Integrating Theatre Approaches in Conflict Management Techniques in Nigeria

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Abstract

Conflicts are inimical to societal growth and development if not properly managed. They affect the socio-political stability and cohesion of various federating units, especially in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. A number of strategies are often put in place to manage the outbreak of conflicts but these most often than not tend to escalate conflicts. Examples of these strategies include military and police interventions, curfews and trade-offs. But there are other approaches which are both subtle and efficient that can be employed for conflict management and transformation. One of such is by making use of ‘theatre forms’. Though theatre is basically used for entertainment, it is also an art form and an education tool. It possesses features which make it pertinent to conflict management. It can be used to enlighten about conflict and to stimulate change; as well as to mobilise cultural resources in a conflict situation more than other conflict management and peacebuilding efforts. This paper therefore submits that theatre art forms are relevant to conflict management and transformation and should be integrated into more formal conflict management strategies in Nigeria specifically and Africa at large.

Keywords: Conflict, Socio-political, Stability, Escalate, Management.

1.1 Introduction

Nigeria is reputed to be the largest country in Africa with an estimated population of 140,431,790 people (NPC: 2006). Owing to her size and population, any occurrence of conflict in the country has a spiral effect on the continent at large and the West African sub-region in particular. Consequently, frequent occurrences of conflicts and violence in the country are major sources of concern to many.

Negative conflicts are inimical to progress. They affect the socio-political stability and cohesion of various federating units, especially in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. Oftentimes, when crisis occurs in the country, a number of strategies such as military and police interventions and curfews are employed as conflict management mechanisms to halt the devastating effects of these conflicts. However, these interventions most times fail to achieve anything meaningful and most often, tend to escalate tense situations.

Also, these interventions are not preventive in nature as they come into effect only after the conflicts might have occurred. But in the traditional Nigerian society, it is not only desirable to manage conflicts in order to reduce negative outcomes and impacts but to also prevent the outbreak of conflicts. One of the means by which conflict prevention values are inculcated in the people in the Nigerian traditional society is by making use of ‘culture’. Culture has been described as the way and life of a people and a people without a culture are as good as dead. In the past, culture was preserved and passed on using story-telling, communal festivals and rituals among others. These employed the use of music, dance, oral literature, song and movement or in popular parlance, theatre art forms. However, in recent times especially with the advent of the internet and other modern media of communication, culture appears to have taken a back seat.

1.2 What is Theatre?

Theatre has been defined as “man’s expression of his feelings, emotions and experiences. It is a creation by man and as such forms part of his culture” (Hersokits: 1952), “parallels life. It is the truth of human experience. It makes statements about people, economies and political systems” (Barranger: 1995) and as “a series of human activities that make stories, movements or sounds of combinations of these things for peoples enjoyment. It is an art in which performers by impersonating, represent or embody imitations of a people in a story that is shown to an audience” (Cameron & Gillesie: 1980). Theatre is a verbal art and a direct medium of communication and as such is important to the field of conflict resolution because communication is essential to the resolution or non-resolution of conflict. Theatre has been described as a powerful mirror that reflects society. Mills (2003) states that theatre “can make people or society as a whole question and feel through melody, image, words and laughter.” According to (Wainscott & Fletcher: 2004), theatrical productions function as integral parts of societies that supports it; “theatre may imitate, parody, criticise or celebrate society’s foibles and greatness. It also alters a society’s development and identity.” It is used to inform, entertain and educate, spur change in the society and for transforming conflicts. This is encapsulated in Y.Raj Isar’s (2004) statement that, “The purpose of playing said Hamlet, was and is to hold as ‘twere, the
mirror up for nature. Four centuries after Shakespeare, that purpose lives on. Today, however, injustice, deprivation, exile, exclusion, trauma and violent inter-group conflicts loom large in our understanding of the nature to be mirrored. And the mirror serves not just to uncover, but also to denounce, provoke and empower, sometimes even to heal.”

Theatre is art and entertainment as well as a tool for educating and empowering people. As a form of entertainment, theatre highlights fictional action and does not usually challenge the beliefs of the audience and neither does it push it beyond its comfort zone. Theatre as an art form spurs its audience to “think harder, look deeper, confront uncomfortable truths or come to a higher understanding” (Wainscott & Fletcher: 2004). Tulsas (2004) corroborates this when he states that:

The arts matter not for the instrumental reasons but because they are non-material, because they deal with daily experience in a different way, because they transform the way we look at the world; because they offer different explanations to the world, because they link us to our past and open the door to the future, because they work outside routine categories, because they take us out of ourselves, because they make order out of disorder and stir up the stagnant with movement ... because they offer beauty and confront us with ugliness, because they offer explanations but no solutions, because they offer a vision of integration, because they force us to think about the difference between the good and the bad, the false and the truth.

In other words, theatre (arts) stimulates growth and development.

The genres of theatre include drama, dance, music and other performance arts. Drama, which is of utmost importance to this paper, can be both literary and theatrical; Ogundejji (2002) states that “it is at the literary level that we talk of plot, characterisation, dialogue and theme. As dramatic performance, it presents a storyline that is the plot, in a performing place, the stage or the arena before the audience. Actors and actresses employing various necessary and relevant constructional instruments play the role of characters in the story.”

Literary drama is in most cases published. It is theatre of the playwright as these are “interested in facts, not as facts but as they represent recurrent truths of human existence” (Wright: 1974).

The advantages of theatre to conflict management are varied and include sensitising people about the horrors and deprivations of conflict; it also has the potential to open new insights for learning about conflicts by realistically presenting the root causes and dynamism of conflicts in a way no formal education channel can. Through theatre, one can easily recognize the precise problems that lock people in conflict.

1.3 What is Conflict?
Conflict has been defined variously by scholars as “a confrontation between one or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends” (Miller: 2005), “a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings whether (tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, socio-economic, political or any other) is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more identifiable groups because these groups are pursuing what are or appear to be incompatible goals” (Boughetty & Pefattzgarf: 1981).

These two definitions are clear indications of the general perspective of conflict as a negative phenomenon. However, conflict can be either positive or negative depending on the way it is perceived by parties in the conflict and handled. The way conflict is handled determines if it will be an instrument of change or that of destruction; if handled positively, it will lead to transformation and development. People with a positive understanding of conflict will probably handle it constructively. “Constructive conflict helps build new insights and establishes new patterns in a relationship” (Bebe et al: 1996) while individuals with a negative understanding of conflict on the other hand will dismantle relationships without restoring them; “the hallmark of destructive conflict is a lack of flexibility in responding to others” (Beebe et al; 1996). This consequently results in hard-line positions being formed and maintained.

Conflict is not restricted to a particular group of people or environment (Bennet: 1997) and occurs between individuals and groups in their daily interactions with one another (Wasmuth: 1996)

1.4 Theatre and Conflict
Conflict is found in all spheres of life. It occurs all the time between individuals and groups in the course of their daily interaction with each other. It is essential for growth and development as Albert (2001:3) notes that “it is a critical mechanism by which goals and aspirations of individuals and groups are articulated. It is a channel for the definition of creative solutions to human problems and a means to development of a collective authority.” There is a nexus between theatre and conflict; if the definitions of conflict stated in previous paragraphs were to be put in a play format, there is already a reason for friction to take place between characters or ideas. This reason is called conflict.

In the field of theatre arts, conflict is the essence of drama. It stimulates the action of the plot. It is that opposition or friction between or among characters, ideas or
forces in a drama. Yerima (2003:33-45) states of conflict in drama:

Conflict remains a very important part of a play. Without conflict, a play would easily fail to hold the attention of the audience. A play depicts a contest in which man’s conscious will is employed to achieve a certain goal which is very hard to reach, and whose realization is actively resisted. It is through the conflict that the playwright is able to realize not only a good plot, but also a balance in dramatic dialogue and also achieve a good performance.

Theatre mirrors the society and situations. It has the advantage of being both a subtle and diplomatic medium of communication - it is subtle in passing across information, especially information sensitive in nature. It is relevant in conflict studies because it can be used to stimulate change. It can also be used to mobilize cultural resources in conflict situations more than other conflict management methods because of features which it possesses. Also, it helps to tease out salient issues in conflict which will aid the successful resolution of conflict. These might be related to causes of conflict, type of conflict, issues of conflict and stakeholders in conflict among others as found in the case studies.

2.2 Theatre Approaches to Conflict Management

There have been a number of theatrical interventions in conflict management and resolution in Nigeria but one that comes readily to mind is the play, Askari: A Vote for Tolerance written by Ben Tomoloju. The play ‘Askari’ reflects situations that lead to violent conflicts in Africa generally and in Nigeria specifically. The case study highlights the similarities between theatre and conflict resolution and management. Characteristics of major conflicts where greed, lust for power, intolerance and abuse are variably pursued by parties in a conflict with the attendant devastating effects on society are portrayed in the play.

The play, Askari: A Vote for Tolerance is both a literary and performance drama.

2.2.1 ASKARI: A Vote for Tolerance

Synopsis

The play Askari: A Vote for Tolerance is both a literary and performance drama. The (literary) script centres around Lord Askari, the war thirsty paramount ruler of Askari land. Askari land is noted for waging wars against her perceived enemies and this extended to the neighbouring communities of Askari land, namely Yumuyumu and Ijedo. Initially, Askari land was at war with only the people of Yumuyumu but the people of Ijedo land became involved because of Ijedo’s refusal to allow the soldiers of Askari land pass through its town to Yumuyumu land.

Lord Askari is a tyrannical ruler who jeopardised everything and everybody except his own assets and household in the prosecution of the war against Yumuyumu and Ijedo. He has a number of political advisers who counsel him on the affairs of state, especially as it pertains to the war. Chief amongst them is the Old One. The Old One has a dual personality which is unknown to other parties in the conflict. In reality, he is the Yoruba mythical god of mischief, Esu Odara in human garb. He is Lord Askari’s pillar of support in the battle between Askari land and Yumuyumu land. He plants dissidents and spies in Lord Askari’s camp, but still urges the latter not to permit international peace-keepers to intervene in the conflict. He also attempts to cause disaffection between religious leaders who partner with peace-keepers to restore calm to the warring communities. Eventually, the conflict is resolved but not before Lord Askari is captured by rebel movements and rescued by International peacekeepers and The Old One exposed for who he is and his negative role in the conflict.

As it is common in violent conflicts, there are always victims in a war and these are majorly women and children. In the play script ASKARI, women and girls are raped; under-aged children are forcefully conscripted into rebel movements and introduced to hard substances and there is general deprivation and hunger.

2.3 Analyses

Theatre is informed by the playwright’s impression of what he observes in his society and surroundings and which he puts down in the form of a plot and realised by performers through acting. Ben Tomoloju, the playwright’s, impression of what he observes in his surroundings and which he put down in writing in ‘Askari: A Vote for Tolerance’, is violent conflict. The play highlights the causal and fuelling factors of conflict, consequences/ impact of conflict and stakeholders in conflict and how these shape the course of every conflict. Theatre is pertinent to conflict management in three major ways. These are:

a) Sensitizing people about the horrors and deprivations of conflict;

b) Opening new vistas for learning about conflicts by realistically presenting the root causes and dynamics of conflicts in a way no formal education channel;

c) It makes it easy to recognise the precise problems that lock people in conflict.

2.3.1 Sensitising about the horrors and deprivations of conflict
Theatre can be used to sensitise the general public about the devastating effects of conflict better than any other medium. The literary script of ‘Askari’ sensitised people about the horrors and deprivations experienced by people in conflict. Some of the horrors reflected in the play are rape, poverty, creation of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), the forceful conscription of underage children into rebel movements, introduction of children to drugs and other hard substances as well as an upsurge in the activities of rebel movements.

a) **Rape** – one of the negative consequences of war is rape. Women and female children have often been the sexual target of armed combatants in violent conflict on the African continent. A war journalist, Jeffrey Gentleman states that “I’ve witnessed up close – often way too close – how combat has morphed from soldier vs. soldier to soldier vs. civilians...where armed groups in recent years have sexually assaulted hundreds of thousands of women.” Often times, women and girls are subjected to mass rape by combatants. It is considered one of the spoils of war. For example, in the play, Askari, Moladun, a fourteen year old girl was kidnapped by Askari soldiers and raped by Askari himself:

(A soldier in traditional African battle dress comes into view, crawling. Soldier notices the approach of two teenage girls, playing ‘Mr. Okoroko’, a clap and dance musical game. Sound of gunshots ... scares them. They panic, soldier appears to them. In a bid to escape, Moladun is caught. The other girl escapes. As Moladun is held down in captivity, Askari in full combat gear of old time warlords appears with two body guards. The soldier makes obeisance to Askari; offers him the young girl. Askari makes open love overtures to her. She stamps and screams to no avail. The warlord bundles her out. The three soldiers remain on ground. From within, Moladun’s cries reach their ears...)

Askari: It is the way of my ancestors; the ones who break shackles in whatever direction they wish. Askari lineage is a lineage of versatile bullets. Even in the underside of a virgin, we make bold impressions. It was virgin flesh I just tasted soldiers, not that of an old hag. So, you see why I am high.

b) **Poverty** – another consequence of negative conflict is widespread poverty. According to Iennan and Griffiths (1994), “there is a direct causal relationship between war and poverty, poverty and war, a vicious circle of human suffering” as personified by Sofi and her family:

Sofi: Where is peace of mind when there is hardly any food and Junior has spilled the only oil left in the house?

Moladun: So, what is my business?

Sofi: What is not your business, you small witch? The only oil left in the house, loaned to me this morning by the mother of Messiah. I had thought to use it to cook our last soup when this (picks up a light object. Throws it at Junior) this imp threw it all away.

Sofi: Why shouldn’t I stone him? It is so difficult now to survive. The war has brought famine and starvation. Farmers can no longer farm. The rivers house more dead bodies than fishes. The markets are closed indefinitely.

c) **Abuse of drugs and hard substances** – during wars, many of the combatants become exposed to hard drugs which are used to make them ‘high’. It is when they are high that they are able to perform a lot of atrocities without batting an eyelid. For example, the 10-year old Sergeant Junior who was forcibly recruited by a dissident, Ogufe became exposed to hard drugs:

Ogufe: Come this way Sergeant Junior. Don’t be afraid, right. We are going to win this war, then I can make you a Colonel, okay? (The boy nods, still yawning). In this forest, you can rest for the night, pick yourself up tomorrow morning and continue with the combat. (Pulls out a syringe) Come, this one will help as usual. (Injects a dose of hard drugs into the boy’s system), c-o-o-l eh? Ha-ha-ha!

Junior: Ma-a-an, I see stars. Hey-hey.Ogufe: And what?

Junior: And wind. It blow me cool, man. Really cool.

d) **Creation and upsurge in the activities of rebel movements** – more rebel movements were formed by dissidents in the play and there was an upscale in their activities as well. This is a natural phenomenon in all conflicts that had taken place on the African continent in general and the West-Africa sub-region in particular. Rebel movements were particularly active in the Liberian and Sierra-Leonean conflicts. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra-Leone and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and splinter groups like the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) played strategic roles in the protracted conflicts in
these countries. The conflicts initially took place as a result of grievances. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) had taken over the reins of governance in Sierra-Leone from the All Peoples’ Congress (APC) led government on the grounds of alleged mismanagement of public funds and failure to improve the deteriorating economy (Lehtinen & Ogunbor in www.conflictttransform.net/sierra%20Leone.pdf) while the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) had struck the Samuel Doe led government in Liberia because some ethnic groups in the country had been marginalised by the government (www.exploringafrica.matrix.msu/teachers/events/Liberia.php).

In the play ‘Askari’, Jato was an Ijedo dissident who formed his own rebel movement to fight against tyranny as personified by Lord Askari:

Jato: Together, we will turn the tide against Lord Askari. And for the first time in the history of this land, the suffering masses will triumph over the forces of oppression.

Others: Oh yeah!

Jato: And the wall of infidelity will collapse...

Others: Ja-to!

Jato: And the Revolutionary Youth Vanguard will sing ‘glory’, ‘glory’!

Others: Jato- Jato-Jato-Jato...

Jato: No comrades, I do not ask to be lionised. I don’t want to be anybody’s hero. All I ask is that we proclaim and install the principle of our struggle. Yes, Askari is the proverbial hen that spills your concoction. What do you do to her egg?

Others: Smash it!

While another rebel movement was formed by Ogufe, another dissident. Ogufe forcefully recruited children to his movement. An example is 10-year old Junior:

(Enter Ogufe with bloodshot eyes and in a killer mood).

Ogufe: Who’s in there?

Sofi: And you, what do you want here? Terrorist without any sense of shame!

Ogufe: Don’t snarl at me, woman. My own woman has just started. I am recruiting soldiers.

Sofi: Recruit me, you bogey.

Ogufe: You are fragile, woman. It is your son I need.

Sofi: You are out of your senses.

(Decisively, Ogufe hits Sofi with the butt of his gun. She collapses on the floor.

Ogufe drags Junior away, ignoring his weeping and pleading.)

The rebel movement formed by Ogufe didn’t appear to have any form of ideology, plan or reasons for striking as is common to most rebel groups in conflict situations. An opinion by Gettleman (2010) about rebel groups in Africa emphasises this. He states that, “the combatants don’t have much of an ideology, they don’t have clear goals. They couldn’t care less about taking over capitals or major cities – in fact, they prefer the deep bush, where it is far easier to commit crimes. Today’s rebels seem especially uninterested in winning converts, content instead to steal other people’s children.”

2.3.3 Opening New Vistas For Learning About Conflicts

Theatre creates new chances for exploring conflicts by realistically presenting the root causes and dynamics of conflicts in a way no formal education channel can. The play script ‘Askari: A Vote for Tolerance’ identified some of the root causes of violence in African conflicts as well as the impact which stakeholders have on conflict and how these shape conflicts. It is always easier to resolve conflicts when all parties in a conflict ‘see’ the causes of conflict, the impact of each other’s actions on the other person(s) and how these determine the course of conflict. Because it teaches people about conflicts, albeit informally, it is easy for people locked in conflict to proffer solutions to their conflict.

2.3.3.1 Causes of Conflict

Scholars have identified causes of conflict as competition/interest over resources, power or status; psychological needs, and manipulation of information (Cuny: 1991, Lund: 1997, Albert: 2001).

In line with the above assumptions, the play identified the root causes of violent conflict as:

1. Competition for resources - resources in this instance include contestation for power, money and mineral deposits as evidenced in the dialogue(s) below...

Askari: So, whenever we set our feet on Yumuyumu land, destroy everything in sight ...except of course my own assets and business interests.
And:

Odara: I have made my position very clear on this, Askari. If you concede any ground to the Yumuyumu, you will be seen as a bastard.

Askari: And this is the fact. Apart from threatening the investment of my Royal family in their territory – you know the goldmine and coppermine...

Apostle: It is still not clear to me whether this war is being fought merely to protect your goldmine, coppermine and others or for a strong nationalistic principle.

Odara: Both, Apostle, both.

From the dialogue above, it is obvious that resources played a major role in the war between Askari and Yumuyumu. This is indicative of major causes of violent conflict in Africa. One of the most long-drawn out conflicts in West Africa, the Sierra Leone conflict is a case in point. The Sierra Leone conflict was basically a contest for political power, and control of the country’s natural resources - diamonds.

2. Competing value systems – Competing value systems between parties in conflict negatively impacts on conflicts. Values are based on beliefs and values. It thus influences perceptions and general outlooks to life. The play highlighted this in Lord Askari’s attitude to the people of Yumuyumu; “they have sinned against my history and my ancestry. And I, Askari, the lion on the bloody highways, will never forgive the Yumuyumu elites for teaching my subjects to sabotage and rebel against the Monarchy.” Values influence hard line positions of combatants in conflict; in the play, Lord Askari felt that his values and by extension, the values of his people and ancestors were challenged by the people of Yumuyumu. This perception impacted negatively on the conflict. And as it happens in many situations of conflict, contradicting value system of parties in a conflict worsens conflict and results in negative outcomes.

3. Manipulation of information - Information is important to effective communication because effective communication is central to the outbreak as well as the resolution or non-resolution of conflicts. When information passed across to a listener (s) is manipulated to suit the purpose(s) of the speaker, it causes conflict.

The dialogue below reflects how the manipulation of information aids conflict:

Odara: My fear Apostle is that your brother has other motives than to make Askari yield to any peace move.

Apostle: My brother, who is my brother?

Odara: Ya Mallim. I think he only wants Askari as a convert.

Apostle: Look, old one, we are not here to talk about converts.

Odara: One thing leads to another. That’s what I mean. And if you know your work well enough, you will recognise that you have a stake in the redemption of Askari’s soul, Apostle.

Apostle: Yes, you have a point there.

Odara: And you must guard it jealously. ‘I am a jealous God’, says the Lord...

Apostle: ... who avenges the sins of the father on the son from the first generation...

Odara: (On his way out he meets Ya Mallim) Ahah, Ya Mallim, you are welcome. (Playish) sss! But be careful as you go inside. Your brother, the Apostle is in a deadly mood.

Mallim: What’s that?

Odara: Says nothing can stop him from making Askari a convert as a pre-condition for joining the peace move.

Mallim: But we didn’t discuss that.

Odara: It’s confidential. I’ll see you.

Odara attempted to cause disaffection between Ya Mallim and Apostle, the religious leaders who partnered with international peacekeepers to resolve the conflict by misinforming both of them about the ‘real’ motive of each for supporting the peace process but as can be seen in the dialogue below, his ploy did not work:

Odara/ Minions: We cannot lift it. We cannot drag it. We cannot lift it. It is heavy.

Odara: This song fits us in our melancholy, my minions, than it fits the sons and daughters of man. Or can you not see how they crawl out of the pit we have dug for them? One by one, our tiger’s claws are cut. Agents of peace triumph over the principalities of confusion. I weep. An array of men is pouring balm on wounded souls. I weep. It hurts me when I see distinguished men of faith who should batter each other’s skull in battle walk hand-in-hand, parleying as if they are twin brothers. See them!

2.3.3.2 Stakeholders in conflict

There are three types of stakeholders every conflict. Stakeholders can be primary, secondary or shadow. Primary stakeholders are directly involved in a conflict, secondary stakeholders become involved in a conflict
because of their relationship with the primary stakeholders while shadow stakeholders wield immeasurable influence on a conflict, though they are not often seen to be involved in the conflict. They often wield a lot of influence on the course and impact of conflict. Stakeholders often fuel conflict by providing funding, weapons, advice among other things for their own benefit and not for the benefit of the victims of conflict or in order to resolve conflict.

Through the literary script of ‘Askari: A Vote for Tolerance’, the general public was able to appreciate the importance of stakeholders to conflict.

There are primary, secondary and shadow stakeholders in the play (literary) script ‘Askari’. Lord Askari is one of the primary stakeholders in the conflict. He caused the war between Askari land and her neighbours, Ijedo and Yumuyumu. He is high-handed, oppressive and tolerates no opposition. The people of Askari land, Yumuyumu and Ijedo are also primary stakeholders because the conflict had direct impact on them while the secondary stakeholders include religious leaders as personified by Ya Mallim and Apostle. The Old One/ Odara is another stakeholder in the conflict. He is a shadow stakeholder in the conflict. He is Askari’s principal counsellor on the war and effectively manipulates Askari to suit his own purpose. Because he is widely respected in Askari land and its environs, he uses his influence to sow seeds of discord and dissent among the people.

Other stakeholders who shaped the course of the conflict include dissidents and peacekeepers. The dissidents for instance moved the conflict to another level of violence but the peacekeepers were able to arrest the trend, Odara escalated the conflict with the advice he gave Askari and his clandestine activities with dissidents, but his power was neutralised by the combined effort of the two religious leaders while Askari himself was saved from death by international peacekeepers.

3.0 Theatre Arts and Conflict Management
Conflict management involves reducing the level of violence or tension in a conflict and creating positive behavioural changes in the conflicting parties. Dickson (2000:10) defines conflict management as:
Activities that seek to stop or prevent further escalation of violence and prepare ground for a settlement. They may involve pre-negotiation, peacekeeping, confidence building measures, humanitarian and relief intervention.

Conflict can be managed in various ways. Lund (1997) in Schmid (2000) identifies some approaches to conflict management as “transforming the (potential or actual) violent clash into a less-damaging form of interaction” and “searching for (temporary) solutions that can prevent (re)-escalation and move the conflicting parties towards either a settlement of the conflict, or at least a termination of the killing.”

Theatre arts (drama) can be used to manage conflicts. It can be used to reduce the level of violence or tension in conflict and to spur positive behavioural changes in conflicting parties. There are a couple of ways by which theatre (drama) can be applied to conflict. One of these is ‘Theatre for Development’ (TfD). Theatre for Development (TfD) was developed by Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire. It is a community process which focuses on the practicality of awakening people’s critical awareness in order to provoke them to discuss, analyse and find solutions to the problems that may hinder development, including conflict.

Theatre for Development (TfD) according to Kidd (1984:264) is:
... used as a means of bringing people together, building confidence, and solidarity, stimulating discussion, exploring alternative options for action and building a collective commitment to change, starting with people’s urgent concerns and issues. It encourages reflections on these issues and possible strategies for change.

It builds on cultural and traditional theatrical elements like travelling theatre, story-telling, puppet shows, sociodramas, mimes, songs and riddles. Tools that stimulate audience participation and interest in Theatre for Development (TfD) performances are language, music and dance, mask and costume as well as folklore and oral tradition.

4.0 Integrating Theatre (Drama) in Conflict Management
Theatre possesses features that stimulate conflict management. These include the message or theme of drama, the plot, characterisation and costuming, as well as dialogue. It also employs the use of forms that are familiar and popular to its audience such as songs, music, dance, poetry and mime. These enhance the message being passed. Theatre is both visual and auditory and it has the advantage of flexibility of language. This means that theatre can be presented in structured and formal language, local indigenous languages or semi-formal language such as Pidgin English which is popular among a lot of Nigerians.

The case study of this write-up, the play Askari: A Vote for Tolerance is both literary and popular drama. It went from being literary to popular drama when folk music was introduced into the script. It also integrates experiences and myths which the audience is familiar with as well as songs, oral tradition, music, costumes and figures of local origin.
The play aims at communicating information relating to violent conflict and its effect on the society. It also aims to prompt behavioural change in parties in conflict. Though the play is written in English, it is interspersed with songs in the local dialect – Yoruba to ease the understanding of the non-literate audience. An example is presented below:

Awa alaiye ree o,
Eriwo yee,
Awa alaiye ree o,
L’Area wa,
K’alapa san pa,
K’onida mu ‘da
K’esu gb’omi mu
K’oye won,
K’oye won o
P’awa l’ajo alaibikita,
K’oye won.

This song could be translated as:
We are the owners of the world,
Yes, we are
We are the terrors of the land.
Let everyone run for his life,
Let everyone flee to safety,
Because evil has been unleashed,
Let everyone understand that we don’t care about anybody,
We are ready to unleash mayhem.

The play, Askari: A Vote for Tolerance, as a theatrical conflict management technique was basically targeted at young people, who are usually used to prosecute violence by politicians and other conflict mongers in the country.

Conflict management aims to reduce the level of violence in conflict and create positive behavioural changes in conflicting parties and theatre can be used to achieve this better than more formal means of conflict management techniques. Theatre is both a subtle and diplomatic medium of communication which stimulates deep reflection in conflicting parties without unnecessarily aggravating or escalating conflict.

5.0 Conclusion
This paper highlights the relationship between theatre arts and conflict management. It shows that conflict in any theatrical production is premised on those causes of conflict as found in conflict resolution and management. Theatre indeed presents reality through performance. It captures the attitudes and behaviours that lead to aggression and violence and the impact of these on the society. Theatre is a form of mass media, and can be used for community education, and advocacy. Theatre forms the basis of social education and empowerment for the people, especially for those living in rural communities, making it relevant to conflict management. It can thus be integrated in conflict management efforts in the country. The literary script of Askari: A Vote for Tolerance typified issues that cause and fuel conflicts, stakeholders and their varied interests and how these affect the proper management or mismanagement of conflicts in Nigeria and on the continent generally. The play also shows that there is a need for peace education in the country; the kind of peace education which does not necessarily have to be confined within the four walls of a classroom and will integrate the use of theatre art forms.

It is therefore recommended that peace education should be made a priority and that theatre, in the form of role plays and drama, should be integrated in all conflict management efforts in the county.

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