop individuals into effective and responsible citizens. It seeks to ensure equal opportunities across foundational, secondary, and tertiary levels, whether through formal schooling or informal learning experiences (National Policy on Education, 2004: 7). A key objective of this philosophy is the cultivation of values and attitudes that support both individual fulfillment and societal development.

In line with these objectives, modern educational initiatives have increasingly acknowledged the critical role of Theatre in Education (TIE). This pedagogical approach leverages the strengths of drama and interactive performance to enhance the learning process. TIE brings education to life, enabling learners to actively engage with knowledge through role-play, imagination, and reflective dialogue.

i. Origins and Evolution of TIE

The concept of TIE emerged in the mid-20th century in the United Kingdom, pioneered by Brian Way, who founded the Theatre Centre in 1953. His work, along with that of Gordon Vallian and the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, helped formalize TIE in 1965. These early programmes laid the foundation for a movement that spread nationwide and eventually across continents. The Belgrade Theatre led the implementation of

TIE in Coventry schools from 1965 until 1996, setting a benchmark for educational theatre practices.

By 1997, TIE had evolved significantly, incorporating live performance, multimedia components, and age-appropriate interactive activities, all structured around curricular goals. TIE became recognized not only for its educational value but also for its effectiveness in improving learning outcomes, clarifying difficult concepts, and building learners' self-esteem and social awareness.

ii. Key Features of Theatre in Education (TIE)

TIE is a purpose-driven form of theatre with specific educational objectives. Its defining characteristics include:

- A clear aim and consistent educational message.
- Small cast, requiring actors to be highly versatile and often multi-role.
- Low budgets often demand that performers also play instruments or manage simple technical elements.
- Portable productions, with minimal and symbolic set designs.
- Multi-perspective storytelling, showing the consequences of actions from different viewpoints.
- Active audience participation to deepen engagement.
- A style that often departs from strict naturalism, using direct address, narration, **or** stylized performance.
- Simple, representational costumes and props, especially when roles are doubled.
- Inclusion of factual content and statistics were relevant.
- Strong underlying messages or moral themes.

TIE is not simply performance for entertainment's sake. It is an educational intervention, employed to train actor-educators to stimulate thought, promote empathy, and encourage behavioural or attitudinal change. Its pedagogical strength lies in combining play with structured learning, allowing participants to explore subjects in ways that are emotionally resonant and cognitively engaging.

iii. Expressive Resources in TIE: Tools of Engagement:

In delivering these approaches, I have consistently drawn on the four fundamental expressive resources as articulated by Vallian (cited in Umukoro, 2002, p. 15). These include:

1. The Body – Used in movement and dance to interact with the environment and express emotion and narrative, including engagement with physical or technological elements.
2. The Voice – Employed in speech, singing, and instrumental sound-making (from rudimentary percussion to complex musical forms) to create rhythm, melody, and storytelling effects.
3. Visual Symbols – Used in constructing visual compositions, such as sculptures, masks, costumes, or symbolic set pieces, to reinforce themes or moods.
4. The Written Word – Applied through scripts, narrative construction, and literary adaptation to convey complex ideas in accessible ways.

These resources, when strategically employed, facilitate both playing to learn and learning through play a duality that lies at the core of TIE's effectiveness.

iv. The Theatre as a Learning Ground:

It is important to emphasize that such multi-skill competencies - particularly the ability to collaborate and respond to others within a performance context - are developed progressively under the guidance of directors and producers within the theatre space.

The discipline of theatre is anchored in three core components of the learning process:

1. Teaching
2. Practical Application
3. Performance Achievement

These components collectively foster both theoretical knowledge and practical skill acquisition, creating a holistic learning environment. The theatre thus becomes a continuous learning space, shaped through various methodologies ranging from rigorous rehearsals to intellectual engagement in workshops.

The Dimensions of Learning in Theatre are:

❖ Character Development

When an actor undertakes the portrayal of a new character, learning begins with a deep exploration of the character's backstory, emotions, and motivations - critical to delivering a believable performance.

❖ Creative Collaboration

Directors and designers engage in extensive research, collaboration, and experimentation, which are vital learning processes that enhance conceptual and practical outcomes.

In 2022, I produced over ten framed productions under the project *Costumes in Performance* in collaboration with Start-Up Stars for the British Council. This initiative used “picture speaks” performance - a scene-by-scene pictorial storytelling method - as a visual way of connecting learners to theatrical narratives.

iii. Technical Proficiencies

Learning in the theatre extends beyond acting to encompass technical skills such as stage management, lighting, sound design, and costume design, each contributing significantly to the overall production quality.

iv. Skill-Building Workshops

Training sessions and workshops focused on specialized areas - including acting, directing, stage movement, and choreography - offer hands-on learning and refinement of techniques.

As one out the learning grounds, I facilitated a simple play workshop at the international conference on “The Philosophy of Play” in Prague, Czech Republic in 2019.



Plate 17: Play Workshop at Prague, Czech Republic

v. Academic Enrichment

Lecture-based classes, peer discussions, and guided exercises led by experienced theatre educators deepen conceptual understanding and provide a framework for critical analysis and reflective practice.

Theatre In Education (Tie) Methodologies: Practice and Pedagogy

In my academic and professional practice, I have explored the Theatre in Education approach through two primary methodologies:

1. Children's Theatre (**Playing to Learn**) and
2. Creative Drama. (**Learning through Play**)

Both approaches focus on educational and social development. They employ dramatic techniques for problem-solving, critical thinking, and community engagement. These methods have been realized through practical classes, community outreach, and immersive, participatory projects where learners are

actively involved in the learning process through doing, reflecting, and sharing. These practices align with the aim of the Nigerian educational system, especially in fostering reflective learning that leads to long-term retention, value acquisition, and social transformation.

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the Theatre in Education (TIE) approach presents a powerful alternative to conventional didactic pedagogy. By embedding educational content within imaginative, participatory, and performative experiences, TIE ensures that learning becomes memorable, meaningful, and transformative. It brings theory to life, encourages collaboration, fosters empathy, and develops communication and critical thinking skills - qualities essential for the holistic development of learners. In a generation where attention spans are shrinking and engagement is critical, TIE provides a relevant, adaptable, and culturally resonant methodology. It aligns seamlessly with Nigeria's broader educational objectives and offers a vital tool for nurturing not only informed citizens but creative, expressive, and responsible members of society.

i. Children's Theatre Approach (Playing to Learn)

The University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre (The Crab) has long served as a venue for theatrical experimentation, refinement, and the cultivation of values essential for individual development and societal growth. The *Children's Theatre Programme* was originally introduced as a course titled "*Theatre and Drama in Education*", taught by Dr. Stanley Obuh (of blessed memory). As students, we were actively encouraged to organize the practical aspects of the course,

including drama presentations, children's carnivals, dance, songs, and craft-making. These activities fostered emotional, social, and cognitive development while building essential life skills as teamwork, communication, and creativity.

A significant revival of the programme occurred in the 2007/2008 academic year, under the leadership of Prof. Emmanuel Emasealu, who appointed me as Assistant Director. This appointment marked a pivotal moment in my professional journey, rekindling my commitment to educational theatre and expanding opportunities for children within the university community and surrounding areas. At the time of reintroduction, awareness of the programme was relatively low. Early participants were mainly drawn from the Departmental Professional Certificate Programme, where students specialized in Theatre in Education. These students, along with lecturers, played an instrumental role in facilitating and delivering the programme. Their involvement reignited a culture of artistic exploration and self-expression among youth.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of *playing and learning* within the theatre. As an actor, I learned to embody characters, to discover their voices, and to bring their stories to life. As a director, I learned to guide performers, shape narratives, and build a cohesive artistic vision. As a playwright, I honed my ability to craft compelling stories, develop characters, and examine the human condition. These experiences have continuously affirmed the value of the Children's Theatre Improvisation Approach, which I actively explored through the UniPort Children's Theatre Programme.

The use of **Rhymes and Songs** were playfully organized to foster memory retention and language acquisition, **Acting and Storytelling** sessions were carried out to enhance listening skills, expand imagination, and improve language comprehension while conveying important moral lessons. **Dramatic Dance** was also employed by the Children to learned both Nigerian and Western dance forms through playful engagement. These sessions incorporated cultural rhythms, allowing the children to connect with their heritage while also being introduced to global movement vocabulary. Ballet techniques were also introduced to enhance grace, coordination, discipline, and flexibility.



Plates 18& 19: *Children in Dramatic Dance*

The ongoing process of *playing and learning* has been central to my professional development in theatre. My involvement with children's theatre, vigorous activities and productions has revealed the profound impact theatre can have on holistic growth. It is imperative to recognize that children often exhibit a wide range of competencies across the various roles involved in theatrical productions.

Institutional Recognition and National Relevance: Vice-Chancellor, the UniPort Children's Theatre stands as a testament to the University's commitment to holistic education and the nurturing of young talent. Under my tenure as Assistant Director (2006–2008), we produced over twenty (20) children's theatrical productions, making the University of Port Harcourt a recognized name in Theatre for the Young across Nigeria.

Plate 20: *Gallery of Productions of UCTP*



Our Children's Theatre programme shares standing with those of leading institutions such as the University of Ibadan (UI), University of Abuja (UNIABUJA), University of Calabar (UNICAL), Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK), Federal University of Lafia, Keffi, and others. These programmes, including ours, contribute to national educational goals by instilling in children the social, moral, and intellectual competencies necessary for nation-building.

Shaping Generations: The Transformative Impact of the Children's Theatre:

The UniPort Children's Theatre has impacted and transformed the lives of over three hundred (300) children by providing a

vibrant platform through which they explored their creative abilities, discovered their passions, and embarked on meaningful journeys of self-discovery and personal development. Through structured theatrical engagement, the programme nurtured moral, psychological, and socio-political values, contributing significantly to positive national development. Many beneficiaries of this initiative, particularly children of staff of the University have gone on to excel as Medical Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Pilots, Journalists, Academics, Business Leaders, and Professionals across diverse fields of human endeavour. Today, the programme stands as a testament to the cultivation of confident, articulate, and socially responsible individuals who passed through its formative process.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the theatre remains a living laboratory for teaching, creativity, and developmental learning. It provides children and students with a dynamic environment where they play to learn and learn through play, engage meaningfully with cultural heritage, express their identities, and broaden their intellectual horizons. The UniPort Children's Theatre exemplifies how theatrical arts, when purposefully aligned with education, can shape generations by instilling not only knowledge but also confidence, empathy, resilience, and the capacities required for lifelong success.

ii. Creative Drama (Learning Through Play)

Creative drama is one of the core methodological approaches in Theatre in Education (TIE), distinguished by its process-based and student-centered nature. It uniquely integrates education

and cultural development, setting it apart from other branches of the arts. This approach emphasizes problem-solving through experiential learning, whereby the moment of experience itself enriches the individual. As a result, this educational method enables individuals not only to absorb profound knowledge but also to develop crucial faculties such as self-awareness, empathy, and sensitivity towards others. More recently, creative drama has been recognized as an effective approach in addressing complex or paradoxical educational challenges where traditional methods fall short. Creative drama, therefore, stands as a valuable component of theatre in education, helping students develop essential skills while engaging with complex themes and issues.

Vice-Chancellor, in my role as a creative dramatist, I have learned to facilitate the learning process by creating a supportive environment that encourages students to experiment and explore. When learning proves difficult within traditional teaching methods, creative drama often provides a viable solution.

Building on this pedagogical insight, I have developed nine instructional modules for teaching Theatre and Drama as subjects in Nigerian primary schools. I emphasize that creative learning at early childhood stages must be encouraged, as drama and theatre are often marginalized as extracurricular activities or relegated to mere end-of-year presentations.

In 2015, I designed a computer-based instructional prototype focused on Adire fabric designs using elements of design. This

tool visually demonstrates how improper designs can lead to undesirable outcomes, whereas well-harmonized patterns yield beautiful results. The idea was inspired by Marvin B. Becker's typing classes, highlighting a well-structured educational tool that enhances learning. This instrument offers a self-contained learning environment, fostering sustained student attention, concentration, and motivation through playful exploration of life's meanings.

I introduced yet another technique called '**story mapping**', a technique for drama sequential flow and a better understanding of drama immediately in our performance flow. This art of drawing and mapping a story was directed to individuals 'creativity, essential for learning the play-text.

One practical example of story mapping was employed in the production of *Ola Rotimi's The Gods Are Not To Blame* at the Crab Theatre, illustrating how this technique aids in performance preparation and learning.

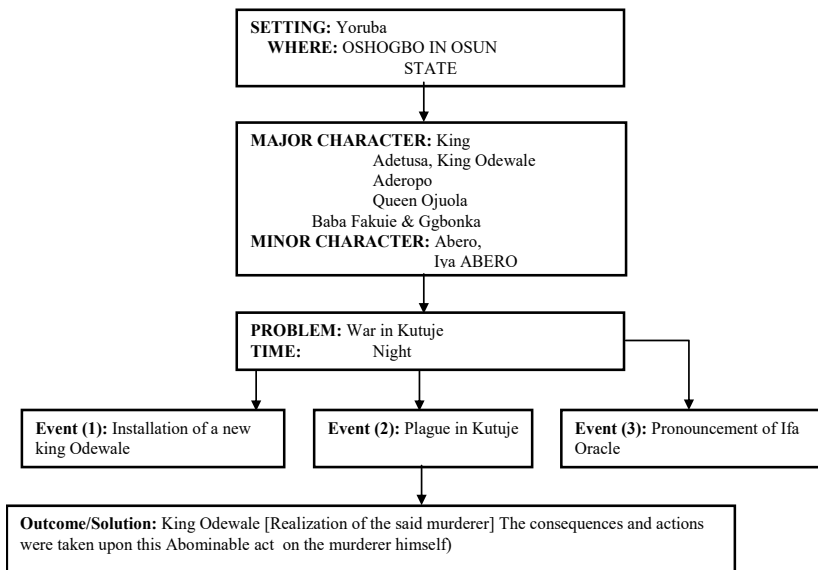


FIG 4: *Story Mapping Technique (Ken-Aminikpo, 2012)*

As a theatre education specialist, I have gained a deeper understanding of the playing and learning process by shaping the abilities and attitudes of children through education, information, and entertainment. Through various classroom experiences and research-based interventions, we have successfully demonstrated the Theatre in Education (TIE) methodology as a dynamic tool that accommodates creative drama in formal teaching environments. This approach has been effectively applied in the teaching of Social Studies, Religious Studies, Poetry, and Agriculture, among others. Specifically, these integrations were achieved through collaborative studies such as **Ejiofor and Ken-Aminikpo (2017)** for Social Studies, **Chukwuemeka and Ken-Aminikpo (2016)** for Religious Studies, **Onyekuru and Ken-Aminikpo**

(2014) for Poetry, and **Adida and Ken-Aminikpo (2015)** for Agriculture. These efforts reflect the transformative role of creative drama in enriching lesson delivery, making abstract or challenging concepts more tangible, while encouraging active participation, empathy, and critical thinking among young learners.

**Contributions to Knowledge
(Inaugural Lecturer's Professional Journey as a Nexus of
Playing and Learning)**

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, I have actively participated in engaging activities and experiences that bridge the dynamic relationship between playing and learning. I implanted Theatre in Education (TIE) as a cornerstone of my professional journey. This methodology connects play with purposeful learning, emphasizing hands-on, interactive, and enjoyable experiences that nurture creativity and intellectual exploration.

Throughout my career, I have introduced innovative teaching approaches, developed interactive performances, crafted instructional modules, and designed educational models for use across various schools. These initiatives have explored critical issues such as children's rights, social justice, cultural heritage, and health awareness.

My contributions reflect a multidimensional commitment to expanding theatre's relevance in educational settings. In 2020, I introduced a new interpretative methodology for Janusz Korczak's pedagogical approach in Poland, advocating for children's rights to education within children's theatre practice.

This further underscored my global advocacy for inclusive, child-centered education through performance.

Recognizing the possibilities of digital transformation in theatre arts, I established a computer-aided design approach for costume chart instruction in 2018 to reevaluate and standardize costume designers' practices. I also contributed to curriculum development for early childhood education by categorizing early art forms by age and ability levels: musical arts (0–1), language arts (1–2), scribbling arts (2–3), paper crafts (3–4), and outdoor games (4–5). These classifications provide a framework for school readiness through meaningful and creative learning.

In a 2016 collaborative study with Prof. Benjamin Ejiofor, we examined how Theatre in Education (TIE) can provide alternatives to the traditional chalk-and-talk method in teaching Social Studies. The same year, I introduced the computer-aided instructional design for teaching Theatre Costume Plot/Chart aimed at re-evaluating and modernizing the methodologies employed by costume designers in their creative process. **(Ken-Aminikpo, 2018).**

As a pioneer in applying Keller's ARCS Motivation Model (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction) to theatre arts education, I created an instructional framework for monitoring the impact of learning. This model serves as a guide for instructional designers in the performing arts and is particularly suited for working with children in creative environments (Ken-Aminikpo, 2014).

To further strengthen theatre education in Nigeria, I developed nine (9) instructional modules for teaching Theatre and drama in primary schools. These modules promote creative learning from early childhood, revealing the instructional value of drama as a tool for unlocking latent skills. In 2017, I adopted experiential learning techniques to create the *Theatre Word Puzzle Game* - an instructional board game to improve vocabulary and spelling across various subject areas. This innovation awaits patenting.

In theatre practice, my contributions have remained both relevant and impactful. From as early as 1991, I have engaged pressing social issues such as gender equality and sanitation through **dance and drama performances**, in 2020 and 2021; I further demonstrated theatre's capacity as a tool for advocacy and social transformation. Notably, my award-winning play *Say 'No' To Child Abuse (Ken-Aminikpo,2016)*, presented at the Rivers State Junior Schools Drama Competition, addressed Child Abuse through role-play and participatory storytelling enabling children to learn decision-making and resistance skills in ways that were both memorable and life-changing.

My performances commissioned by the University of Port Harcourt include *Pillars of Intellectual Property (2024)*, *Centre of Excellence* for the Central Bank of Nigeria handover ceremony (2023), *The Plea* for the Niger Delta Development Commission (2023), and *NIMASA*, performed during the launch of the NIMASA building at the University (2023).

Beyond institutional settings, my commitment extends to community-driven theatre projects. I was trained in Adire Fabric Design for three weeks in Abeokuta, Ogun State, through a Rivers State Government initiative. This experience enabled me to serve as a resource person in several skill acquisition workshops organized by the Rivers State Women's Initiative, led by Her Excellency Justice Mary Odili. These workshops took place at the University of Port Harcourt Women's Association (UPWA) in 2007, the Choba Community (2006), and the Odual Community (2005). Participants were empowered with materials such as sewing machines, dyers, and cookers to foster economic self-sufficiency.

In 2024, I supervised the Grassroots theatre production *The Flood's Fury* under the KoMUNiti Project of the THESPIAN Family and Productions in collaboration with the University of Port Harcourt Theatre. This production highlighted the devastating effects of oil spillage in the Niger Delta. I have also contributed to various cultural events, including the EFI Fishing Festival (2021), RIVIFEST (2010, 2011), Abuja Carnival (2024), and Expressions I, II, and III of the UPWA Children's Carnival, utilizing theatre as a tool for public engagement and cultural education.

Conclusion

As I draw this inaugural lecture to a close, I return to the central theme that has shaped both my professional journey and scholarly vision: the inseparable bond between playing and learning in theatre. These are not opposing or competing

forces; they are conjoined twins - intertwined, interdependent, and vital to the life of the stage in both theory and practice. Play brings freedom; learning brings depth; together, they ignite the spirit of discovery that lies at the heart of all meaningful theatre.

Throughout my scholarship, practice, and teaching, I have explored and embodied this profound symbiosis, demonstrating how theory and practice converge to sustain and enrich our discipline. In theatre, to play is not a diversion from learning; it is its mirror, its partner, and its pulse. The stage, therefore, is not merely a stage of performance, but a living classroom where imagination is awakened, values are shaped, and human possibilities are continually reimagined.

Let us, therefore, never sever what the theatre has so powerfully joined: a world in which to play is to learn, and to learn is to live more fully.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir; ladies and gentlemen, my journey as an academic and theatre practitioner has culminated in this moment as the Two hundred and Eleventh Inaugural Lecturer of this unique University. I therefore define myself as a **Conjoined Pedagogue of the Theatre**: two hearts beating within the same artistic body, inseparable in purpose and united in expression. It is an identity grounded in the conviction that playing and learning are not parallel pursuits, but true Siamese twins within the theatrical experience- conjoined in essence and bound together in their transformative power.

In affirming this philosophy, I offer theatre not only as an art to be admired, but as pedagogy to be embraced, sustained, and advanced within the academy and beyond. This, I submit, is my scholarly testament, my pedagogical vision, and my enduring legacy.

Recommendations

To unlock the full potential that theatre offers for education and societal development, I propose the following strategic recommendations grounded in both theory and practice and designed to position the University of Port Harcourt as a leader in innovative educational reform and creative entrepreneurship.

In Learning: Establishment of a Dedicated Institute for Theatre-in-Education (TIE)

I recommend that the University of Port Harcourt take a pioneering step by creating a Centre or Institute for Theatre-in-Education (TIE). This initiative should place the University at the forefront of educational innovation on the African continent.

This Institute would serve as a multifunctional hub with the following objectives:

- **Curriculum Integration:** Incorporate TIE methodologies into teacher training programs, general education curricula, and community outreach. Theatre can make abstract concepts tangible, foster empathy, and enhance critical thinking skills applicable across disciplines.

- **Research and Development:** Function as a Centre for research in applied theatre, pedagogy, child psychology, and curriculum innovation. It will foster partnerships with schools, NGOs, and government agencies dedicated to education reform.
- **Capacity Building:** Organize regular training workshops, conferences, and certification programmes for educators, facilitators, and students, equipping them with creative tools to make learning more engaging and impactful.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Serve as a nexus where education, drama, psychology, health sciences, environmental studies, and other disciplines collaborate, using theatre as a medium to address real-world challenges.
- **Community and Policy Impact:** Institutionalizing TIE will enable the University to influence national education policy by demonstrating how performative methods improve classroom dynamics, enhance learning outcomes, and address social issues such as gender equality, health, and civic education. This initiative will advance the University's academic mission while promoting holistic learning, cultural identity, and socio-emotional intelligence among learners.

In Playing: Establishment of a World-Class, Disney-Inspired Children’s Theme and Learning Park

Aligned with the creative and imaginative spirit of theatre, I also recommend the development of a world-class, Disney-inspired children’s theme and Learning Park, strategically situated within or affiliated with the University of Port Harcourt.

This proposed park would serve as:

- **An Edutainment Hub:** A vibrant space where play and learning are seamlessly integrated. Interactive exhibits, theatrical performances, storytelling zones, role-play villages, and science discovery corners would transform traditional recreational spaces into centers of imaginative learning.
- **A Benchmark for Innovation in the Region:** This Park would be the first of its kind in Nigeria and West Africa, setting a new standard for combining education with entertainment, attracting international educators, tourists, and investors.
- **A Revenue-Generating Entrepreneurial Model:** Beyond its educational value, the park presents a sustainable entrepreneurial venture. It could generate income through ticket sales, partnerships, themed merchandise, workshops, seasonal camps, and collaborations with media and publishing companies.

- **A Platform for Theatre Students and Professionals:** The Park would function as a living laboratory for theatre arts students, graduates, and professionals, offering employment, internships, and opportunities to design, perform, and facilitate child-focused content.
- **A Commitment to Youth Development:** Serving as a practical demonstration of the University's commitment to nurturing young minds, the park will provide a safe, enriching environment for children to explore, discover, and grow through creative expression, play, and performance.

Together, these two initiatives - the Institute for Theatre-in-Education and the Disney-inspired Learning Park - represent two sides of the same coin. One addresses the academic and intellectual dimensions of theatre in education, while the other elevates its creative, and entrepreneurial potential. Both initiatives embody a future where the University of Port Harcourt not only imparts knowledge but inspires imagination, fosters innovation, and shapes society through the powerful synergy of **Playing and Learning**.

Future Research Directions

The ideas articulated in this inaugural lecture on Playing and Learning: The Siamese Twins of the Theatre do not mark an end of my scholarship; rather, they signal a variety of investigations for future studies.

First, future studies will focus on the systematic documentation and theorization and application of the conjoined pedagogy, and by extension, the identity of the **conjoined Pedagogue** to position theatrical play and learning as a process of knowledge production within Theatre and Education. This research path seeks to develop a structured framework through which theatre-based play and formal learning operate as integrated pedagogical system. By doing so, the Conjoined Pedagogue becomes not a personal appellation, but a transferable model of practice, training and scholarly inquiry.

Second, I will undertake empirical studies on the **impact of Theatre in Education on Students' Learning outcomes**, examining how theatre-based pedagogies influence learner across selected faculties at UNIPORT. These studies will prove verifiable data for evaluating the educational value of theatrical play beyond its aesthetic appeal.

Third, I intend to conduct longitudinal studies on children and youth theatre as a developmental pathway, building on **UniPort Children's theatre 4practice and experiences**, to examine how early theatrical engagement shapes learning trajectories, leadership capacity, and social integration.

Fourth, I intend to expand my research into theatre as a tool for social learning, examining how play facilitates dialogue in other areas of studies such as civic engagement, peace building, and cultural sustainability. These studies will be interdisciplinary, collaborative, and responsive to societal

needs, thereby reinforcing theatre's relevance beyond the stage and screen.

Finally, these future research directions should be anchored in postgraduate mentorship, research clusters, and institutional partnerships at local and international platforms. By ensuring that emerging scholars are nurtured to see that learning is not a passive reception, but an active and playful discovery.

Personal Thoughts for the University

My study and practice of theatre, drama, and media arts in education have significantly contributed to the development of essential skills, conflict resolution, and social transformation among students, children, participants, and audiences alike. The purpose of this lecture is not merely to celebrate the playful essence of theatre - although that is indeed valuable - but to offer a more profound vision: to reimagine the traditional classroom.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, imagine integrating Theatre in Education - a creative drama approach into our classrooms. Picture the infusion of play into our teaching practices across all disciplines within the University of Port Harcourt's learning process, making knowledge acquisition not only possible but engaging, accessible, and even enjoyable.

Envision a learning environment where:

1. A scientist recreates a historical experiment or uses visual storytelling to explain complex scientific concepts through mime or theatrical narratives.

2. A pharmacist demonstrates how drugs bind to receptors in the human body using dynamic and interactive performances.
3. A historian reenacts pivotal moments or facilitates debates where students embody historical figures on stage.
4. Organic chemistry concepts, such as the workings of carbon compounds, are illustrated through play-based activities.
5. Students grapple with complex moral dilemmas enacted through role-play, fostering deeper ethical understanding.
6. A geologist demonstrates crystal morphology through visual and kinesthetic theatre methods.
7. Mathematics concepts are explored through interactive character dialogues and dramatic scenarios.

The possibilities are boundless. We must preserve and nurture this dynamic interplay of playing and learning to ensure that theatre continues to excel as a vital cultural and educational tool. As the demands of the 21st century evolve, integrating play and learning remains an indispensable strategy for preparing students to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Thank you for the privilege of sharing this journey with you.

Photo Gallery of My Professional Activities



PERFORMANCE WITH BRITISH COUNCIL (2022)



Traditional Cartoon Video for Children



THESIPIAN FAMILY Komuniti Project, 2024



Stage Production of the play *Thinking Cap*, 2014



LAKE EFI FISHISH FESTIVAL, 2021



RIVERS STATE CARNIVAL (CARNIRIV 2011)

REFERENCES

- Abone, C. N. (1990). "Creative Dramatics: A powerful instrument for promoting qualitative primary education in Nigeria." In G. G. Nworgu and B. C. Emenogu (Eds.). *The Nigerian Primary Education System: Issues, Trends, and Strategies for Development*. Pp. 240-251. Etuokwu Press.
- Boulton, M. (1990). *The anatomy of drama*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Brain, S. and Edwards, E. (1971). *History of early childhood education*. Wood Pub. Comp.
- Chukwuemeka, S.A. (2018). Developing Cognitive Domain in Primary School Children Using the Playway Method. Unpublished M.A Dissertation. University of Harcourt.
- Cook, C. (1973). *Imagination and drama*. Heinemann.
- Dadirep, M. E. (1997). "Drama's a tool for child education." In *Theacom Journal*. Vol 1.3. Pp. 120-130. Department of Theatre and Mass Communication, Jo.
- Edwards, C., Gandini, L., and Forman, G. (2012). *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia experience in transformation*. ABC-CLIO.
- Ejiofor, B. A. and **Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2016) "Theatre in Education: A technique for effective Social Studies teaching in Junior Secondary Classes." In *Journal of Education and Human Development, American Institute of Policy Development*. Vol. 5, No. 2. Pp. 155-168.
- Elkind, D. (2007). *The power of play: How spontaneous, imaginative activities lead to happier, healthier children*. Da Capo Press.
- Fafunwa, Babs. (1980). *New perspective in African education*. Macmillan.
- FGN - UNICEF. OAU Charter on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF, Lagos.

- Heathcote, D. (1973). "Drama and Theatre in Education." In Nigel D and Winifred H. (Eds.) *Collected writings on Drama in Education*. London: Heinemann.
- Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., Berk, L. E., and Singer, D. G. (2009). *A mandate for playful learning in Preschool: Presenting the evidence*. University Press.
- Heining, G. and Stillwell, L. (1991). *Creative Drama for the Classroom*. Prentice Hall Inc.
- Karlen, N. (2001). "Centre Stage" NPL 1. 29. MSP Communications.
- Ken- Aminikpo, F. I. (2014).** *Thinking cap*. University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F.I. (2016).** *Drama and theatre in education: Introduction and theory*. Peghoson Printing Enterprise, in conjunction with the University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I. (2018).** *Perfect Mix*. Art Angle Band Publishers.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I. (2016).** *Say 'No' to child abuse*. Oscom Prints, in conjunction with the University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I. (2016).** *Child's Worth*. Sofiata Publishers.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I. (2013).** "The Downplay of drama and theatre instruction in primary schools." In Oni, S. *Challenges and Prospects in African Education Systems*. Pp 18-34. Trafford Publishing.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I., (2020).** "Relevance of Janusz Korczak's Pedagogy to Children's Right to Education in Children's Theatre Practice." In Odrowaz-Coates, A. (Ed.). *WHAT would Korczak do? Reflections on education, well-being & children's rights in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic*. Pp. 130 -140. UNESCO/Janusz

- Korczak Chair International Summer School. Maria Grzegorzewska University.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2012) “*Teaching Theatre Costume Designs, Plots and Charts*” In Oni, S. (Ed.). *Revitalizing Nigerian education in the digital age*. Pp 556-577. Trafford Publishing.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2007). “Basics of Costume and Make-up Arts.” Bell-Gam, H. L. (Ed.). *Theatre in Theory and Practice for Beginners*. Pp. 37-49. University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2020). “Stage performance of suffering in paradise: An educative production on the challenges of independent African children.” In the *International Journal of Learning, Common Ground*. Vol. 30, No. 1. Pp. 129-137. Montclair State University.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2020). “The Utilization of Artistic Play for Children’s Civic Education.” In the *International Journal of Learning, Common Ground*. Vol. 30, No. 1. Pp. 182-196. Montclair State University
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2020). “Arts and early childhood in learning.” In the *African international journal of educational learning*. Vol. 10. Pp. 102-115. University of Alexandria.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2020). “Towards Disengaging the Myth of Learning Poetry: Theatre in Education (TIE) in Focus.” *The Griot: Journal of West African Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies*. Vol. 1, No. 1. Pp. 150-172. University of Benin.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2018). “Revitalizing traditional folklore for children in the digital age.” In the *International Journal of Marketing, Computer Science, Hospitality Management, and Entrepreneurship, Centre for Knowledge Advancement (CEKA)*. Vol. 4, No. 1. Pp. 153-164. Mount Mercy International University.

- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2017). “Educational drama as a viable instrument for youth development.” In the *International Journal of Humanities & Education, Centre for Knowledge Advancement (CEKA)*. Vol. 4 No. 1. Pp. 31-39. Mount Mercy International University.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2017). “Aesthetics and innovation of drama in children’s education.” In the *International Journal of Humanities Research, Reiko Centre for Academic Research and Development*. Vol. 4, No.1. Pp. 29-39. Atlanta International University.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2015). “An Introduction to Computer-Based Instruction on Fabric Designs.” *Journal of Educational Media & Technology, National Association of Educational Media & Technology (NAEMT)*. No. 35. Pp 130-149.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2012). “Significance of storytelling in the children’s Theatre Education.” In *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria*. Issue 4. Pp 188-195. Regal.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2011). “Rehearsal essence: A model for theatre performance skills in children.” In the *International Journal of Humanities (CIRSD)*. Vol. 3, Num. 2. Pp. 217-231. Kandid Gold.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2011). “Story mapping: An approach to children's drama instruction.’ In *Journal of Educational Review (JER)*. Vol. 4, No. 3. Pp. 319-322. Higher Education Research and Policy Network [HERPNT].
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2011). “Application of Motivational Strategies in the Development of Theatre Performance Skills of Children.” In **the** *Journal of the Institute of Education*. Vol. 5, Num. ii. Pp 113 -130. University of Port Harcourt.

- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2010). "Play relevance to children's theatre." In the *Kiabara Journal of Humanities*. Vol. 16, Num. ii. Pp. 275-279. University of Port Harcourt.
- Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2009). "Towards improving the standards of teaching Literature in English in Nigerian schools." *Benin Journal of Educational Studies, Institute of Education*. Vol. 19, Nos. 1 & 2. Pp. 83-96. University of Benin.
- Lowefield, M. (1992). "Drama and childhood play: The uses of drama." In Hodgson, J. (Ed.). *Lowe and Bryden*.
- Milteer, R. M., Ginsburg, K. R., and Mulligan, D. A. (2012). "The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent-child bonds: Focus on children in poverty." 129 (1). Pp. 204-213. *Pediatrics*.
- Montessori, M. (1912). *The Montessori method*. Frederick A. Stokes Company.
- Moreno, J. L. (1998). *Play, drama, and thought*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nwachuku, E. D. and **Ken-Aminikpo, F. I. (2018)**. "Child's psychology and attraction: A panacea for indigenous children's television drama in Nigeria." *ICHEKE: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal of the Faculty of Humanities*. Vol. 16, No. 1. Pp.85-99. Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.
- Onyekuru, J. A. and **Ken-Aminikpo, F. I.** (2017). "Poetic devices in traditional and contemporary poetry: A discourse of Gabriel Okara's *Piano and Drums* and Sophia Obi's *Tears in A Basket*." In *Trends in Educational Studies (TRES Volume 10, Numbers 1 & 2)*. Pp. 162 -174.). Institute of Education: University of Port Harcourt.

- Osibodu, B. (1994). "Drama in the school curriculum." In *Nigerian Theatre Journal* 1.2. Pp 1 – 10. Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists.
- O'Toole, J. (1976). *Theatre in Education*. Hodder and Stoughton,
- Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, Dreams, and imitation in childhood*. Norton.
- Piaget, J. (1952). *Origins of intelligence in children*. International Universities Press.
- Russ, S. W. (2004). *Play in child development and psychotherapy: Toward empirically supported practice*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. In *American Psychologist*. 55 (1). Pp. 68-78. American Psychologist.
- Sahlberg, P. (2015). *Finnish Lessons 2.0: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* Teachers College Press.
- Self, D. (1976). *A practical guide to drama in secondary school*. Willmer Brother Ltd.
- Shakespeare, W. (1923). *As You Like It*. In M.H. Spielman & A.W. Pollard (Eds). *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (Vol.1). J.J. Juvenal.
- Slade, P. (1976). *An Introduction to Child Drama*. Hodder and Stoughton.
- Federal Government. (1981). *National policy on education*. Federal Government Press.
- Umukoro, M. (1979). *The School Pity*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis. University of Wales.
- Utoh —Ezeajugh, T. (2003). "Harnessing the artistic potentials of the Nigerian child through drama and music." In

- Awka Journal of Research in Music*. Vol.vi. Pp. 178-190. The Department of Music.
- Vallain, G. (1971). "Drama and Theatre in Education." In Brown, R. (Ed.). *Drama and the theatre with radio, film, and television*. Routledge and Kegan,
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. University Press.
- Unknown photographer. Chang and Eng Bunker, (c.1860.) Public domain historical photograph. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

CITATION



Professor Faith Ibarakumo Ken-Aminikpo fta
Cert. BA. PGDE. M.Ed, MA, PhD (UPH)

Faith Ibarakumo Ken-Aminikpo (**née Ugo**), born on May 20, 1968, in Daboubiri Compound, Sabagreia Town, Old Rivers State. A renowned Nigerian theatre artist and educator, she is the fifth of twenty-one children of the late Mr. Francis Robinson Samuel Ugo and Ma Giyamu Korikitie, both indigenes of Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Ken-Aminikpo began her education at St. Theresa Catholic Primary School, Apapa, Lagos State, and continued at State School II, Sabagreia (1974–1980), where she obtained her First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC). She then attended Holy Rosary Girls Secondary School, Port Harcourt (1981–1985), earning her West African School Certificate (O’Level). She pursued higher education in theatre arts, obtaining a Certificate

in Theatre Arts (1987), a B.A. in Theatre Arts (1997), and an M.A. in Theatre Arts (2006). Her academic journey further led to a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE, 2000), an M.Ed. (2004), and ultimately a Ph.D. in Instructional Technology (2012) from the University of Port Harcourt. She was among the pioneering Corps members who served the nation under the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) in Sakpenwa, Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State (1997).

She holds the distinction of being the first female Ph.D. holder and Professor from both her biological community of Sabagreia and Okoloba in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, and her marital community of Borobara, Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State. She is also the first female indigenous CRABITE to have obtained all her academic degrees and to be promoted a Professor from the same - University of Port Harcourt.

Professional Career and Achievements

Professor Ken-Aminikpo's career spans both the technical and artistic realms of theatre. She joined the University of Port Harcourt following her exceptional performance in the Certificate in Theatre Arts Programme, where she earned a **Distinction** in 1987. From 1988 to 1995, she served as a **Resident Artist** in costume, and makeup. After a brief employment break, she was reabsorbed on August 16, 1998, as **Assistant Producer** and became pensionable in 1999. She was promoted to **Producer** from 2003 to 2006, before transitioning to the academic cadre as an **Assistant Lecturer** in 2006. Through consistent dedication and scholarly contribution, she rose through the academic ranks to her current position as **Professor** in 2021 at the University of Port Harcourt.

With nearly two decades of experience as a Lecturer and theatre practitioner in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Professor Ken-Aminikpo has excelled in the study areas of **Costume and Makeup, Children’s Theatre, and Theatre in Education**. Her innovations include the **Theatre Word Puzzle Game**, a board game for children adaptable across various subject lexicons, and the **Rehearsal Time Prediction Model**, which determines rehearsal hours required based on age to master a given role. She has also produced numerous **instructional audio-visual materials, pictures, and videos**, driven by her passion to advance Theatre in Education in Nigeria. These contributions have elevated the standards of Nigerian Children’s Theatre and inspired a new generation of artists and scholars.

Professor Ken-Aminikpo has presented at both international and local conferences and has a prolific publication record, including **three monographs, two books, five plays, eight book chapters, and over thirty journal articles**. She is an active member of several professional associations, including the National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (**NANTAP**), the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists (**SONTA**), the Educational Theatre Association (**EdTA**), the West African Association of Commonwealth Literature and Languages Studies (**WAACLALS**), the National Association of Education and Media Technology (**NAEMT**), and the Creative Arts Guild of Nigeria (**CAG**).

Artistic and Administrative Experience

Professor Ken-Aminikpo has consistently advanced the image and relevance of theatre practice through sustained artistic and administrative engagement within and beyond the University. Her professional activities have significantly impacted the cultural landscape of Rivers State, where she played prominent

roles in major festivals, particularly the Rivers State Festival (CarniRiv), serving in capacities such as coordinator, consultant, and Local Government Area representative. She was Local Government Area Representative for CarniRiv, Rivers State Carnival **(2010–2011)**; Coordinator, Tai Local Government Area, CarniRiv **(2008–2009)**; Technical Consultant, Tai Rivifest Working Committee, Tai LGA **(1997)**; Member, Panel of Judges, Tai Mini-Rivifest **(1997)**; and Member, Rivifest Central Working Committee, Tai Local Government Area **(1996)**.

Beyond festival administration, Professor Ken-Aminikpo has made extensive contributions to theatrical productions as a producer, director, actor, and costumier. Notably, in the area of costume design, she single-handedly costumed over two hundred (200) contingents for the Rivers State Carnival (CARNIRIV) for five consecutive years **(2009–2014)**, in addition to designing costumes for numerous other theatrical productions. Her professional expertise also gained international recognition when she represented Nigeria as the lead actor (Oru) in Bell-Gam's *Orukoro* at the World University Cultural Games held in Sheffield, England, in 1991. Overall, she has performed in over thirty-four (34) productions, featured in seventeen (17) commissioned plays, and produced more than twenty (20) theatrical works.

Her administrative engagements have played a defining role in shaping her academic and professional career. Notably, she served as Head of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies at the University of Port Harcourt from **2022 to 2024**. She was also a Member of the Degree Results Verification Committee of the University **(2018–2021)**. In addition, she served as External Examiner in the Department of Theatre Arts, College

of Education, Agbor, Delta State **(2017–2021)**, contributing to quality assurance in teacher education.

Within the University system, she held several other administrative positions, including Treasurer of the Senior Staff Club, University of Port Harcourt (2002–2004), and Congregation Representative on the Council Committee on Investment **(2005–2010)**. She was re-elected as Congregation Representative to the University Demonstration Primary School **(UDPS)** Board, where she served as Chairman of the Structural Development and Planning Committee **(2014–2018)**. She also functioned as Internal Auditor of the Academic Staff Union of Universities **(ASUU)**, University of Port Harcourt Branch **(2014–2018)**.

Her commitment to student welfare is evident in her service as Hall Warden in several halls of residence at the University of Port Harcourt, including Medical Hall and Goodluck Jonathan Hall **(2011–2013)**, and Dan Etete Hall **(2014–2017)**. Earlier, as Assistant Hall Warden of Claude Ake Hall A **(2008–2010)**, she introduced the innovation of online bed space allocation in 2009, during the tenure of Professor Matthew Wegwu as Dean of Student Affairs. The success of this initiative led to its subsequent adoption across the University.

Beyond the University of Port Harcourt, her administrative and leadership contributions include service as a Supervisor for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) from **1999 to 2011** and as Accreditation Team Leader for Private Schools in Rivers State in **2016**. Collation officers, LGA Returning Officer for the Independent National Electoral Commission **(INEC)** in **2015, 2019 and 2023** respectively. Earlier in her career, she served as Public Relations Officer of the Protem Committee of the National Council for Women Societies

(NCWS), Tai/Eleme Local Government Area, Rivers State (1995), and as Secretary of the Family Support Programme (FSP), Tai/Eleme Local Government Area (1993–1994).

Her leadership trajectory dates back to her secondary school years, where she served as House Prefect at Holy Rosary Girls Secondary School, Port Harcourt **(1984–1985)**, and President of the Nigerian Red Cross Society in the same school in 1985. She served the University of Port Harcourt Women Association **(UPWA)** in several capacities, including Coordinator (1995–1996), Public Relations Officer **(2004–2006)**, Second Vice President **(2006–2008)**, and Member of the Social Committee of the Vice-Chancellor’s Children’s Christmas Party **(2000–2011)**.

At the Faculty and Departmental levels, she has rendered significant administrative and academic service. she served s a member of the Faculty Bookshop/Book Pricing Committee **(2024)**, the Faculty Innovation Committee **(2023)**, and as Faculty Examinations Officer (2014). Within the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, she served diligently in several capacities, including Chairman, Departmental Graduate Committee **(2024- till date)**, Served as chairman, Special Lectures and Conferences Committee **(2020–2022)**, and Member, Departmental Accreditation Committee **(2021)**.

She also served as Coordinator, Fundamentals of Theatre Arts **(2006/2007 and 2016/2017)**, Examination and Records Officer **(2014–2016)**, and Secretary, Academic Programme Review Committee (2014–2015). In recognition of her administrative innovation, she received commendation for introducing a unique template for student academic records management in the Department in **2012**.

Her other departmental responsibilities include Coordinator, Departmental Community Service (2011–2016); Coordinator, Certificate in Theatre Arts Programme; Deputy Director, University of Port Harcourt Children's Theatre Programme (2007–2011); and Member, Departmental Disciplinary Committee (2008–2010).

Awards and Honours

Professor Faith Ken- Aminikpo is a **Fellow of Theatre Arts**, National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP), 2024, **Recognition for Creative Sustainability Award**, Nigerian Best Comedy Club, Port Harcourt Comedy Club. 2023., **Recognition for Excellence Award**, Nigerian Army Officers Wives Association, 6 Division Chapter, 2022., **Recognition for Excellence Award**, National Association of Rivers State Students Uniport Chapter, 2019. **Recognition for Excellence Award**, National Association of Bayelsa State Students Uniport Chapter, 2019. **An Honourable Friend Award**, National Association of Imo State Students Uniport Chapter, 2019. **Outstanding Female Lecturer Award**, Faculty of Humanities, Uniport, 2011. **Most Student-Friendly Female Lecturer Award**, Association of Theatre Arts Students (ATAS), University of Port Harcourt, 2011. **Letter of Commendation** for her outstanding Performance as Departmental Examination Officer, Department of Theatre and Film Studies, 2015. **Award for Creative and Innovative Hall Warden**, Hall Warden of the Year, Dan Etete Hall, Uniport, 2010.

Professor Ken-Aminikpo's artistic vision and leadership have been central to numerous departmental performances at the Uniport Arts Theatre. Her efforts have brought to life her creative works such as *Say 'No' To Child Abuse*, *Child's Worth*, *Thinking Cap*, and *Perfect Mix*, which have further

cemented her influence in shaping the creative future of her students.

Today, we celebrate a woman of notable intellect and talent, a Lay Reader in the Anglican Communion and a committed Professor of Theatre and Media Arts in Education. She stands as a symbol of excellence, creativity, and purposeful leadership. She is married to Hon. Kenude Eli-Aminikpo and the union is blessed with four wonderful children: Mrs. Barikpe Ndutimi Etuatimi, Mr. Dumlumene Ken-Aminikpo, Mr. Leyira Ken-Aminikpo, and Mr. Kue Ken-Aminikpo. By God's grace, her family has grown to include four cherished grandchildren — Legalu Dum-Aminikpo, Samantha Etuatimi, Samuel Etuatimi (twins), and Tambari Dum-Aminikpo.

Professor Owunari Abraham Georgewill

Vice-Chancellor