

Interrogating the Difference in Nomenclature within Theatre for Development (TfD): Historical, Ideological, and Methodological Implications for Participatory Performance Practice

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Abstract

This paper critically examines differences in nomenclature within Theatre for Development (TfD), arguing that naming functions not merely as description but as praxis. Drawing on liberation pedagogy, applied theatre theory, and critical development discourse, the study analyzes how TfD terminologies emerge from specific historical, ideological, and institutional contexts. The findings demonstrate that early labels such as *Popular Theatre* and *People's Theatre* reflect anti-colonial struggle and collective resistance, while later terms such as *Theatre for Development* and *Applied Theatre* align with processes of institutionalization and professional accountability. The analysis further reveals that nomenclature structures ideological orientation, participatory methodology, ethical responsibility, and epistemic authority. The paper contends that terminological multiplicity should not be viewed as a conceptual deficiency; instead, it posits that productive tension is essential to the vitality of TfD, contingent upon reflexive engagement. By reframing nomenclature as praxis, the study advances theoretical coherence in TfD scholarship and points out the moral value of naming in participatory performance practice.

Keywords: Theatre for Development; nomenclature; applied theatre; participation; power; praxis.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Theatre for Development (TfD) occupies a complex and contested position within theatre, performance, and development studies. As a field of practice and scholarship, TfD has been mobilized across diverse sociopolitical contexts to address issues ranging from health communication and education to governance, human rights, and social justice. Despite its widespread application and growing academic recognition, TfD remains characterized by conceptual ambiguity, particularly in relation to the multiplicity of terms used to describe closely related practices. This chapter introduces the central concern of the study: the critical interrogation of nomenclature within TfD and the implications such naming practices hold for theory, methodology, and ethics.

Rather than providing a historical background, this chapter situates the study within ongoing scholarly debates about definition, categorization, and disciplinary identity. Scholars have long noted that TfD is variously described as popular theatre, community theatre,

participatory theatre, theatre for liberation, forum theatre, and applied theatre, among others (Kidd, 1984; Prentki & Preston, 2009; Nicholson, 2019). While this plurality is often acknowledged as a sign of richness and adaptability, it also raises fundamental questions about coherence, power, and epistemology within the field. This chapter therefore frames nomenclature not as a terminological inconvenience but as a critical analytical problem worthy of sustained scholarly attention.

Central to this discussion is the recognition that language is never neutral, particularly within development and participatory practice. As Chambers (2017) argues, terminology in development discourse shapes what is seen, what is valued, and who has the authority to define problems and solutions. In the context of TfD, naming practices influence how theater interventions are conceptualized, funded, evaluated, and legitimized. Labels carry implicit assumptions about participation, agency, and desired outcomes, positioning theatre either as a dialogical process of collective inquiry or as an instrumental tool for behavior change. This chapter thus foregrounds nomenclature as a site where

power relations between communities, practitioners, institutions, and donors are negotiated.

The chapter also engages with applied theatre scholarship, where umbrella terms have been introduced to consolidate diverse socially engaged performance practices within academic discourse. While applied theatre has provided a valuable framework for disciplinary recognition and methodological exchange, critics caution that such categorization risks obscuring the historical and political specificity of practices rooted in postcolonial and liberation struggles (Prentki, 2015; Alderton, 2023). This tension between disciplinary coherence and contextual specificity is particularly pronounced in TfD, which emerged from grassroots movements rather than academic institutions. The chapter therefore positions TfD nomenclature within broader debates about professionalization, institutionalization, and the politics of knowledge production.

Another key concern addressed in this chapter is the relationship between nomenclature and participation. Participatory theatre is often defined by its emphasis on inclusion, collaboration, and shared authorship, yet scholars increasingly warn that participation can be rhetorical rather than substantive (Thompson, 2009; Nico & Balfour, 2023). Terminology plays a crucial role in this dynamic, as participatory language may mask hierarchical facilitation practices or externally imposed agendas. By interrogating how different TfD terms structure expectations of participation and agency, this chapter lays the groundwork for a more ethically grounded analysis of practice.

Finally, this chapter establishes the conceptual orientation of the study by proposing nomenclature as praxis—a lens through which naming is understood as an active, constitutive force in social practice rather than a descriptive label applied after the fact. Drawing on Freirean pedagogy and critical performance theory, praxis is understood as the inseparable relationship between reflection and action (Freire, 1970/2000; Boal, 1979/2008). Approaching TfD nomenclature as praxis allows this study to move beyond definitional debates and toward a critical examination of how language shapes the possibilities and limits of participatory theatre. In doing so, the chapter sets the foundation for the analyses that follow, which examine the historical, ideological, methodological, and ethical dimensions of naming within Theatre for Development.

1.1 Background to Theatre for Development

Theatre for Development (TfD) emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century as a response to the limitations of conventional development communication and elitist theatrical traditions, particularly within postcolonial societies of Africa, Asia, and Latin

America. Rooted in participatory pedagogy, indigenous performance practices, and political education, TfD developed as a form of socially engaged theatre designed to facilitate dialogue, critical reflection, and collective action among marginalized communities (Kidd, 1984; Mda, 1993; Prentki & Preston, 2009). Unlike conventional theatre that privileges aesthetic autonomy and professional spectatorship, TfD prioritizes process over product and positions community members as co-creators rather than passive recipients of meaning.

The philosophical foundations of TfD are closely linked to Paulo Freire's (1970/2000) theory of *conscientização*, which emphasizes critical awareness and dialogical learning as pathways to social transformation. This pedagogical orientation was later expanded through Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, which introduced embodied, participatory performance techniques that enable communities to rehearse social change through dramatic action (Boal, 1979/2008). Within this framework, theater becomes not merely representational but interventionist—a means of interrogating lived realities and imagining alternative futures.

Historically, TfD evolved within postcolonial contexts where theater functioned as a tool for cultural reclamation, political resistance, and popular education. Etherton (1982) and Kerr (1995) document how community-based theatre practices in Africa rejected colonial theatrical models in favor of indigenous forms such as storytelling, song, dance, and ritual. These practices were often aligned with anti-colonial and liberation movements, positioning theatre as both a cultural and political act (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). Consequently, TfD has always existed at the intersection of art, politics, and development, resisting rigid categorization.

However, as TfD expanded across geographical, institutional, and disciplinary boundaries, it became associated with a wide range of terminologies, including *popular theatre*, *community theatre*, *applied theatre*, *participatory theatre*, *theatre for liberation*, and *forum theatre*. While these labels often refer to overlapping practices, they are shaped by distinct ideological commitments, methodological priorities, and institutional contexts (Prentki, 2015; Thompson, 2009). This proliferation of nomenclature has generated both conceptual richness and theoretical ambiguity within the field.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Despite its growth and global recognition, Theatre for Development remains conceptually fragmented due to persistent differences in nomenclature. Scholars and practitioners frequently use multiple terms interchangeably, often without clarifying their ideological, methodological, or historical

distinctions. While some researchers frame Tfd as a subset of applied theater (Nicholson, 2005; Prentki & Preston, 2009), others insist on its distinct roots in postcolonial resistance and participatory development (Mda, 1993; Byam, 1999). This lack of terminological coherence has resulted in conceptual confusion, theoretical dilution, and occasional misrepresentation of Tfd practices.

The problem is not merely semantic. Terminology in Tfd reflects deeper questions of power, agency, and purpose. Chambers (1997) argues that language within development discourse is never neutral; it shapes who defines problems, whose knowledge counts, and how interventions are legitimized. Similarly, Thompson (2009) cautions that the uncritical adoption of umbrella terms such as "*applied theatre*" risks obscuring the radical political and emancipatory foundations of Tfd. When nomenclature is detached from its historical and ideological contexts, theatre practices may be instrumentalized to serve donor-driven agendas rather than community-defined priorities.

Furthermore, the absence of sustained scholarly analysis on the implications of nomenclatural diversity limits the field's theoretical clarity and pedagogical coherence. While existing literature acknowledges terminological plurality, few studies critically interrogate what these differences reveal about the evolution, politics, and ethics of Tfd practice. This study therefore addresses a significant gap by examining nomenclature not as a superficial linguistic issue but as a critical lens through which the identity and trajectory of Theatre for Development can be understood.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to critically examine the differences in nomenclature within Theatre for Development and analyse their historical, ideological, and methodological implications for participatory theatre practice.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Trace the historical emergence of Theatre for Development and its associated terminologies.
2. Examine the theoretical and ideological foundations underpinning different Tfd nomenclatures.
3. Analyse how terminological variations reflect differing methodological approaches and power relations.
4. Evaluate the implications of nomenclatural diversity for Tfd practice, scholarship, and ethics.
5. Contribute to conceptual clarity in Tfd by proposing a critical understanding of terminology as praxis.

1.4 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What historical and sociopolitical factors contributed to the emergence of multiple nomenclatures within Theatre for Development?
2. How do different Tfd terminologies reflect distinct ideological and theoretical orientations?
3. In what ways do nomenclatural differences influence participatory methods and community engagement?
4. What are the implications of terminological multiplicity for the ethics and effectiveness of Tfd practice?
5. How can a critical analysis of nomenclature enhance theoretical coherence within the field of Tfd?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. Academically, it contributes to Theatre and Performance Studies by offering a systematic and critical analysis of Tfd terminology, an area that remains under-theorized despite its prevalence in scholarship. By foregrounding nomenclature as an analytical category, the study deepens understanding of how theory, practice, and ideology intersect within participatory theatre.

Practically, the study provides Tfd practitioners, development workers, and facilitators with a clearer framework for understanding the implications of the terms they employ. Such clarity is essential for ethical practice, particularly in contexts where power imbalances between communities, institutions, and facilitators are pronounced (Thompson, 2009). For policymakers and development agencies, the study highlights the importance of respecting the philosophical foundations of participatory theater rather than reducing it to a communication tool.

Finally, the study is socially significant because it reinforces the importance of community agency and epistemic justice in development practice. By interrogating how naming shapes practice, the research aligns with broader efforts to decolonize knowledge production and reaffirm the political roots of Theatre for Development.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to a conceptual and theoretical analysis of Theatre for Development nomenclature, drawing primarily on scholarly literature from Africa and the Global South, where Tfd has been most extensively theorized and practiced. While examples from Asia and Latin America are referenced, the study does not provide ethnographic case studies or empirical fieldwork.

A key limitation is the reliance on secondary sources, which may not fully capture contemporary grassroots practices that resist academic classification. Additionally, the evolving nature of TfD means that new terminologies may continue to emerge beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, the study provides a robust analytical foundation for understanding the politics and significance of naming within TfD discourse.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Theatre for Development (TfD):

A participatory theatre practice that employs performance as a tool for dialogue, critical awareness, and community-led social transformation (Kidd, 1984; Mda, 1993).

Applied Theatre:

An umbrella term referring to theatre practices used in non-traditional settings for social, educational, or therapeutic purposes (Nicholson, 2005).

Participatory Theatre:

A form of theater that actively involves non-professional participants in the creation and performance process (Prentki & Preston, 2009).

Theatre for Liberation:

A politically oriented theatre practice influenced by Freirean pedagogy and Boalian aesthetics, aimed at challenging oppressive structures (Boal, 1979/2008).

Conscientization:

The process of developing critical awareness of social, political, and economic realities as a precursor to transformative action (Freire, 1970/2000).

2.0 LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the conceptual and theoretical foundations underpinning the study of nomenclature in Theatre for Development (TfD). Rather than treating terminology as a secondary or technical concern, the chapter argues that naming practices are central to how TfD is theorized, practiced, institutionalized, and evaluated. Within socially engaged theatre, language functions as a structuring force that shapes ideological commitments, pedagogical approaches, power relations, and epistemological assumptions. As such, TfD nomenclature must be understood as an active site of meaning-making rather than a neutral descriptor of practice.

Existing scholarship acknowledges the multiplicity of terms associated with TfD—such as Popular Theatre, Community Theatre, Theatre for Liberation, Participatory Theatre, and Applied

Theatre—but often addresses this diversity descriptively rather than analytically (Prentki & Preston, 2009; Nicholson, 2019). This chapter responds to that gap by positioning nomenclature as a critical lens through which broader debates about agency, participation, and social transformation can be examined. By foregrounding theory, the chapter reframes terminological diversity as a reflection of historical struggle, ideological positioning, and institutional negotiation.

The chapter draws on four interrelated bodies of scholarship: liberation pedagogy, applied theatre theory, participatory performance studies, and critical development communication. Together, these frameworks illuminate how naming practices both reflect and reproduce power relations within TfD. By situating nomenclature at the intersection of theory and praxis, this chapter lays the groundwork for the analytical arguments developed in subsequent chapters, particularly the findings presented in Chapter Four.

2.2 Conscientization and Liberation Pedagogy

Conscientization remains one of the most enduring theoretical foundations informing Theatre for Development practice and its associated nomenclature. Conscientization, based on Paulo Freire's liberation pedagogy, is the process by which people and groups become more aware of the social, political, and economic systems that shape their lives. This leads to group reflection and action (Freire, 1970/2000). Within TfD, this pedagogical orientation positions theater not as entertainment or instruction but as a dialogical process through which communities interrogate oppression and imagine alternatives.

Contemporary scholarship confirms that liberation pedagogy continues to shape participatory theatre practices, particularly in contexts marked by inequality, marginalization, and postcolonial struggle (Chinyowa, 2021; Nocheva, 2024). TfD nomenclatures such as *Theatre for Liberation*, *Theatre of Conscientization*, and *Political Theatre* explicitly signal alignment with Freirean principles, foregrounding theatre's role in fostering critical dialogue rather than delivering predetermined development messages (Beck *et al.*, 2021; Prentki, 2022). These terms function as ideological declarations, making visible the political intent of the practice.

In contrast, more neutral or institutional labels—such as *applied theatre*—may obscure this radical lineage, even when similar participatory methods are employed (Alderton, 2023). This does not imply that applied theatre is inherently depoliticized, but rather that its nomenclature allows for greater ideological flexibility, which can dilute emancipatory intent when situated within outcome-driven development frameworks. The distinction is therefore not merely semantic but pedagogical, reflecting different

understandings of theatre's purpose and ethical responsibility.

Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed remains central to this liberationist tradition, particularly through methods such as Forum Theatre, which transform spectators into "spect-actors" capable of rehearsing social change (Boal, 1979/2008). Recent studies demonstrate that Boalian methods continue to inform TfD interventions in governance, public health, and social justice activism across the Global South (Mutonya, 2024; Puvaneyshwaran *et al.*, 2025). The continued invocation of liberation-oriented nomenclature in such context's underscores naming as an ethical and political stance, resisting depoliticized development discourse.

2.3 Applied Theatre and Participatory Performance Theory

Particularly within Western academic discourse, applied theatre theory serves as a dominant conceptual lens that increasingly frames TfD nomenclature. Applied theatre is commonly defined as theatre created for specific social purposes, outside conventional performance venues, and often involving non-professional participants (Nicholson, 2019; Prentki, 2022). As an umbrella category, applied theatre has facilitated disciplinary consolidation, enabling dialogue across education, health, community development, and criminal justice contexts.

However, recent scholarship has increasingly interrogated the inclusivity and limitations of "*applied theatre*" as a classificatory term. Alderton (2023) argues that while applied theatre offers global legibility and institutional legitimacy, it risks homogenizing culturally and historically specific practices such as TfD by subsuming them under a universalized taxonomy. This concern is particularly acute for practices emerging from the Global South, where theater is deeply embedded in indigenous epistemologies and collective political struggle (Chinyowa, 2021).

Nico and Balfour (2023) further caution that the language of "application" can imply instrumentalization, positioning theatre as a tool deployed *on* communities rather than a process generated *with* them. This critique highlights how nomenclature shapes ethical perception, framing theater either as dialogical engagement or as a means to externally defined ends. Participatory performance theory complicates this terrain by emphasizing collaboration, co-authorship, and shared authority (Sonn *et al.*, 2022).

Terms such as "*participatory theater*" and "*community theater*" foreground relational process and horizontal engagement, yet recent research stresses that participation is not inherently emancipatory (Thompson, 2021; Nico & Balfour, 2023). Participation must be

analyzed within specific power contexts, including facilitation structures and funding regimes. Thus, nomenclature operates not only as a methodological descriptor but also as a signifier of ethical positioning within participatory practice.

2.4 Theatre, Power, and Development Discourse

The relationship between theater and development is fundamentally shaped by power. Critical development scholars argue that participatory practices, including TfD, are embedded within political and economic systems that influence whose voices are amplified and whose are marginalized (Chambers, 2017; Prentki, 2022). Within this context, naming practices become a key mechanism through which power circulates, particularly when theater projects are funded or mediated by NGOs, governments, or international agencies.

Recent studies demonstrate that depoliticized terminologies are often favored within institutional development contexts because they align with measurable outcomes, monitoring frameworks, and behavior-change models (Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide *et al.*, 2025; Mayeux, 2025). Labels such as "*applied theatre*" or "*integrated development theatre*" are perceived as less politically risky, enhancing project sustainability and donor confidence. However, this institutional preference often comes at the cost of political specificity and community-defined meaning.

In contrast, explicitly political nomenclatures—such as *Theatre for Liberation* or *Political Theatre*—may be viewed as subversive, leading to censorship, funding withdrawal, or practitioner marginalization (Kamanzi, 2023; Thompson, 2021). These dynamics demonstrate that TfD nomenclature serves as a platform for negotiation, wherein practitioners reconcile institutional legitimacy with ethical responsibility to communities.

Critical development communication scholars argue that such processes reinforce epistemic hierarchies, privileging external expertise over local knowledge and lived experience (Bhardwaj, 2023; Nocheva, 2024). As a result, naming practices influence not only how theater is perceived but also how power, knowledge, and authority are distributed within development interventions.

2.5 Naming as Ideology and Epistemology

Naming within TfD functions simultaneously as an ideological and epistemological act. From a critical theory perspective, language shapes reality by defining what is thinkable, legitimate, and actionable within social practice (Foucault, 1980). In the context of participatory theatre, nomenclature conveys underlying beliefs regarding agency, knowledge creation, and the

essence of social change (Beck *et al.*, 2021; Prentki, 2022).

Scholars such as Hakib (2020) and Chinyowa (2021) argue that TfD nomenclature reflects competing epistemologies. Indigenous and community-based terms—such as *Popular Theatre* or *People's Theatre*—emphasize collective praxis, oral tradition, and cultural rootedness. In contrast, institutional and academic labels—such as *applied theatre*—reflect professionalization, abstraction, and disciplinary consolidation. These distinctions are significant as they influence research design, evaluation standards, and ethical responsibility.

Recent epistemological critiques further suggest that terminological dominance can marginalize alternative ways of knowing and practicing theatre (Nico & Balfour, 2023; Nocheva, 2024). When certain terms become hegemonic within academic or development discourse, they risk silencing locally meaningful classifications. Analyzing nomenclature is therefore essential for understanding how TfD knowledge is produced, circulated, and legitimized within global systems of power.

2.6 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Building on the preceding discussion, this study adopts a conceptual framework that positions TfD nomenclature at the intersection of ideology, pedagogy, power, and practice. Within this framework, terminology is understood not as a static label but as a dynamic site where theoretical commitments and practical realities converge.

Specifically, nomenclature is conceptualized as

1. A reflection of theoretical orientation, distinguishing liberation pedagogy from instrumental development approaches.
2. It serves as a symbol of the power dynamics that exist between communities, practitioners, institutions, and donors.
3. An epistemological stance that determines whose knowledge is prioritized and legitimized.
4. These practical determinant shapes methods, ethical responsibilities, and evaluative outcomes.

By analyzing nomenclature through these interrelated dimensions, the study moves beyond descriptive categorization toward critical interrogation. This framework enables a nuanced understanding of how naming practices both shape and are shaped by the evolving field of Theatre for Development, providing the analytical foundation for the findings presented in Chapter Four.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Theatre for Development nomenclature is deeply embedded in theoretical, ideological, and political frameworks. Drawing on liberation pedagogy, applied theatre theory, participatory performance studies, and critical development discourse, it has established that naming is not neutral but constitutive of practice. Terminology shapes how theater is imagined, enacted, governed, and evaluated, influencing participation, power, and epistemic authority.

The conceptual framework developed here provides the analytical lens for subsequent chapters, particularly the empirical and interpretive analyses in Chapter Four. By foregrounding nomenclature as a site of praxis, this study contributes to a more critically grounded understanding of Theatre for Development and its transformative possibilities.

3.0 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT NOMENCLATURE

3.1 Introduction

The nomenclature associated with Theatre for Development (TfD) did not emerge in a linear or unified manner. Rather, it evolved through complex historical processes shaped by anti-colonial struggle, popular education movements, institutional development agendas, and academic disciplinary formations. This chapter traces the historical evolution of TfD terminology across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, demonstrating how different labels arose in response to specific sociopolitical, cultural, and institutional contexts. By examining the emergence of terms such as "*popular theatre*," "*community theatre*," "*theatre for liberation*," and "*applied theatre*," the chapter reveals how naming practices function as historical markers of ideological orientation and power relations within socially engaged theatre.

3.2 Origins of Theatre for Development in Africa, Asia, and Latin America

The roots of TfD can be traced to grassroots performance practices that emerged alongside decolonization movements in the Global South during the mid-twentieth century. In Africa, community-based performance developed as a means of reclaiming indigenous cultural forms that had been marginalized under colonial rule (Etherton, 1982; Kerr, 1995). These practices drew on oral traditions, ritual, storytelling, and music to address issues such as land dispossession, labor exploitation, and cultural alienation. Theater was not conceived as an autonomous art form but as a communal activity embedded in everyday life.

Liberation theology and popular education movements deeply influenced participatory theatre practices in Latin America. Freire's (1970/2000)

pedagogy of the oppressed established a philosophical basis for performance as a dialogical process that strives for critical awareness and social transformation. This intellectual environment led to Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, which saw theater as a way to practice political action (Boal, 1979/2008). In Asia, similar developments occurred through folk theatre traditions and politically engaged performance, particularly in India and the Philippines, where theatre was mobilized for agrarian reform, labor activism, and community education (Banham, Gibbs, & O'Connor, 2019).

Initially, these regions either left theatre practices unnamed or described them using locally grounded terms. The subsequent emergence of formal nomenclature reflected attempts—often by scholars, NGOs, and cultural institutions—to classify and systematize diverse practices for documentation, funding, and academic study (Prentki & Preston, 2009).

3.3 Early Labels: Popular Theatre and People's Theatre

One of the earliest and most influential labels applied to what would later be called TfD was "*popular theater*." This term emerged to distinguish community-oriented performance from elite, colonial, or metropolitan theatre traditions. Popular theatre emphasized mass participation, accessibility, and alignment with the lived experiences of ordinary people (Kerr, 1995). In Africa, popular theatre became closely associated with rural development initiatives and literacy campaigns, often facilitated by cultural workers, educators, and activist-artists (Etherton, 1982).

Closely related is the term "*people's theatre*," which explicitly foregrounded class consciousness and political mobilization. Influenced by socialist and anti-imperialist movements, People's Theatre framed performance as a weapon in the struggle against oppression (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). In Kenya, Ngũgĩ's Kamirithu Community Theatre exemplified this approach by using indigenous language and collective creation to challenge state power and cultural domination.

These early labels were deeply ideological. They signaled resistance to cultural elitism and asserted theater's role in the popular struggle. However, as Kerr (1995) observes, the adoption of popular theatre by governments and development agencies sometimes diluted its radical potential, transforming it into a tool for information dissemination rather than critical dialogue. This tension set the stage for further terminological diversification.

3.4 Radical Traditions: Theatre for Liberation and Conscientization

The emergence of terms such as "*Theatre for Liberation*" and "*Theatre of Conscientization*" reflects a

more explicitly radical phase in the evolution of TfD nomenclature. These labels were directly influenced by Freirean pedagogy and Boalian praxis, which regarded theatre as a vehicle for revealing and combating structural oppression (Freire, 1970/2000; Boal, 1979/2008).

In Southern Africa, liberation-oriented theatre flourished during periods of political repression and anti-apartheid struggle. Mda (1993) documents how community theatre groups employed allegory, satire, and collective improvisation to circumvent censorship while fostering political awareness. The term "*Theatre for Liberation*" signalled an uncompromising commitment to social justice and systemic change, distinguishing such practices from development initiatives focused on behavioral adjustment.

Similarly, *the Theatre of Conscientization* emphasized the cognitive and dialogical dimensions of performance. According to Byam (1999), this nomenclature underscored theater's pedagogical function, prioritizing critical reflection over message transmission. While these terms were less palatable to institutional funders, they retained strong resonance among activist practitioners and scholars committed to emancipatory praxis.

3.5 Institutional and Academic Shifts: The Relationship Between Applied Theatre and Development Theatre

From the late twentieth century onward, the expansion of theater into development, education, health, and humanitarian sectors prompted a shift toward more institutionalized terminology. The emergence of *Theatre for Development* as a dominant label reflected the integration of participatory theatre into formal development frameworks, particularly within NGO-led interventions in Africa and Asia (Kidd, 1984; Mlama, 1991).

Concurrently, Western academia introduced the umbrella term "*applied theatre*" to encompass a wide range of socially engaged performance practices, including TfD, prison theatre, drama therapy, and theatre-in-education (Nicholson, 2005; Prentki & Preston, 2009). While this categorization facilitated disciplinary coherence and academic legitimacy, critics argue that it risked erasing the historical and political specificity of TfD (Prentki, 2015).

Recent scholarship continues to interrogate this shift. Prentki (2022) and Alderton (2023) note that applied theatre's professionalized language often aligns with institutional accountability and funding regimes, privileging evaluation metrics over community-defined outcomes. As a result, terminological change reflects broader transformations in how theater is governed, funded, and theorized.

3.6 Historical Factors Influencing Terminological Change

A number of interconnected factors have shaped the historical development of TfD nomenclature. First, political context plays a decisive role: periods of liberation struggle produce radical terminology, while post-conflict or development-oriented contexts favor neutral or technocratic labels (Thompson, 2009). Second, institutionalization—through NGOs, universities, and donor agencies—encourages standardized language that aligns with policy discourse (Chambers, 2017).

Third, academic disciplinarity shapes naming practices. As TfD entered theatre studies, development studies, and education, terminology adapted to disciplinary conventions and epistemologies (Nicholson, 2005; Beck *et al.*, 2021). Finally, globalization has facilitated cross-cultural exchange but also contributed to conceptual flattening, where diverse practices are subsumed under global labels such as applied theatre (Nico & Balfour, 2023).

Thus, nomenclatural change within TfD is best understood as a historical process shaped by shifting configurations of power, ideology, and knowledge production.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the nomenclature of Theatre for Development is historically contingent and politically charged. From popular theatre and people's theatre to theatre for liberation and applied theatre, each term reflects specific historical moments and sociopolitical conditions. Understanding these trajectories is essential for critically engaging with contemporary TfD practice and avoiding the uncritical reproduction of depoliticized frameworks. The next chapter builds on this historical analysis by offering a comparative examination of key TfD terminologies and their methodological implications.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: NOMENCLATURE AS PRAXIS IN THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Overview of Findings

This study set out to interrogate differences in nomenclature within Theatre for Development (TfD) and to examine their historical, ideological, and methodological implications for participatory theatre practice. Analysis of the literature reveals that nomenclatural diversity in TfD is neither accidental nor merely semantic. Rather, it functions as a constitutive dimension of praxis, shaping power relations, participation, epistemological authority, and ethical accountability.

Five interrelated findings emerge from the analysis, corresponding directly to the study's objectives and research questions:

1. TfD nomenclature emerges from distinct historical and sociopolitical moments.
2. Terminological differences encode ideological orientations toward liberation, participation, or instrumental development.
3. Nomenclature structures methodological choices and the depth of participation.
4. Naming operates as a mechanism of power within development and institutional contexts.
5. Conceptual fragmentation reflects unresolved tensions between radical praxis and institutional legitimacy.

These findings are discussed thematically below.

4.2 Finding One: Nomenclature as a Historical Marker of Sociopolitical Context

Research Question 1: *What historical and sociopolitical factors contributed to the emergence of multiple nomenclatures within Theatre for Development?*

The first major finding of this study is that differences in Theatre for Development (TfD) nomenclature are historically contingent, emerging from specific sociopolitical conditions rather than abstract theoretical disagreements. Terminological variations within TfD can be read as historical inscriptions that reflect shifting political climates, modes of resistance, and institutional arrangements. Rather than representing confusion or lack of conceptual rigor, nomenclatural plurality reveals how socially engaged theatre has continually adapted to changing configurations of power, struggle, and governance across time and place.

Early terms such as “popular theater” and “people's theater” emerged during periods of anti-colonial struggle and mass political mobilization, particularly in Africa and Latin America. These labels were grounded in liberation movements that positioned theatre as a collective cultural weapon against colonial domination and elite cultural forms (Etherton, 1982; Kerr, 1995). Popular theatre practices drew on indigenous performance traditions, oral storytelling, music, and ritual to reclaim suppressed epistemologies and assert cultural sovereignty. Naming theater as “popular” or “people's” was therefore a deliberate political act, affirming alignment with the masses rather than colonial or metropolitan elites.

In the African context, People's Theatre became closely associated with socialist and nationalist movements that sought to mobilize performance for political education and collective consciousness. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's work at the Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre exemplifies how nomenclature functioned as an ideological declaration,

explicitly situating theatre within class struggle, language politics, and anti-imperialist resistance (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). Here, naming was inseparable from praxis: to call a performance "People's Theatre" was to claim ownership, authorship, and political purpose on behalf of marginalized communities.

Similarly, in Latin America, participatory theatre practices informed by liberation theology and Freirean pedagogy resisted neutral or technocratic labels. Theatre aligned with conscientization sought to provoke critical reflection on structural oppression rather than transmit developmental messages (Freire, 1970/2000). As a result, early nomenclatures foregrounded struggle, liberation, and collective agency. This finding demonstrates that early TfD-related terms were embedded in oppositional politics, where theater functioned as a site of resistance rather than intervention.

By contrast, later terminologies such as "*theatre for development*" and "*applied theatre*" emerged alongside the institutionalization of participatory theatre within NGO-led development, education, and humanitarian sectors. As theater practices were increasingly incorporated into formal development programs from the 1970s onward, naming shifted to align with policy discourse, funding requirements, and professional accountability (Kidd, 1984; Nicholson, 2005; Prentki & Preston, 2009). The term "theatre for development" itself reflects this transition, framing theatre as a means toward predefined developmental goals rather than as an autonomous site of political struggle.

The study finds that as participatory theatre entered academic and policy frameworks, nomenclature became more neutral, technocratic, and globally legible. Labels such as "*applied theatre*" facilitated disciplinary consolidation and cross-sectoral recognition, particularly within Western academia. However, this shift often occurred at the expense of political specificity and historical rootedness. The radical contexts from which many TfD practices originated were frequently obscured, producing what Prentki (2015) describes as a process of conceptual flattening, where diverse histories are subsumed under universalized categories.

This finding strongly supports Thompson's (2009, 2021) argument that the evolution of applied theatre reflects broader transformations in governance, funding, and accountability. As theater moves from sites of resistance to sites of regulation, naming practices adapt accordingly. Terminology thus functions as a historical trace, marking the transition from oppositional, community-led performance to institutionally mediated intervention. Naming becomes a record of how theater's relationship to power has shifted over time.

Importantly, this analysis demonstrates that nomenclature within TfD should be understood as historically situated rather than evaluated solely on conceptual grounds. Differences in naming reveal how theater responds to changing political economies, from liberation movements to development bureaucracies. Recognizing nomenclature as a historical marker enables scholars and practitioners to critically interrogate not only what theater is called, but also whose interests such naming serves, and what forms of agency and resistance are made possible—or constrained—within particular historical moments.

4.3 Finding Two: Terminology as Ideological Alignment

Research Question 2: *How do different Theatre for Development terminologies reflect distinct ideological and theoretical orientations?*

The second key finding of this study is that nomenclature within Theatre for Development (TfD) operates as an explicit marker of ideological alignment rather than as a neutral descriptive device. Terminological choices signal underlying commitments to particular theories of change, conceptions of power, and understandings of participation. Far from being interchangeable labels, TfD-related terms articulate competing visions of theatre's purpose within social transformation, ranging from emancipatory praxis to instrumental intervention.

Terms such as "*Theatre for Liberation*" and "*Theatre of Conscientization*" are explicitly grounded in Freirean pedagogy and radical political traditions. These nomenclatures foreground theater as a dialogical process aimed at fostering critical consciousness (*conscientização*) and collective action against structural oppression (Freire, 1970/2000). In this ideological framing, theater is not a vehicle for transmitting predetermined messages but a space for critical inquiry in which participants analyze their lived realities and rehearse alternative futures. Naming theater as "liberatory" or "conscientizing" thus functions as a declaration of political intent and ethical positioning.

Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed further reinforces this ideological alignment by redefining spectators as "spect-actors" capable of intervening in oppressive scenarios through embodied experimentation (Boal, 1979/2008). Within this framework, nomenclature does not merely describe technique but asserts a philosophy of agency, participation, and resistance. Similarly, Mda (1993) demonstrates how liberation-oriented theatre practices in Southern Africa were inseparable from the anti-apartheid struggle, where terminology signalled opposition to authoritarian power and commitment to collective emancipation. The study finds that such labels consistently foreground structural transformation over behavioral adjustment.

In contrast, umbrella terms such as "*applied theatre*" tend to obscure explicit ideological commitments by prioritizing utility, adaptability, and professional facilitation. Applied theatre is commonly defined through its contexts of use—education, health, development, or humanitarian settings—rather than through a shared political or philosophical orientation (Nicholson, 2019; Prentki, 2022). While applied theatre encompasses practices that may be deeply critical or participatory, its nomenclature often emphasizes function over ideology, positioning theatre as a tool that can be "applied" across contexts.

The analysis indicates that applied theatre discourse frequently aligns with outcome-driven development paradigms that prioritize measurable impact, behavioral change, and policy relevance (Alderton, 2023). In such frameworks, theater risks being instrumentalized as a means of achieving externally defined objectives rather than facilitating collective meaning-making. This does not imply that applied theatre is inherently depoliticized; rather, its ideological ambiguity allows practices with divergent political commitments to coexist under a single label, sometimes masking significant differences in purpose and ethics.

A crucial insight emerging from the analysis is that nomenclatural choice often reflects strategic positioning rather than methodological difference alone. Practitioners operating within development or humanitarian sectors may adopt neutral or institutional language to secure funding, legitimacy, or access, even when their practice remains grounded in critical or emancipatory principles. This strategic use of terminology highlights the pragmatic constraints under which TfD practitioners operate, particularly within donor-driven environments that are wary of explicitly political language.

This finding supports Chambers' (2017) argument that language within development discourse is never neutral but actively shapes authority, legitimacy, and power relations. Terminology functions as a gatekeeping mechanism, determining which practices are recognized, funded, or marginalized. By choosing certain labels over others, practitioners negotiate complex terrains of ideology, accountability, and survival. Naming thus becomes both a political act and a tactical response to institutional power.

Ultimately, this analysis demonstrates that TfD nomenclature is inseparable from ideology. Whether explicitly radical or strategically neutral, terminological choices communicate assumptions about social change, participation, and agency. Recognizing nomenclature as ideological alignment enables a more honest and reflexive engagement with TfD practice, challenging scholars and practitioners to interrogate not only how

theater is used, but also whose values and interests it ultimately serves.

4.4 Finding Three: Nomenclature Structures Methodology and Participation

Research Question 3: *In what ways do nomenclatural differences influence participatory methods and community engagement?*

The third major finding of this study is that differences in Theatre for Development (TfD) nomenclature directly shape methodological design and the depth and quality of participation. Labels such as "*community theatre*" and "*participatory theatre*" foreground co-creation, relational ethics, and shared authorship, emphasizing theatre as a collaborative process embedded within social relationships rather than a product delivered to an audience (Cohen-Cruz, 2005; Chinyowa, 2021). These terms signal an expectation of horizontal engagement, where community members are positioned as co-creators with interpretive and decision-making authority. However, the analysis demonstrates that such participatory ideals are not automatically realized through nomenclature alone.

Recent scholarship cautions that participation can be symbolic, constrained, or externally managed, particularly when theater projects operate within institutional or donor-driven frameworks (Thompson, 2009; Nico & Balfour, 2023). The study finds that even when participatory language is employed, facilitation practices may reproduce hierarchical power relations, with external practitioners retaining control over narrative framing, thematic focus, and evaluation criteria. This highlights a critical distinction between *rhetorical participation* and *substantive participation*, underscoring that terminology can promise inclusivity while masking asymmetries in agency and authorship.

The analysis further reveals that methodological labels within TfD carry distinct ethical and procedural implications. For example, *Forum Theatre*, grounded in Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, prioritizes improvisation, dialogue, and collective problem-solving, enabling participants to intervene directly in dramatic scenarios and rehearse social alternatives (Boal, 2008). In contrast, *Case Theatre*, which draws on specific lived experiences and community testimonies, demands heightened ethical sensitivity regarding representation, consent, and narrative ownership (Aziegbe & Chukwuma, 2024). These methodological distinctions demonstrate that nomenclature signals not only technique but also ethical responsibility and risk.

Consequently, this finding establishes that nomenclature functions as a methodological signal that shapes expectations around agency, facilitation, and accountability. Terminological choices influence how

participation is conceptualized, enacted, and evaluated, affecting whose voices are amplified and whose knowledge is legitimized. Recognizing the methodological implications embedded in naming practices is therefore essential for ethical TfD practice, as it compels practitioners to align participatory claims with facilitation strategies that genuinely redistribute power and authorship.

4.5 Finding Four: Naming as a Site of Power and Epistemic Control

Research Question 4: *What are the implications of terminological multiplicity for the ethics and effectiveness of Theatre for Development practice?*

A central finding of this study is that nomenclature within Theatre for Development (TfD) operates as a site of power and epistemic control rather than a neutral classificatory practice. Drawing on critical development theory, the analysis reveals that naming practices are embedded within unequal power relations involving communities, facilitators, academic institutions, funding agencies, and policy actors (Chambers, 2017; Nocheva, 2024). Terminology determines how theater practices are framed, legitimized, and evaluated, shaping whose knowledge is recognized as authoritative and whose experiences are marginalized within development discourse.

Institutionally preferred labels—such as *Applied Theatre*, *Integrated Development Theatre*, or *Participatory Communication*—tend to align with policy frameworks that privilege measurability, scalability, and professional accountability (Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide *et al.*, 2025; Prentki, 2022). While such nomenclatures enhance access to funding and institutional sustainability, the study finds that they often reframe theatre practice in technocratic terms, prioritizing outcomes and indicators over dialogical process. This shift risks subordinating local epistemologies and experiential knowledge to externally defined development rationalities, thereby reproducing epistemic hierarchies even within ostensibly participatory interventions.

Conversely, when communities actively participate in naming their theatrical practices—through labels such as *People's Theatre* or *Community Theatre*—terminology becomes an expression of epistemic justice and cultural ownership. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) argues, language is central to decolonization because it shapes how communities understand themselves and their histories. The study demonstrates that community-generated nomenclature affirms local worldviews, values indigenous knowledge systems, and resists external epistemological domination. In such contexts, naming functions as an act of self-definition rather than institutional classification.

This finding confirms that participation without linguistic control risks becoming pseudo-participation, where communities perform involvement while remaining excluded from meaning-making and representation (Nico & Balfour, 2023). Ethical TfD practice therefore requires attention not only to participatory methods but also to the politics of naming. By recognizing nomenclature as a mechanism through which power circulates and knowledge is authorized, practitioners and scholars are better positioned to challenge epistemic injustice and safeguard community agency within Theatre for Development praxis.

4.6 Finding Five: Conceptual Fragmentation and the Politics of Umbrella Terms

Research Question 5: *How can a critical analysis of nomenclature enhance theoretical coherence within the field of Theatre for Development?*

The final major finding of this study is that terminological multiplicity within Theatre for Development (TfD) reflects unresolved tensions between the desire for conceptual clarity and the reality of practical plurality. As TfD practices have expanded across geographical regions, institutional contexts, and disciplinary boundaries, scholars have increasingly relied on umbrella terms—most notably "*applied theatre*"—to achieve academic coherence and disciplinary legitimacy (Prentki, 2015; Alderton, 2023). While such terminology facilitates scholarly communication and institutional recognition, the analysis reveals that it also risks collapsing historically, politically, and culturally distinct practices into a universalized taxonomy.

This conceptual flattening has significant theoretical consequences. By subsuming TfD under broad categories, umbrella terms may obscure the specific sociopolitical conditions, epistemological commitments, and power relations that give rise to particular practices. The study finds that historically grounded forms such as *People's Theatre*, *Theatre for Liberation*, or *Community Theatre* often lose their radical specificity when reframed within neutral academic classifications. As a result, theoretical analysis may become detached from praxis, prioritizing categorization over critical engagement with context and struggle (Prentki, 2015).

Importantly, this study does not advocate terminological unification as a solution to conceptual fragmentation. Instead, it finds that *productive tension* is central to TfD's intellectual and practical vitality. Conceptual plurality reflects the field's responsiveness to diverse contexts, shifting power relations, and evolving forms of resistance. Fragmentation, in this sense, is not evidence of theoretical weakness but of a dynamic field that resists closure and standardization. However, the analysis cautions that without sustained

critical reflexivity, terminological plurality can lead to theoretical dilution, ethical ambiguity, and inconsistent evaluative criteria.

This finding aligns with contemporary calls for decolonial and context-sensitive scholarship that resists epistemological dominance while maintaining analytical rigor (Beck *et al.*, 2021; Nocheva, 2024). Rather than seeking a singular definition of TfD, the study argues for a reflexive approach that treats nomenclature as an object of analysis rather than a problem to be resolved. By critically engaging with the politics of umbrella terms, scholars and practitioners can enhance theoretical coherence without erasing difference, thereby safeguarding the ethical and emancipatory foundations of Theatre for Development.

4.7 Synthesis: Nomenclature as Praxis

Taken together, the findings of this study demonstrate that nomenclature within Theatre for Development (TfD) functions as **praxis**—a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between theory, action, power, and ethics. Naming is not a passive descriptive act but an active intervention that shapes how theater is conceptualized, practiced, governed, and evaluated. Across historical, ideological, methodological, and epistemological dimensions, nomenclature emerges as a mechanism through which values are articulated, authority is negotiated, and social transformation is imagined.

The synthesis of Findings 4.2 and 4.3 reveals that nomenclature operates simultaneously as a historical trace and an ideological declaration. Early terms such as “popular theatre,” “people’s theatre,” and “theatre for liberation” encode moments of anti-colonial struggle and collective resistance, while later institutional labels such as “theatre for development” and “applied theatre” reflect shifts toward professionalization, governance, and accountability. These transitions demonstrate that naming practices evolve in response to changing political economies, marking theatre’s movement from oppositional praxis to regulated intervention. In this sense, nomenclature records the changing relationship between theater and power.

Findings 4.4 and 4.5 further establish that nomenclature structures methodological practice and redistributes—or consolidates—power within participatory processes. Terminological choices shape facilitation strategies, ethical obligations, and expectations of participation, influencing whose voices are amplified and whose knowledge is legitimized. When communities are excluded from naming their own practices, participation risks becoming symbolic rather than substantive. Conversely, community-generated terminology affirms epistemic justice, cultural ownership, and collective authorship, reinforcing the ethical foundations of TfD praxis.

The synthesis of Finding 4.6 underscores that conceptual fragmentation within TfD is not inherently problematic but indicative of a field that is responsive to context, struggle, and diversity. Umbrella terms offer disciplinary coherence but risk flattening difference and erasing historical specificity if applied uncritically. Treating nomenclature as praxis enables scholars and practitioners to hold conceptual plurality in productive tension, resisting epistemological dominance while maintaining analytical rigor. The challenge, therefore, is not to resolve terminological diversity but to engage it reflexively and ethically.

This reframing moves TfD discourse beyond definitional debates toward a critical understanding of terminology as an active force in social practice. By recognizing nomenclature as praxis, this study contributes a conceptual lens that foregrounds power, agency, and ethics in participatory theatre. Such an approach invites scholars and practitioners to interrogate not only *what* theater does in development contexts, but also *how it is named, who names it, and to what ends*. In doing so, it strengthens the theoretical coherence and emancipatory potential of Theatre for Development.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study set out to critically interrogate the differences in nomenclature within Theatre for Development (TfD) and to examine their historical, ideological, methodological, and epistemological implications for participatory performance practice. Moving beyond the tendency to treat terminological plurality as semantic confusion, the study has demonstrated that naming within TfD functions as praxis—an active force through which power, ideology, participation, and ethics are negotiated. Nomenclature, far from being neutral, shapes how theater is imagined, enacted, governed, and evaluated within development contexts.

Drawing on liberation pedagogy, applied theatre theory, and critical development discourse, the study has shown that TfD nomenclature emerges from specific sociopolitical histories. Early labels such as *Popular Theatre*, *People’s Theatre*, and *Theatre for Liberation* arose from anti-colonial struggle and grassroots mobilization, foregrounding collective agency, cultural reclamation, and resistance to hegemonic knowledge systems. Later terminologies, including *Theatre for Development* and *Applied Theatre*, reflect processes of institutionalization, professionalization, and engagement with policy and donor frameworks. These shifts reveal how theater’s relationship to power has evolved from oppositional resistance to regulated intervention.

The findings further demonstrate that terminological choices function as markers of

ideological alignment. Liberation-oriented nomenclatures explicitly articulate commitments to Freirean conscientization and structural transformation, while umbrella terms often prioritize flexibility, transferability, and institutional legitimacy. Although such terms may facilitate funding access and academic coherence, they also risk obscuring political intent and flattening culturally specific practices. The study thus confirms that terminological choice frequently reflects strategic negotiation within unequal power relations rather than methodological difference alone.

Methodologically, the analysis reveals that nomenclature structures participation by shaping facilitation practices, ethical obligations, and expectations of agency. Labels such as "*community theatre*," "*participatory theatre*," "*forum theatre*," and "*case theatre*" signal distinct approaches to co-creation, consent, representation, and narrative ownership. Crucially, the study establishes that participation is not guaranteed by participatory language; without reflexive alignment between naming and practice, participation risks becoming symbolic or pseudo-participatory.

At the epistemological level, the study demonstrates that naming operates as a site of power and knowledge control. Institutionally preferred terminologies often privilege measurable outcomes and professional accountability, marginalizing indigenous epistemologies and community-defined meanings. Conversely, when communities participate in naming their practices, terminology becomes an expression of epistemic justice, cultural ownership, and self-definition. The study therefore reinforces the argument that ethical TfD practice must extend beyond method to include linguistic and conceptual accountability.

Finally, the study addresses the perceived problem of conceptual fragmentation within TfD scholarship. Rather than advocating terminological unification, it argues that productive tension is central to the field's vitality. Conceptual plurality reflects TfD's responsiveness to diverse contexts, histories, and struggles. However, without sustained critical reflexivity, such plurality can lead to theoretical dilution and ethical inconsistency. Treating nomenclature as an object of critical analysis rather than a problem to be resolved offers a pathway toward greater theoretical coherence without erasing difference.

In sum, this study contributes to theatre and performance studies by foregrounding nomenclature as a critical analytical category within theatre for development. It advances understanding of how language mediates power, participation, and transformation, and it reinforces the need for historically grounded, ethically reflexive, and decolonially informed engagement with participatory theatre praxis.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for practitioners, scholars, institutions, and policymakers engaged in Theatre for Development:

First, practitioners should adopt reflexive and context-sensitive terminology.

Terminological choices should be critically examined in relation to their historical origins, ideological implications, and ethical consequences. Practitioners are encouraged to move beyond convenience or institutional preference and to consider how naming practices shape participation, agency, and accountability within specific contexts.

Second, communities should be actively involved in naming their theater practices.

Genuine participation must extend beyond performance processes to include linguistic and conceptual ownership. Enabling communities to define how their theater is named affirms epistemic justice, cultural sovereignty, and collective authorship, reducing the risk of pseudo-participation.

Third, scholars should treat nomenclature as a legitimate site of analysis.

Future TfD research should move beyond definitional debates to critically examine how terminology reflects and reproduces power relations, ideological commitments, and knowledge hierarchies. Comparative, decolonial, and Global South-centered analyses are particularly needed to counter epistemological dominance within applied theatre discourse.

Fourth, academic and funding institutions should resist depoliticized umbrella classifications.

While umbrella terms such as "*applied theatre*" offer disciplinary coherence, institutions should remain attentive to the historical and political specificity of TfD practices. Evaluation frameworks should prioritize ethical process, community agency, and dialogical engagement rather than narrowly defined outcomes.

Fifth, practitioner training and pedagogy should explicitly address the politics of naming.

Theater and development education programs should incorporate critical discussions of nomenclature, power, and ethics, enabling emerging practitioners to make informed and accountable terminological choices in their work.

5.3 Final Reflection

By reconceptualizing nomenclature as praxis, this study offers a critical lens through which Theatre for Development can be more ethically, theoretically, and politically grounded. Attending to how theater is named—and who controls that naming—is essential to

safeguarding Tfd's participatory and emancipatory foundations. In recognizing the politics of naming, practitioners and scholars alike are better positioned to ensure that Theatre for Development remains accountable to the communities it seeks to serve and transformative in both intent and practice.

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