

# Migrating from Stage to Screen: Challenges and Prospects

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## Abstract

It is on record that theatre arts had survived over the ages due to its capacity to reinvent by embracing, new tool and languages, new style and form. It is a fact that when a discipline reinvent its techniques of impartation and training in line with modern demands, the standard of performances is enhanced and the quality of the practitioner is tremendously improved. Over the years, Nigerian theatrical performances had gone through many stages (i.e. ritual, court/church, traditional travelling theatre, professional travelling theatre, academic drama, radio drama, television drama, celluloid film, and video film), reinventing itself in order to keep up with the requirement of each era. In reviewing the essence/spirit of the 50 years of Theatre in the African academy through the University of Ibadan experience, one could not but to wonder why a film school has not developed out of the old Ibadan school of drama. Or question why the central mode of training the theatre artistes in academia stocked to the stage despite the various innovations that had taken place over the years.

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*Index terms—*

## 1 Introduction

University system anywhere in the world is expected to carry out research, training and other extension services as may be required by the society. In other word University is meant to service as the arrow head of research and new discovery; provide highly trained human capacity for societal growth and development; provide training facilities and other extension services for interested individuals and organisations within a given society (and these may include technological inventions, equipment maintenance and hiring etc.)

In reviewing the essence of the 50 years of Theatre in the African academy through the University of Ibadan experience, one could see that, the first school of drama in Africa which was officially established in October 1963 was designed to provide the above functions. This was why Geoffery Ax worthy, the pioneering head of the school, preferred the running of a diploma programme instead of a degree course. According to him. I got the first intakes to read a diploma instead of a degree course because I wanted them to discover what things are all about by doing them. I was more concerned with professionalism than with academic accumulation. (LACE Publications Vol 1 No. ??, 1984:8) One could see that as soon as the goal of the school was established and directed towards developing human capacity, serving and making impart on the society, the financial needs of the school was naturally supplied by private commitments, Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and other international bodies. On meeting the needs of the school, Ax worthy again observed that:

The major assistance which came in terms of finance also helped tremendously the activities of furthering and developing the theatre school. In 1960 from the Cocoa funds we obtained money for the alterations and repair, and by 1962 the Rockefeller Foundation gave funds for the running of the school for five years. In 1965, the Ford Foundation gave funds for the teaching of film and other activities at the Theatre School. (LACE Pub., 1984:6) From the foregoing, one could detect that fund was even made available for the then School of drama at the University Collage Ibadan for the teaching of film related studies. Thus, one could not stop but to speculate: "why has film school not develop out of the Department of Theatre Arts 50 years after?"

44 The aim of this paper is to provide a theoretical framework and an historical perspective through which it will  
45 propose the establishment a program me on film studies as well as ruminating on the challenges and prospects  
46 of this migration from stage to video screen productions in term of academic training and practice. In providing  
47 plausible answers to a set of questions raised in this paper, the researcher was guided by postmodernism theory,  
48 and the discoveries in this study were acquired through historical exploration and participatory observation. The  
49 observation so employed was of two-folds: personal experiences as student of this great institution and personal  
50 experiences as a media arts tutor in another University.

## 51 2 II.

### 52 3 Theoretical Framework

53 In order to a have a better focus on the study, and in applying postmodernism theory to this work, the

## 54 4 G

55 concept of postmodernism as defined by James Morley within the context of pre-modernism, modernism and  
56 postmodernism will serve as a good premise of distinctions:

57 1. Premodernism: Original meaning is possessed by authority (for example, the Catholic Church). The  
58 individual is dominated by tradition. 2. Modernism: The enlightenment humanist rejection of tradition and  
59 authority in favour of reason and natural science. This is founded upon the assumption of the autonomous  
60 individual as the sole source of meaning and truth -the Cartesian Cogito. Progress and novelty are valorized  
61 within a linear conception of history -a history of a "real" world that becomes increasingly real or objectified. One  
62 could view this as a protestant mode of consciousness. 3. Postmodernism: Arejection of the sovereign autonomous  
63 individual with an emphasis upon anarchic, collage, diversity, the mystically unrepresentable, Dionysian passion  
64 are the foci of attention. Most importantly we see the dissolution of distinctions. The merging of subject and  
65 object, self and other. This is a sarcastic playful parody of western modernity and the "John Wayne" individual  
66 and radical, anarchist rejection of all attempts to define, reify or represent the human subject.

67 (Postmodernism in the Electronic Libyinth elab.eserver.org/hf0242.html, (7/8/2013) It could be recalled that,  
68 postmodernism was a movement started in architectural field but with time, the movement was embraced in arts  
69 and humanity. The emphasis of this movement was on rejection of the modernist theory, avant garde concept or  
70 the passion for the new. Modernism according to the above websource is to "understand in art and architecture  
71 as the project of rejecting tradition in favour of going "where no man has gone before" or "to create forms for  
72 no other purpose than novelty [i.e. art for art sake]."

73 Postmodernism movement in the 50's and 60's rejected modernism's exploration of possibilities and a perpetual  
74 search for uniqueness and its cognate individuality. Even modernism's valorization of the new was rejected for  
75 conservative reasons.

76 Fundamentally, postmodernism wanted to maintain elements of modern utility while returning to the reassuring  
77 classical forms of the past. "The result of this was an ironic brick a brick or collage approach to construction  
78 that combines several traditional styles into one structure.

79 As collage, meaning found in combination of already created patterns."

80 Following this, the modern romantic image of the line creative artist was abandoned for the playful technical  
81 (perhaps computer hacker) who could retrieve and recombine creations from the past -data alone becomes  
82 necessary. This synthetic approach has been taken up, in a politically radical way, by the visual, musical,  
83 and literary arts where collage is used to startle viewers into reflection upon the meaning of reproduction  
84 (robin.escalation@ACM.org).

85 For example the current trend in pop music in the country where musician combined both the traditional beat  
86 with modern elements could be seen as postmodernism influence on indigenous pop music in Nigeria.

87 In summary, postmodernism is seen as a general and wide -ranging term which could be applied to literature,  
88 art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, and cultural/literary criticism, among others. Postmodernism is largely  
89 a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific knowledge or objective or any other effort deployed to explain  
90 reality. In essence, it stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it,  
91 but rather, is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality. (A Glossary  
92 Definition on www.pbs.org./posttbody.html)

93 III.

## 94 5 An Historical Perspective

95 From Yemi Ogunbiyi's (1981) edited resource book: Drama and Theatre in Nigeria..., and other available texts,  
96 one would agree with Ola-Koyi (1997) that between the pre-historical period and now theatrical performances  
97 in the country had gone through many stages starting from the ritual drama, (Ola Rotimi, Dapo Adelugba,) moving through the traditional travelling theatre (J. A. Adedeji), through the church cantata, school musical concert/performance, ??Echeruo), through the popular/ professional travelling theatre (Ebun Clark, Uli Beier, Wale Ogunbiyi, Akinwunmi Isola), through the academic drama (Biodun Jayifo, Demas Nwoko), through the

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101 radio drama (S. A. Shaibu), through the television drama (Segun Olusola), to the celluloid film age (Hyginus  
102 Ekuazi), and pausing on the current video film era (Foluke Ogunleye).

103 Right from the time Hubert Ogunde and his contemporaries Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola etc. took to  
104 professional acting in the 40s down to the period 1956 when Axworthy was invited by Molly Mahood, a professor  
105 in the Department of English, University of Ibadan, there were flourishing Student Dramatic Societies and other  
106 voluntary performing arts groups in Ibadan and Lagos.

107 For instance, there were so many Dramatic Societies in secondary schools, Teacher Training colleges, and the  
108 then University College, Ibadan. In the 50s and 60s, there existed along with other Yoruba operatic/dramatic  
109 travelling troupes, the University College Ibadan Dramatic Society (UCIDS); the Arts Theatre Production Group,  
110 The Players of the Down, the Mari Club and the Ibadan Operatic Society. All these groups were made up of  
111 theatrically minded people, students, clergymen, teachers, civil-servants, and business men, who engaged in the  
112 organisation of concerts, cantata, and other dramatic entertainment in a British tradition format. (LACE Pub.,  
113 Vol.1 No. ??, 1984:4) With the establishment of the first African school of drama in Ibadan, a new door of  
114 cooperation in theatrical experiment between the town and the gown was opened. In upholding the tenet of  
115 postmodernism which strived to maintain elements of modern utility while returning to the reassuring classical  
116 forms of the past, one could identify a positive result of this collage approach to dramatic construction that  
117 combined several traditional approaches and modern styles into one amalgamated structure in academic training  
118 and practice.

119 With a postmodernist analysis, one could see that in the 60s through to the 80s, the University of Ibadan was  
120 able to perform the following functions:

121 1. Serve as the arrow head in discovering new and techniques, in scripting, designing and the staging theatrical  
122 productions (for instance, most of the current great African plays text and stage productions were written and  
123 performed during this period.) 2. Provide highly trained human capacity for societal growth and development  
124 (for example, in the country today, most members of staff and students of the then school of drama are now  
125 leading theatre scholars and performing artists in academia. Although UPC was set up as an autonomous entity  
126 with its own board of management, however in term of play productions both for the stage and the screen, the  
127 director of UPC who was in charge of play directing, and actor training worked hand in hand with the Department  
128 of Theatre Arts. Consequently, there was a symbiotic relationship between the Department and the UPC.

129 Jide Malomo equally believed that, play selection for the stage was guided by concern for the well tested,  
130 successful and accessible plays by Nigerian authors. Secondly, plays were chosen based on their entertainment  
131 and simplicity values. As a result, the UPC gave accelerated popularity to some Nigerian Between 1980 and  
132 1986, under the directorship of Jide Malomo, UPC/Theatre Arts Department produced two serials -The Visitors  
133 written by Femi Osofisan, a lecture in the Department and Cloudy Horizon written by Taiwo Adeyemi a member  
134 of the UPC. In addition to all these achievements, over sixty single one-hour dramas were produced and shown  
135 on various stations all over the country.

136 In commenting on the running of the UPC operation, Jide Malomo opined that, "The UPC earned the bulk of  
137 its income from television contracts. A break-down of its gross income showed about 60% accruing from television  
138 performances, about 30% from film show, and less than 10% from stage performances." From all indications, the  
139 Department of Theatre Arts has been actively engaged in theatrical and drama productions from her inception  
140 in the 60s (which could be termed "the popular/ professional travelling theatre period) moving through 70s (i.e.  
141 "the Nascent celluloid film era") to mid 80s (i.e. "the television drama period") but went under siege right from  
142 beginning of the video film productions era (1988 till date.)

143 As a student of this great Department, the researcher could not help but to ask himself these three basic  
144 questions: In providing answer to the first question, one could not but take solace in the fact that the great  
145 Department of Theatre Arts might not want to mingle with uncertainty found in an experimental, nascent or  
146 under developed industry like "Nollywood". However, one must acknowledged the fact that due to individual  
147 interest and afterschool training, some members of staff and alumina of this Department have done the University  
148 proud in the areas of directing, acting, costuming for the Nigerian film industry while many staff and students  
149 of this same Department have carried many resounding studies on this industry.

150 Yet, the fact remains that, up till time of writing this paper, one could not point out a production in Nollywood  
151 endorsed by or emanating from this Department as she did for Kola Ogunmola's production in the 60s or as he  
152 led in the production of the required local dramatic contents for most nascent television stations in the 80s.

153 On the challenge of moulding, the highly trained human capacity required for the growth of Nigerian film  
154 industry, one must come to term with the fact that, the first Department of Theatre Arts in the country has not  
155 commence any programme that will take care of the training of executive personnel/crew for the nascent film  
156 industry in Nigeria. To some operators/employers of labour in Nigerian entertainment industry, the university  
157 graduates in the country are unemployable in the sense that most of these graduates are often retained before  
158 they could be given any executive portfolio in the industry.

159 For instance, the top echelons of a film production company will include director, script supervisor,  
160 dialogue coach, director of photography/cinematographer, sound designer, special effect specialist, makeup artist,  
161 costumier, production manager, supervising editor among others.

162 Even though, some of the alumina of this Department have found their ways into some of these executive  
163 positions in Nigerian film industry, this is made possible largely due to their personal interests and after school

164 knowledge acquisition or on the job training. Thus a full credit could not be given to their undergraduate  
165 training at the University. In our previous study on "Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and  
166 the Development of Performing Arts Programme", one wondered.

167 ...how many tertiary institutions in the country could claim to have included the following courses on film as  
168 part of their media arts syllabus: Cinematography, Film Editing, Soundtrack Design, Location and Production  
169 Management etc.? Yet the qualities of manpower produced in our tertiary institutions are seen by some  
170 practitioners as grossly incapable and inadequate for the emerging digital film industry. (Ola-Koyi, 2011:45)

171 Apart from areas such as script writing, dialogue coach, makeup, costume, and sometimes production  
172 management that are common positions in which knowledge and training on stage techniques could easily  
173 be applied when it come to screen production. Other areas such as cinematography/ "viedography", sound  
174 design, special effects and film editing are yet to be incorporated into the University of Ibadan undergraduate  
175 training programme/degree syllabus. In his study on "Theory, Criticism and the Nigerian Film", Tunde Onikoyi  
176 (2013:312) suggested that:

177 It is essential for the Nigerian university don to ensure that the Nigerian student is equipped with the various  
178 ideas of the usefulness of theories to film. They shall develop not just a critical mind but 'an active critical mind'  
179 that will question existing ideas for the purpose of developing new direction to theory. But it rests upon the  
180 shoulders of the teacher to courageously guide the student carefully, meticulously and dynamically.

181 From the foregoing, it shows that some of the existing programmes on performative arts and media  
182 entertainment are not specific designed to meet the peculiar need of the Nigerian film industry, therefore, there  
183 is a fresh demand for university trained human capacity for top executive positions in Nollywood.

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185 Volume XIV Issue III Version I Year ( ) G develop new programmes that are specifically tailored towards meeting  
186 the demand for highly trained manpower requirement in the ever growing entertainment industry in Nigeria.

187 As at the time of writing this paper, a fresh high school graduate could not inspire to study any of the following  
188 modern programmes in some universities in the country not even at this great University of Ibadan: Filmmaking,  
189 Sound Design, Sound and Music for Interactive Games, Music for Moving Image, Audio Post Production, etc.

## 190 7 IV.

191 A Concept of a B. a. / B. sc.

## 192 8 Programme in Film Studies

193 To be more specific, a designed B.A./B. Sc programme in film studies as it is ran by other higher institutions in  
194 foreign countries, is based on both theoretical study and practical exercises in the art of filmmaking. It involves  
195 creativity, project development and the business strategies on film production and a strong collaboration with  
196 independent production companies.

197 In this course, the concept of the filmmaker as auteur is emphasised and his place as a creative artiste is  
198 at the heart of teaching the process of film production. Basically this course often involves sharing on various  
199 filmmaking techniques and theories. A properly designed course on film studies often enables student to think,  
200 research, discuss and watch a lot of films. It encourages radical approach to film production, and the development  
201 of truly independent stories and ideas.

202 In this course, students are exposed to different genres and modes of film productions -areas such as narrative,  
203 documentary, animation and other experimental filmmaking are common grounds for workshop ensemble. At  
204 the end of this programme, each of the students is to specialize on any of the following areas: screenwriting,  
205 screen directing, creative production, cinematography, production design, sound recording technique / Design,  
206 film editing, screen performance, special effect design and animation etc. Sometimes the institution could also  
207 give financial assistance to some deserving students to pursue final year projects in film production.

208 In his postulation Onikoyi (2013:321), among other things recommended the establishment of a Department  
209 of Film Arts, that will develop of full time or part time undergraduate and post graduate programmes on film  
210 studies, the employment of master/PhD students in film related fields, and the setting up of film laboratory /  
211 studio for practical training. academic system could not be without any problem, confrontation or hindrance.  
212 The plausible challenges which the introduction of this proposed programme may encounter include: challenges  
213 on the retraining of manpower, problem of equipment acquisition, enlargement/introduction of new syllabus, the  
214 cumbersome process of registration with regulatory bodies.

## 215 9 Challenges on Retraining of Manpower

216 Naturally the introduction of a new programme/course of study will required the retraining of human resources  
217 who are the facilitators of the proposed programme/ discipline.

218 From practical experience as tutor, one could see that most conservative lecturers are unenthusiastic about  
219 the introduction of new programme. Some tutors are not just willing to explore new frontiers or venture into  
220 new courses except to remain in their comfort zone. This unwillingness of these rigid tutors may compel them  
221 to antagonize any move to introduce any teaching on film production as a new discipline/course of study.

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222 From all indications these conservative lecturers (both young and old) must realise that theatre or performing  
223 arts as a discipline is very dynamic in nature. It continues to reinvent itself years in, years out by adapting new  
224 media in its training, practices and manifestation. This is why the course is still very much relevant to the new  
225 age of ICT (information and communication technology). Therefore the conservative teachers must change with  
226 time and allow themselves to migrate from stage to screen. By venturing into the new frontiers or acquiring  
227 filmic knowledge and engaging in retraining programmes, both the students and the film industry will be better  
228 for it.

229 To be more precise, it is on record that some of the pioneering playwrights on the Nigerian stage (Akinwunmi  
230 Isola, Adebayo Falati and Femi Osofisan) have already migrated or in the process of migrating from stage to  
231 screen by acquiring new skills of writing for screen drama/movies which is not the same as writing for the stage.  
232 Some of the productions scripts written by these pioneering playwrights include Afunsetan Aniwura, Saworoide,  
233 Agogo-Eewo, and Maa mi.

234 Thus the conservative custodians of knowledge in the Departments of Theatre or Performing Arts, in our  
235 universities / colleges stand to gain more by cueing into new trend of performative arts and acquiring new  
236 knowledge which the new terrain demand. In

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240 Like any other innovation, the introduction of film programme or film production courses into any addition, as  
241 Onikoyi suggested above, post graduate students/ PhD. candidates in film related fields could be injected in to  
242 the system by encouraging them to take up the teaching of the new courses on film studies.

## 243 **12 V.**

244 VI.

## 245 **13 VII. Problem of Equipment Acquisition**

246 The task of acquiring new equipment for a new programme could be very cumbersome and tiring. Administra-  
247 tively, the proposal for the new equipment could take donkey years before it could be approved; its execution  
248 might equally be tied to the availability of fund. If these two huddles are finally scaled through, the new  
249 challenge that one need to overcome is sticking to the specification of the standard/quality of the required  
250 equipment or else wrong or inferior equipment might be purchased and this will in long run be a disservice to  
251 the proposed programme. Therefore, sufficient capital must be made available for the purchase/importation of  
252 required apparatus for the programme and skill must be acquired on the equipment handling and maintenance.  
253 In addition, constant electricity source must be provided for the operation and preservation of these gargets.

## 254 **14 VIII.**

## 255 **15 Enlargement/Introduction of New Syllabus**

256 A model B.A./B.Sc. Programme in film studies could be obtained in any of U. S. Universities that offer film  
257 studies or other independent film Institutions. Even though most syllabi will include courses in introduction  
258 to film, mode of film studies, film analysis, history of film/media, film theory and criticism with emphasis on  
259 time/period; regional creation; genres, and creative style/auteur approaches. In attempt to enlarge or introduce  
260 new syllabus on film studies, care must be taken to incorporate indigenous components and tailored towards  
261 national inspirations.

262 The proposed programme operators must see to the setting up and the provision of the following practical  
263 facilities: required media laboratories, sound studio, standard theatre, green screen and other industry-standard  
264 equipments. And the programme must be designed in such a way that it will make provision for industrial  
265 attachment and other linkageprogrammes with other institutions and production companies.

## 266 **16 IX.**

## 267 **17 The Involvement of Regulatory Bodies**

268 Even though the film industry and other performing arts fields do not have a central professional regulatory  
269 body like ICAN, Nigerian Bar Association, Nigerian Medical Board, The Guild of Editor etc. that could assist in  
270 instilling standard in the training of films practitioners, yet the involvement of related bodies in education (NUC,  
271 technical education body etc.), and registration with regulatory bodies must be revisited and restructured to be  
272 less cumbersome.

273 **18 X.**

274 **19 The Prospects of the Programme**

275 In order for Nigerian universities especially the great university of Ibadan, to carry out her fundamental roles of  
276 serving as the arrow head of research and teaching, providing highly trained human capacity for ever growing  
277 entertainment industry; providing training facilities and other extension services for interested individuals and  
278 organisations, this institution must be alive to her responsibilities and come up with designed programmes/courses  
279 of studies in line with required manpower needs of her immediate environment.

280 For instance in the 60s through to mid 80s it is fashionable to study Theatre Arts solely as a course or a  
281 standalone discipline but from 1990s till date it is no longer fashionable for any institution to train students  
282 solely on the arts of the theatre. Rather the new trend in theatre arts training is usually in combination with  
283 other disciplines such as Mass Communication, Film Arts, Psychology, or Biology Since the proposed programme  
284 involves both human and institutional changes, the paper therefore, propose a transitional period during which  
285 existing Department of Theatre Arts will run combined courses in both Theatre Arts and Film Arts. However,  
286 a well designed Department / Programme on Film studies must aid any institution in carrying out all the  
287 identified functions a university. By training graduates for the required highly trained manpower for the Nigerian  
288 entertainment industry it is believed that the new programme will help in eradicating "the try by error approach"  
289 in filmmaking.

290 **20 XI.**

291 **21 Conclusion**

292 Having ruminated on theoretical framework, gone through an historical reflection, developed a concept on the  
293 proposed B. A. / B. Sc. programme in Film Studies and considered the challenges and prospects of such  
294 programme, one can conclude with the fact that if the quality of a tree is known by its fruits, then it is possible  
295 that by improving the quality of training given to potential filmmakers, this will rub on positively on the quality  
296 of their productions.

297 Secondly, negative image created for the country through movies could be changed or enhanced by improving  
298 the quality of films made in Nigeria. Thus the productions of knowledgeable directors always shown their  
299 insightful movies, and they often create better image for the country in terms of film contents and themes, other  
300 professional organisations in the industry could still go a long way in ensuring standard in training of professional  
301 for the ever expanding film/entertainment industry.

302 However, the cumbersome process of Moreover, a team of scholars/experts in the Department Theatre and  
303 Film Arts will not only benefit from rendering consultant services like their counterparts in legal profession,  
304 medical, engineering fields who often combined profession practices with teaching and research but the adequate  
305 training facility provided for the use of the students, could also be used for extension services in the area of  
306 camera hiring, sound system and editing for individuals and private organisations requiring such services.

307 Once the Department or the University is attuned to the reality in the Nigeria film/entertainment industry,  
308 the institution will definitely succeed in performing her statutory duties of carrying out beneficiary researches,  
309 training advanced manpower for the overgrowing entertainment industry and providing other extension services  
310 as may be required by the society.

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<sup>2</sup>© 2014 Global Journals Inc. (US) Hence there is a need for the Nigerian Universities to



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Figure 1: U 1 Global

*[Note: 3. Provide training facilities and other extension services for interested individual and organisation within and outside the country. (That is, between 1963 and 1964, Kola Ogunmola's theatre troupe was invited to the University as Artist in Residence. With his cooperation, an experimental production "Palm Wine Drinkard" was carried as a masterpiece for his one year stay on campus. After this, many other great productions had emerged from the Arts Theatre, University of Ibadan.)]*

Figure 2:

Figure 3:



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