Academic Theater In Algeria Between Reality And Hope

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Abstract
This study aims to highlight the importance of professional academic training in the field of dramatic arts, as well as curriculum and standards development, and the activation of institutes in the field of theater and directing. Our research paper focuses on clarifying the role of academic theater in Algeria and emphasizes the significance of specialization and professionalism among those interested researchers, and stakeholders in academic theater in order to present scientific material in modern ways that enhance the educational level of theater, and create a strong interactive connection between it and society

Keywords: theatrical text, curriculum development, academic training, academic curricula.

1- Introduction

The theater, as an art form and an independent discipline, requires a method and knowledge for the talent of the theater artist to fully develop. On the theater stage, all arts converge, starting from literature and visual arts to sculpture and architecture, in addition to music, dance, and acting. They all intertwine and integrate in favor of the theatrical work. To present such productions, support and encouragement are necessary. Above all, it is essential to provide proper training for artists and theater practitioners to enhance their abilities and talents, and to explore new creative potentials in this field, which contribute important elements of professional growth that elevate the actor's talent to qualify for professional work capable of achieving visions and values, surpassing the concept of a hobby and embracing professionalism.

The number of artistic colleges in Algerian universities is increasing, which is evidence of their social awareness and the importance of academic roles in developing and advancing the theater movement. Since the university includes various artistic institutes in theater, cinema, visual arts, and music, we will focus on studying academic theater, which should be based on a systematic and structured infrastructure, establishing foundations and principles for this specialization. Theater relies on theories and diverse approaches in the creative process of theatrical texts, critical theories, acting techniques, and directing schools. Criticism, acting, set design, and music are shared disciplines in Algerian academic institutes and departments.

- Problem Statement

The theater is considered one of the oldest human activities, as it portrays everything related to life and society, and then presents it as creative works for the audience within a dramatic and appealing framework. To achieve creativity and professionalism in this artistic field, it is necessary to establish a professional academic theater in Algerian universities. Additionally, curriculum development is crucial at all educational levels as proposed solutions. This raises several questions including
- When will theater be integrated into the academic curricula in Algerian universities?
- Will Algerian talents have the opportunity to receive systematic and professional training within the university settings?
- Will we have professional academic actors and theater practitioners who graduate from Algerian universities?
- Will the societal perception of the arts change after providing academic education to its professional, beginner, and talented individuals? Will there be professional theater skills in theater management?
All of these questions, and more, will be addressed in this article

Significance of the Study–

The performance is the first cornerstone of theatrical excellence. If the process of presenting the performance is conducted in a scholarly and professional manner, it guarantees the achievement of artistic success. Additionally, enjoyable reading

and understanding the playwright's intentions, as well as interpreting those intentions, can bring the written theatrical text to life through multiple readings and interpretations. Herein lies the clear importance of the study in establishing the correct scientific regulation of these two processes, which will shed light on the effective role in the learning process of theater. It will also incorporate theater as an artistic discipline in Algerian universities and explore the foundational principles of this art form. Moreover, it is essential to follow its progress and development throughout history, reaching the current state of Algerian theater and aligning it with the requirements of the modern era. This includes the competence and professionalism of theater practitioners who have received academic training, their guidance for university students and talented individuals, as well as their supervision of national and regional theaters in accordance with the needs of this art form and its modernization.

In addition to these points, the significance of the study can be summarized as follows.

Understanding the extent of students' interest in theater and artistic institutes

Highlighting the educational process in Algerian schools and universities in the field of theater and directing.

Providing a clear picture that aims to showcase the methods of receiving academic curricula and courses in the field of theater and dramatic arts.

-Study Objectives

The study aims to uncover the topic of academic training in the field of arts in Algerian universities and the extent to which these courses keep up with the modern trends of global dramatic and theatrical arts. It explores the modernization and integration of academic theater through well-designed curricula taught by experts in the field, allowing students in Algerian universities to become future artists.

2- Study Terminology

2-1 / Theatrical Text:

The theatrical text is a written story that is performed on the theater stage. It includes events, characters, and dialogue. It illustrates the connection between individuals, time, and place through a series of interconnected and sequential scenes. The theatrical text is considered the dramatic structure that determines the flow of the theatrical performance, directing techniques, acting, and design. It provides the director with a visual representation of the setting and time, and it provides the actor with an initial understanding of the character they will portray through reading and memorizing their role in the text. Moreover, the theatrical text allows the audience to comprehend the idea and purpose of the play, and often determines the success or failure of the entire theatrical work in its initial stages **(Azahir, 2011, p.10).**

The theatrical text is one of the multiple elements that create the performance. It represents the written word in this duality, which the director, in collaboration with dramaturgy, later translates into voices, movements, and gestures performed by actors on the stage. The director relies on the components of this text, represented by theatrical instructions and dialogue. These two components are essential in defining the concept of the theatrical text. Anne Ubersfeld wondered, "What is the theatrical text?" and answered, "It consists of two distinct and unblended parts: dialogue and stage directions. It is a concept that refers to the dual structure of the dramatic text, although it is an unequal duality, with one component prevailing over the other. They are two different discourses that complement each other and together form and shape the theatrical text**" (Ubersfeld, 1987, p.21)**

Curriculum Theater: 2-2/

Curriculum theater is one of the latest methods in education as it utilizes theater as a means to facilitate learning, transforming the teaching process from its traditional form to an engaging format that breaks the monotony for learners. It involves addressing parts of the curriculum through a dramatic approach, with specific steps, allowing the learner to embody the roles within the theatrical content in the classroom under the supervision and guidance of the teacher **(Murry, 2008, p.19)**

It is also defined as the "reorganization of curriculum content and teaching methods in the form of natural dialogue situations. The learner takes on the roles that make up the new educational situation, in order to comprehend, interpret, and critique the educational material and to achieve the objectives of the curriculum" **(Shahata, 2008, p.210)**

In the process of curriculum theater, educational materials are brought out of their narrow and limited scope into a dynamic form, making them more vibrant, convincing, and facilitating understanding, allowing them to be firmly ingrained in the minds of both the performer and the audience. It transforms scientific material from theoretical discourse into movement and action (Ismail, 2008, p.20). Furthermore, if we define it procedurally, it can be described as an approach that involves role-playing, dialogue, and aims to transfer educational curricula from the world of abstractions to the world of perceptibles. It moves away from the traditional instructive approach towards an interactive approach, enabling the learner to construct their own instructions and knowledge, making them more active and engaged in the educational communication process **(Mokhtar, 2021, p.343)**. This approach specifically applies to the three educational stages.

2-3 / Academic Training

Academic training refers to students enrolling in institutes and universities for the purpose of education and professional development in higher education and scientific research, according to their respective specializations and the acceptance

criteria. The duration of academic training is three years, after which the student is awarded a bachelor's degree in their field of study. The beneficiaries of this training are high school graduates who are directed to institutes by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. These students are selected based on a set of criteria. The definition of university training does not differ significantly from other types of training in different sectors, except for certain aspects specific to higher academic training. University training is considered the highest level of education, and it is the final stage that culminates the previous levels of education (elementary, middle, and high school). It is the stage that students enter after obtaining their baccalaureate certificate and gaining admission to a university in Algeria. Training is a means of equipping individuals with the appropriate professional skills and competencies, enabling them to perform their professional tasks effectively and in the shortest possible time **(Qatti, 2009, p.33)**. It is also defined as an organized process that aims to stimulate the varying degrees of personal development in the individual's thinking, perception, emotions, and behavior **(Saeed, date, p.76)**

Training is also defined as a positive process of specialized modification that addresses an individual's professional or occupational behavior. Its goal is to acquire knowledge and experience in order to improve one's level. It is a means of preparing qualified professionals for successful and immediate employment, enhancing cognitive abilities through the development of required knowledge, skills, and behaviors **(Hassan, 1998, p.10)**

Among the few concepts and definitions that focus on university training, it can be defined as the preparation of highly qualified human resources capable of rationalization, scientific research, knowledge production, and its direct application. It also involves organizing the management of society and the state politically, economically, and socially **(Ahmed, 2000, p.47).** Based on the aforementioned definitions, we can define university training as a systematic positive modification of knowledge, qualifications, and behaviors that students receive at a specific stage in their university education. It enables them to become active contributors to the society they live in, participating in its social, cultural, economic, and political development according to their field of training **(Al-Karim, 2019, p.72)**

3 - Methods for Developing Professional Algerian Theater Skills
The aim of academic theater is to teach the structural elements of the theatrical text, its components, and the historical stages it has gone through, starting from drawing inspiration from epics and the Iliad, to the crystallization, codification, and canonization of the text in Aristotle's book "Poetics". This encompasses religious, Shakespearean, classical, new classical, romantic, and contemporary texts, with accompanying studies of dramatic writers and their contributions. The development of theatrical education has progressed in line with human and cultural advancement **(Bonfils, 2019, p.36)** .

Some academic institutions recognized the importance of these developments and proposed expanding the scope of their relationship with production, placing it on par with these advancements. They introduced subjects that enable students to use lighting, sound effects, and the relationship with visual imagery and its techniques . These institutions established laboratories and prepared students for graduation equipped with technical knowledge. This foresaw the future relationship between graduates and the job market before they entered the theater industry **(Bonfils, 2019, p.37).** In addition to their theatrical productions as actors, directors, and scenographers, courses related to law were also introduced to familiarize graduates with their rights in their professional careers.

The curricula have undergone significant changes, especially in terms of technical aspects. The study materials no longer focus solely on theory and practice but also extend to media and cinema-related subjects. They include audio-visual compositions in performances and the use of technical materials in lighting and cinematography. With the emergence of post-modern theatrical concepts that align with post-modern culture and its new forms, Algerian academic theater draws inspiration from them. The current generation of academics engages in theater art by incorporating the materials taught in their institutions and embracing the changes and modifications that enable the development of theatrical movement

4- The reasons behind this include
The majority of theater productions presented by graduates today, both within and outside academic institutions, rely on traditional and contemporary technology as a fundamental element in visual composition. Algerian universities strive to train their students in this regard.

Competent individuals with an academic background have wide-ranging knowledge of recent theories on performance, art of acting, and representation.

Academics and recent graduates adopt modern methods and techniques of representation and performance that are consistent with what is taught in the institute. University graduates seek to employ their acquired skills in practical settings **(Kattab, 2011, p.312)**

These developments in theatrical art and the changing aesthetic concept of performance, text, and its dramatic structure have prompted academic institutions to introduce subjects related to aesthetics and beauty to keep pace with the various aesthetic, artistic, and structural changes occurring in theater. Meanwhile, academic theater practitioners have started to formulate post-modern concepts that are compatible with their knowledge and engage and interact with the unique features

of a fast-paced era characterized by a global technological revolution, the removal of barriers, cultural openness, and cross-cultural exchange. The new generation of Algerian academic theater artists draw on their own observations, employ various techniques, and engage with other cultures **(Al-Bachtawi, 2011, p.179.)**

5 - Algerian Talent and Professional Training in Algerian Universities in the Future.
Academic theatrical training, in terms of theory and application, can contribute to the advancement of talent and the development of actors' skills. This training is based on their natural talent, inclinations, and desires to showcase these talents on stage. It is one of the essential requirements for the creation of a professional academic theater industry capable of realizing visions and values upon which dynamic theatrical performances are built **(Al-Mun'am, 2020, p. 48).** This goes beyond the concept of hobbies through workshops that have limited effectiveness and minimal impact.

In this context, to achieve professionalism in theatrical performance, the fundamental requirements include establishing specialized institutes and academies for teaching the art of theater. This is currently lacking on a deeper level, with only a few scattered academies in some universities, while being completely absent in most other universities. However, we cannot ignore the role played by some specialized faculties in Algeria in this field, particularly the Faculty of Arts and Fine Arts at the University of Sania Oran, as well as the Faculty of Arts in Mostaganem with all its disciplines. With respect and appreciation for all the workshops and artistic laboratories in Algerian universities that have laid the foundations for professional theater and its initial development, they have been presented through academic achievements that demonstrated the initial basis for a professional Algerian theater industry aspiring to reach global recognition through studying contents and principles. This journey aims to achieve professionalism in performance and direction, along with all the requirements of modern stage production. However, these studies have not gone beyond the confines of universities. Therefore, there is an aspiration to establish specialized institutes capable of accommodating all those engaged in the theater field. These institutes should offer numerous motivating advantages for young talents and serve as an academic platform for theatrical arts, training professionals in acting, directing, set design, costume design, lighting design, scenography, and other related sectors. This would enhance the capabilities of artists by providing them with a solid academic and theoretical foundation through curricula and practical training on the theater stage, as well as local and international theatrical engagements.

To achieve this, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive educational system that embraces the concept of academic schools at all stages of education. This system should support and encourage talent, establish work plans and strategies, and focus on nurturing and embracing emerging talents, while identifying their future goals and dimensions.

The theater, as an art form and a discipline in itself, should be approached through a structured methodology and knowledge, as it cannot be complete without a scientific working method provided by studies, research, and practical and realistic mechanisms. This is what we aim to achieve through our academies and universities today. On the theater stage, all arts converge, starting from literature and visual arts to sculpture, architecture, music, dance, and acting. They all come together and intertwine in favor of theatrical productions, not forgetting the techniques of directing and presentation (Author, 2011, p. 313)

This necessitates the presence of academic institutions that support, motivate, and refine these talents and adopt them in all these fields under the umbrella of education and qualification. According to artist "**Abdullah Saleh,"** as reported by **'Zahra Bonfus",** "Academic theater is not well-established as it should be" **(Bonfus, 2019, p. 36**). Therefore, the educational system as a whole should activate theater in the curriculum, starting from elementary school and continuing through all other educational stages (middle school, high school) in order to discover talents at an early stage, follow their artistic growth, and eventually reach academies and universities. The theater arts specialization does not attract many students because they are unaware of it as an academic discipline. They are surprised to find it among the available choices after obtaining their high school diploma. Even if a student chooses it and pursues their studies, they do so without prior knowledge or awareness. Thus, their journey of knowledge starts from scratch, which is now criticized in the field of academic education. Instead of Algerian learners being raised on a foundation of artistic theater knowledge, they have to add and acquire it through their learning process

And its previous knowledge accumulations in the stages and thresholds of education, the actor tries to familiarize themselves with the specialized standards from the beginning. Regarding the possibility of the theatrical actor's discovery of the professional world, it is necessary for them to have received systematic training that builds their visions, defines their work prospects, and enables them to innovate and keep up with developments in their field **(Saeed, date, p. 47).** With the availability of virtual learning platforms and the conversion of what can be converted into digital platforms, theater should also embrace this approach to easily disseminate the culture of theatrical art. Theater emerges and disseminates unconventional concepts that can contribute to changing society's perception of this refined art form and keep up with global developments through **it (Ghawas, 2019, p. 132)**. Academic theater today may require constant development and innovation to achieve global professionalism that extends beyond the local scene It should contribute to the cultural and artistic development of the country

First and foremost, attention must be given to training in the field of theater, which plays an important role in preparing students with a high level of effectiveness and the necessary balance to integrate into society and influence it. This field of study is one of the few that actively involves learners in the educational process and pays attention to their psychological well-being, which is the pathway to learning. Contemporary studies emphasize the importance of employing techniques in arts education and the importance of arts themselves in developing cognitive and scientific achievements in all disciplines **(Hamda, 2011, p. 15).** The American Curriculum and Supervision Development Association even argues that the use of theatrical performance is an enhancing factor for students' ability to create, innovate, and encourage intuitive and emotional responses. Moreover, it calls for the necessity of utilizing what is known as digital theater within universities, which is defined **by Mohammed Hassan Habib** as "the theater that employs the new modern technological elements, represented by the use of various digital media in its production or formation of theatrical discourse, provided it acquires the interactive quality" **(Habib, 2009). Emad El Hadi Khefaji** confirms that "digital theater is not theater created through a zero-sum equation but rather theater that relies on digital technology in building its artistic processing tools, such as lighting and sound effects, to enrich the aesthetic and artistic vision of the direction" **(Khefaji, 2019).** Thus, it can be referred to as digital technologies theater to avoid confusion with the concept and to provide clarity in defining it

The more accurate concept is the procedural definition of university e-learning in theater education, which refers to an electronic media system consisting of a portal or platform, websites, blogs, pages on various social media platforms, and specialized media applications for smartphones and tablets. These media disseminate news, information, announcements, and multimedia content, encompassing specialized digital media content in university theater. They are described as specialized media in university theater, distinguishing them from media specialized in theater in general **(Sadeq, 2018).** University media, along with modern communication tools, play a crucial role in the lives of university students. They guide and provide them with various information to facilitate their university life and help them succeed in their studies. Moreover, they significantly contribute to improving the quality of university education by enhancing the performance of students as one of the university's human resources. Additionally, they instill a spirit of scientific, cultural, and media research in the minds of students **(Fadloun, 2014, p. 37).** This means that arts in general, including theater specifically, are a field charged with a strong drive towards representing human experiences and understanding their transformations. They offer students opportunities to choose, examine, and evaluate these experiences, which is the essence of their importance and effectiveness in specialization.

It is impossible for any researcher to discuss theater education in Algerian universities without acknowledging the efforts of academician **"Mustafa Katib,** who was one of the first advocates for introducing theater into Algerian universities. He emphasized the importance of training professionals in the artistic and theatrical fields, as well as the role of training in the development of cultural institutions, especially theaters. **Mustafa Katib** called for the establishment of institutions dedicated to arts education and presented a comprehensive project for training in theater studies. He stressed that training in this field should be at the university level, stating that holders of a Bachelor's degree in theater studies should possess diverse scientific and technical knowledge related to theatrical works, pedagogical information, and methodological knowledge. This enables them to enter the world of work and creativity, in addition to individuals holding Master's and Ph.D. degrees **(Katib, 2011)**

6 - Conclusion

Academic theater within universities is moving towards the world of technology. However, this shift has not been accompanied by a deliberate response to the technological requirements that would optimize their joint corner, represented by academic theater media, especially the digital aspect. Our research paper focused on academic theater in Algeria, aiming to open the field for those interested, researchers, and stakeholders in academic theater to provide solutions that elevate the educational level of theater more and more and create a strong interactive relationship between theater and society. This is particularly important considering the concerns expressed by some parents about their children pursuing theater and arts disciplines in general, fearing the lack of job opportunities in the arts field. In this context, we can propose some suggestions that we list below for those interested in this field.

- Recommendations

Institutes and departments of theater arts across the country should enhance the presence of academic theater media content online by launching a larger number of websites, pages on various social media networks, channels on YouTube, digital radios, and television channels. Care should be taken to provide specialized and carefully studied deep content, in line with the theater's creative specialization, in order to broaden exposure and promote the art.

∗ These platforms and websites should focus on publishing and utilizing multimedia to ensure reaching the largest number of users, thus enabling academic theater to attract followers from outside the university and from different segments of society

∗ There should be an emphasis on openness to experiences and encouragement of talent in all arts to change the inferior perception of these artistic professions that refine and polish souls

∗ Academic theater practitioners within theater arts institutes and departments at universities, along with experts in the field and those working in academic media, including students, are urged to take action and engage in extensive and

continuous discussions to provide practical and applicable solutions to the problem of disconnect or stagnation between the world of theater and society. This is to ensure that academic theater serves art, culture, the university, and the community as a whole.

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