Role of Theatre Art in Conflict Mediation and Remediation

Jawi Mailadanbe
Department Of English, Umar Suleiman College of Education   Gashua.
Email: jawi_mailadanbe@yahoo.com
Phone No: 08032827019.

Bose Ibrahim
School of General Studies, Umar Suleiman College of Education, Gashua
Phone No: 08035148141
Email: boseibrahim2020@gmail.com

Abubakar Isa
School of Preliminary Studies, Umar Suleiman College of Education, Gushua
Phone: 08038097800, Email: abubakarisah@gmail.com

Abo, Shugaba
Department Of English Languge, Umar Suleiman College of Education, Gashua
Email: aboshugaba74@gmail.com, Phone: 07037143509

Abstract: *One of the major problems facing Nigeria and indeed Africa is intra an inter-ethnic and religious conflicts. The conflicts in some of these African nations have, in very recent times degenerated into serious violence, intractable armed struggle. These situations have, to a large extent threatened the corporate existence of many African states, especially against the backdrop of divergent cultures of the various ethnic nationalities, for instance in Somalia, Sudan, Congo and Rwanda to mention a few. The Gunmen question in Nigeria has remained vast area for which no answer seems to be sufficient. What therefore, is the way forward? This paper therefore looks at the ethnic conflict at Zamfara Development Area as well as its aftermath and how Theatre for Development can be utilized to engage the people to participate actively in conflicts mitigation, mediation and resolution. The paper concluded that, for Nigeria to continue on the right side of history, it must always practice an agenda for conflict management and resolution via the instrument of the theatre.*

Keywords: Art, Conflict, Mediation, Remediation & Theatre

1.0 Introduction

In Nigeria, ethnic conflicts, religious and politics have contributed to the social and political dislocation of the Nigerian society. This situation has often led to stagnation in social and economic growth of the country. In recent time, current situation in the country appears to have overtaken by monumental crises and bomb blast resulting in wanton destruction of state

properties and loss of live and private properties of inestimable value. What is the reason for some of this conflict?

The governments of Nigeria in an attempt to stem these conflicts have enlisted number of measures, including workshops and conferences aimed at resolving the conflict situation in nation. But despite several measures fashioned by government and agencies, there seem not to be any end in sight in the conflict and bomb blast, if anything; there seem to be a steady rise in the activities of the various militant groups. The reason for this may be bit contentious, but with all intent and purpose, one can say that some of the measures taken have been too elitist in approach and lack of listening to the view of the stakeholders and so on. To this extent, majority of the people (masses) are excluded in process of peace building. It is in this regard that the medium of theatre is being advocated in this paper, as a tool in conflict resolution and management.

2.1. Causes of conflicts in Nigeria:

A number of factors may have contributed to the conflict situation in the Nigeria: anger, hatred, greed, lust, jealousy, selfish ambition, corruption, injustice, ignorance and breakdown in communication etc. These according to Hagher (1997) and Rabiu (2009) are some of the reasons responsible for the conflict and bomb blast in most countries and other wars as a result of "social injustice, insecurity of life and property, territorial ambition, national pride, religious intolerance, ideological differences". These, he aptly describes as the "oil igniting the flames of war all over", through these conflicts, the economic, political and social life of people have been dislocated and destroyed.

Conflict as a phenomenon can occur in variegated forms. It could occur at the intra-personal level and inter-personal levels. It could also express itself at the group level, local, state or national levels. Conflict can also assume international dimension when situation is between two countries. However it may be a feature common to all forms of conflict that it must-express itself in a communicable form. For instance in Niger Delta, Borno, Yobe states, conflict seems to be expressed through violence. Conflicts as "an expressed struggle between two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from other party achieving their goals. Adler and Rodman (1990:180) observed that conflict is sufficient enough to provide one with an understanding of the reasons for various struggles by the groups in Nigeria Delta and North Eastern Nigeria. It is an observable fact that the groups and their communities are living in a world stifled by extreme poverty and hardship and for survival. This situation it seems, informed the spirited effort put up by the people to have some measure of control of their god –given resources.

Indeed, one of the major causes of conflict in the nation is the struggle for control of social, political as well as economic injustice by leaders for equitable and justifiable means of distribution of wealth and rights for their personal interest.

Camegic and Andrew (1989) asserts that: the problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship".

Another reason for conflict in the nation despite the contribution of the people to the development of the Nigerian State is that, the area where conflict occurred has remained largely under developed in terms of social infrastructure and primary health care faculties, and educational sectors.

Another factor that may have given rise to conflict in Nigeria is underdevelopment. This may be considered as a source of tension which if not managed by appropriate institutional structures has the capability of snowballing into real conflict situation that may disrupt the existing social order. This no doubt, has taken the form of none provision of portable water, affordable healthcare delivery system and education. Worst of all, most of the riverine areas, desert areas, oil producing communities are crisscrossed by; river flood, desertification, oil spillage and gas flame burned around the clock at ground levels. These have posed great danger, health hazards and ecological problems for the Nigerians.

2.2 The Paradox/Predicament of Poverty

However, the paradox/predicament of poverty due to unfairness on oil wealth distribution in the country and also state versus local government fund mismanagement are other issues which generate tension and conflict in the society. Obi and Okwechima (2004:355) noted that the emergent trends are reflected in the increased outbreak of violent inter ethnic, inter-communal conflicts and religious conflicts across the country. Some of these conflicts have raged between neighboring towns, communities and even villages, and involving the use of fire arms, bomb, resulting on the loss of lives and invaluable properties. Sometimes, these conflict have been between religious group who have hitherto, subsisted at the same political unit. An example of this is the conflict between the inhabitant of Jos South/North (Muslim and Christians) and conflict between ethnic groups, with the same political unit. An example: Ijaw/tsekiri communities in Wari, Delta state. Biroms and Fulani's Barikin Ladi Jos, Pleteau state and currently in Zamfara areas.

Fulani's in the area has remained for over a hundred years in the area. It was this issue of justice to resettle them that generated into violence overtime, resulting into mass killing and disruption in economic and socio-political lives of people. Thus one can conclude that the conflict in these areas arose each time because of the struggle to control and dominate. But beyond this, is also struggle for control, use and distribution of community land among a people whose ways of life culturally are at variance. Such as society according to Horowitz (1985) "held together by the dint of the force of colonial power is inherently a precarious and unstable form"

Also incidental to conflict is the rivalry among politician, elites, particularly the political class who enlist youths in the area of influence to intimidate and harass their perceived opponents through manipulation by jostling for power and position. This assertion by Osaghae (1994:25) is sufficient in describing these elites. For him, "ethnicity is instigated and intensified by competition for control of state power which is necessary for attaining desirable's goals of development". This factor, along with the others previously discussed combine to present cleaner picture as the causes of conflict in the country.

2.3 Conflict Resolution and Management in Nigeria

Anyanwu (2004), in symposium noted that a man as a social animal desires constant changes, which attempts to foster the relationship among members of his community. Such relationship when consolidated upon can help to bring about development. Going further, he states that it is impossible to manage conflict; except it is borne in mind that conflict is a necessary human condition. Therefore, to perceive of it only as a negative phenomenon, may resulted to differences in thought, opinion and ideas. But the avoidance of a complete breakdown and its resultant effect is the ability to manage it. For this reason that various methods have been suggested and applied in management of conflict in the country. Among the various method are; the creation of democratic structures, aimed at providing predictable arrangements in which collective decision can be taken, establishment of sustainable development plan which according to Onduku (2002) is structured towards providing a framework for integration of development strategies and environmental policies and environmental policy shift.

The argument about underdevelopment in the country has always been stressed, and will persist until genuine attention is given to the region. Therefore, in terms of sustainable development, one is referring to a situation of social and economic change in the living conditions of the people of the country. This no doubt, will require a shift in policy thrust that will see the people enjoy some basic amenities. Other methods that have been advocated also include; a process of socialization of production processes and consumption of the people's common resources, which will see the employment of indigenes, free education and good measures of the control of the resources by the people themselves.

In spite of the methods applied in the resolution of conflicts, conflicts in a number of communities seemed intractable. The reason for this may be a refusal to comply fully with the strategies adopted on the part of the institutions involved. But quite disturbing is the fact that, most often, the people (masses) are not carried along in the process of mediation and resolution of conflict. Most often, the personalities involved in policy formulation, mediation and peace buildings are the elites, who have been accused of instigating some of these conflicts. For a conflict resolution organized by the government, become the all-knowing, and therefore decision taken are without the use consideration for the feelings and aspiration of the real sufferers in the host communities from where the violence started. The implication is that whatever decision reached are forced down the people's throat, whether good or bad. And given that conflict and struggles are about attainment of specific goals, the people are denied their rights. It is in this regard, that the theatre can function as a veritable tool for conflict resolution using the democratic method in conflict resolution mechanism.

2.4. Theatre and Conflict Mediation: The Way Forward
In history recently, scholars in several fields, agencies, have contributed immensely and motivated many areas of developmental thinking and approaches. For instance, the areas that considers "inhabitants at heart first" and indeed, a perspective that promotes direct involvement of the communities.

This approach gives a democratic process where the community members are involved in identifying and resolving their vast community needs and problem militating against their growth and development. The opportunity this perspective provides is that it enlightened community on action and collective responsibility. Also the people hope to become more challenged and committed to initiate structures and execute programmes that make meaning to them through Theatre for Development practice.

Theatre Art is not a theatre by professionals for entertaining people. But, it is a theatre in which people themselves engage issues about their own lives for their own immediate needs. It promotes development, good governance and peace building. It stresses participation, critical consciousness, sensitization and social transformation by stimulating dialogue within the people using their own familiar artistic expressions to the extent that they take positive action towards the improvement of their lives in the interest of communal stability and nation building. It enables communities to identify their needs, the types of development they desire, the place of development and the means of attaining such a development.

Therefore, it is imperative to say that the relationship between Theatre for Development, conflict resolution and peace building cannot be overemphasized. This is evident in the roles Theatre Art for Development plays and the values placed upon it, as it reflects, refracts and mediates human experiences and values that build and promote peaceful co-existence in human society. For the researcher here, one of the fundamental ways and strategies to promote peaceful co-existence and conflict resolution between the conflicts areas such as Zamfara Development Area is via Theatre for Development Practice. Here, theatre practitioners and development experts having understood the reasons for the incessant ethnic conflicts in the community through researchers intervention by engaging the opposing parties directly using the instrumentality of Theatre for Development to reflect and mediate the contending issues. This is important because, when people play and engage themselves and reflect the issues militating against their development and peaceful co-existence and key into them vehemently, then the likelihood for peace building and conflict resolution will be attained.

Kwabena B. agrees with this assertion and posits that "any development oriented ideas disseminated through the instrumentality of Theatre for Development are more likely to involve and motivate a larger number of people to participate in the development process". Similarly, any success of development requires popular participation through action. For instance, in an event where the state does not have the necessary resources to assume all of its responsibilities regarding human basic needs like socio-economic and political development, peace and conflict resolution, one of the basic ways to achieve them is to promote community self-organization through what Guy Bessette called Participatory Development Communication, which can also be referred to as Theatre for Development in some places. This is because whether it is Participatory Development Communication or Theatre for Development, the whole essence is about people participating in the development initiative of their communities. Bessette says that "Participatory Development Communication is a powerful tool to facilitate this process. It is about encouraging community participation with development initiatives through a strategic utilization of various communication strategies".It means that Participation is central to the task of defining and achieving peace and conflict resolution in our society.

It is pertinent that conflicts whether religious, ethnic, political and otherwise are parts of the human life because strife, disagreement and sometimes hatred can erupt at any time as people sojourn and struggle for space, identification, political power and limited resources in society. Hence, the tendency for ethnic conflict to erupt among people that had previously lived together peacefully is possible. Such actually typifies the ethnic conflict experienced in Zamfara in 2018.

However, the role of theatre in such situation is of paramount important. In this paper we have established that the theatre has a role to play in mediating and resolving already bad situation by mapping out the part to peace and reconciliation. This means that Theatre for Art is an effective tool for conflict resolution of any magnitude. This theatre Art has not only emerged to be an effective weapon in raising the consciousness of the people towards the maintenance and sustenance of peace and peace building, but for the struggles toward a nation where peace and justice shall reign, where the Nigerian people will be seen doing the right things at the right time. What this means is that, a practical representation for theatre intervention must be based on the analysis of what went wrong, why it went wrong and deal with the perceptions associated with the feeling of those who feel wronged through performance. This is why most socio-political theatre practitioners practice, not to please anyone, but to expose social miasma inherent in the society through the instrumentality of Theatre for Art. On the other hand, all that is needed to bring ethnic conflicts like these to a halt in Zamfara and other areas in particular and Nigeria in general, is the necessary political will by restoring confidence and hope to the people through responsible and purposeful leadership, good and exemplary governance, attitudinal change and community participation in decision making and implementation for conflict resolution, peace building and development.

The medium of theatre, like other art forms has never received any considerable measure of attention from government and its agencies, perhaps because, it is considered as an unserious business' and a time waster', and therefore not capable of engendering development. Against the negative perception of the theatre, it is difficult to conceive of it as capable of generating any form of development, both for the individual and the society. But the function and manifestation of the theatre in our society today, has taken a very radical dimension. Its role now is to serve a more constructive purpose' one that will contribute to social and revolutionary change in the society.

One of the agents of socio-political change in drama/theatre and education. Both are reciprocal in nature. Drama is economical mode of experience which conveys an idea that can be accepted as true. Its impact is direct and immediate than other forms of expression.

The functionality of theatre is no longer in doubt, as many people have come to realize the potency of the theatre in development. It has power to influence thought and opinion and can serve as a popular and effective means of political propagation, economic empowerment and culture diffusion. In fact, it is a "medium through which the soul of man reaches out beyond itself to transform". Sofola (1984) pointed out that, the medium of theatre as a communicative art has a very high correlation with development. It can act as a stimulant or tranquilizer for a people to understand their individual self and harness their potentials towards

a collective social development. As tranquilizers, the theatre can function to bring about peace and calm in conflict situation.

An example of the functionality of the theatre in this present concern is the a Rwanda Baliet Isonga", where songs and dance were employed to mediate in the conflict between the major ethnic groups, the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda crises, the Kenyan Amani people's theatre and the Kimiruthu theatre under Ngugi Wa;Thiongo is another outstanding example of the interventionist of the theatre in conflict resolution.

From the above, it becomes clear that the role of theatre in modern times has going keyhole entertainment, its role now is conditioned by social forces, and not care aesthetic diversion. Its at the service of life, it contribute to the development of the society in much the same way as does the engineer and economist. The nature of theatre being advocated, if explored to its fullness can create the awareness that conflict antithetical to societal progress and development, by helping the people to understand issues through metaphoric communication and providing a communal experience, which relates the theatre in this sense, takes the masses into consideration in every aspect through a process of theatre for development (TFD). In this way, the theatre in performance can utilize the abundant ethno-cultural materials in terms of song dance festivals, music to meet the challenges in ethnic struggle.

Theatre Art is a process of stimulating and sustaining participation with the target communities along development lines, using the world of the theatre to achieve real solutions to practical life problems affecting the people. It is aimed at transforming the people from being the object to the subject of development. This is because, as active participation in the development process they are able to contribute to decision making especially as it affects them.

For Mlama Penina (1981), the theatre functions as a tool for conscientization. Through this, the people are made aware of their predicaments, and are able to mainly and analyze them towards finding solutions. Such awareness therefore, becomes a prelude for positive action.

The theatre as an interventionist in conflict resolution employs the democratic method in conflict mediation and remediation. This method more than any other, would create the desired consciousness and engender awareness in identifying the remote cause of the conflict, analyzing the needs and making choices that would best suit (group).

The theatre "can bring the community together, building community cohesiveness, raising important issue". Creating forum for discussion of these problems and stimulating group action", theatre as a medium for conflict resolution place its tool for remedial, non-formal education, 'conscientize the people's (using the words of August to Boail) and make them aware of their potentials of harnessing their individual energies, collectively towards addressing the myriad of problems they are face with, and not pick-up arms that will cause further destruction to live and properties. But to stimulate the awareness among contending forces to an understanding that lasting solutions of their problems can achieved through constructive dialogue, understanding and trust in their religious and ethnic struggle.

The theatre as an interventionist tool in conflict resolution employs the inside-out method in the practice of theatre for development. The method will involve the facilitators becoming part of the community, and leaving them for some time.

4.0 Conclusion

Conflict is a social condition, which generates tension in the society. In whatever form it takes, whether as a religions or inter-ethnic conflict, the nature of resolution and management can help to define and shape its consequence on the people and the society. When not properly managed, it could degenerate structure of the country violence that can load to a disruption of the socio-economic structure of the country or state. Conflict in any society, can stagnate the economy and hinder growth.

Recommendation

It is therefore fundamental that, for a long lasting peace, unity harmony and progress in the state/country. Issue capable of generating conflict must identify, analyzed and managed using the models of conflict resolution. It is in this regard, that the theatre can play a significant role in conflict mediation and remediation. It is hoped that the functionality importance which the theatre has assumed in recent times will be sustained through the involvement of government and public institutions, on account of its relevance and interventionist role in the development of the society.

REFERENCES

An assessment of Ahmad Yarima's Hard ground in the context of the Niger
        Delta Question" (Unpublished).

Anyanwu B.C (2004). "The Media, conflict resolution and national
        Development" (unpolished) A paper presented at the 1st International
        Conference on Africa Arts (ICAA) at the Delta State Universoty, Abraka.

Arendshort, T.R. (2005) "Drama and conflict transformation" Beyond
        Interactability. Eds Giu. Bugess and held burgess. Conflict Research
        Consertion University of Colorado, Boulder-posted April 2005.

Augusto (1985) Theatre for the oppressed, translated by Charles, A. & Maria
        Odilia Leal MCBind New York: Theatre communication group.

Bame, Kwabena. The Use of Indigenous Entertainment Forms in Development
        Communication in Africa. In Indigenous Communication in Africa: Concepts,
Applications and prospects. Kwasi A.K (ed), Accra: Ghana Universities
        press, 2005.

Bessette, Guy. Involving the Community: A Guide to Participatory Communication.
        Malaysia; Southbound; 2014.

Camegic, A. (1989) "The gospel of wealth", in Colombo; G. et al (eds)
        Rereading. America: cultural contents for critical thinking and writing
        New York St. Martins Press.

Hagher, Rabiu (1997), Lamp of peace. Theatre of entertainment. Ibadan: Callop
        Publications Ltd.

Higher (1997) Lamp of peace Ibadan – Caltop Publication Ltd.

Horowitz, D.L. (1985) KEthnic Groups in Conflict. Los Angeles University of California

Mlama, OPenina (1981), Culture and Development: The popular Theatre Approach in Africa. Uppsala: Nordiska Africa Institute.

Obi C. and Okwechima, I. (2004). Globalization and identify politics; the Emerging patterns of inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria.

Osaghae, E. (1994) Ethnicity and its management in Africa, the democratic Link"

Sofola, Zulu (1984). The Artist and the tragedy of a Nation Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nig) Ltd.

Tugbokorowel, M.U. an Ogu-Raphat, I (2008) Agitation and the limits or rights.