Participatory Communication and the Interplay of Counter Insurgency in Nigeria: The Case of Bokoh Haram

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ABSTRACT: *This study is designed to interrogate how Participatory Communication (PC) could be used to facilitate Alternative Conflict Resolution (ACR) in resolving the onslaught of insurgents in the Northern part of Nigeria. Participatory Communication (PC), is an area in communication practice that has been less explored by practitioners, in solving crisis that has to do with militancy, terrorism and insurgency. Although some Theatre and Communication scholars like Ross Kidd, Micheal Etherton, Zake Mda, Jenks Okwori and Kennedy Chinyowa have commented on the effectiveness of PC in curative art, few scholarly researched works have been written on its functional aspects, especially in the area terrorist and insurgent activities. This paper therefore investigates the intricacies of PC in proffering alternative ways towards ending Bokoh Haram terrorist attack in North East Nigeria.*
KEY WORDS: *Alternative Conflict Resolution, Bokoh Haram, Terrorism, Participatory Communication; Negotiation, Insurgency.*

I.   INTRODUCTION: CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS AND TERMS

This study is designed to interrogate how participatory communication could be used to facilitate Alternative Conflict Resolution (ACR) in resolving the onslaught of insurgents in the Northern part of Nigeria. Participatory Communication (PC), is an area in communication practice that has been less explored by practitioners in solving crisis that has to do with militancy and terrorism. Although some Theatre and Communication scholars like Ross Kidd, Micheal Etherton, Zake Mda, Jenks Okwori and Kennedy Chinyowa have commented on the effectiveness of PC in curative art, few scholarly researched works have been written on its functional aspects, especially in the area terrorist activities. This paper therefore investigates the intricacies of PC in proffering alternative ways towards ending terrorist attack in North East Nigeria.

Participatory Communication as a concept evolved in 1950 through the participatory experience of Paolo Friere, the Brazilian adult educator, when working as an adult literacy campaigner among the poor peasants in North-Eastern Brazil. (Adeyemi, 2015) At the end of the campaign, Participatory Communication experience, according to Mefalopoulos "empowered the landless peasants to formulate their own demands for a better life and liberate themselves from oppressive conditions (2)". Inspired by Friere's idea, Augosto Boal in 1974 adopted the concept and introduced it into theatre practice through what he termed "Forum Theatre". This advanced the step of PC further into the public space. Participatory Communication then becomes a form of communication that involves the collective participation of all stakeholders through role play in the form of acting, poetry, folktales and music that are grounded in the indigenous culture aimed at creating " a space for the voice and visibility of oppressed group" (Mefalopulos and Tufte 2000). However, this form of communication has been classified as "Radical Media" or what Clemence Rodrgues refers to as "Citizen Media''.

Participatory Communication in terms of practice falls under Applied Communication practice, which is an umbrella term that covers theatre and communication practice conducted outside conventional mainstream theatre and communication practice, specifically for the purpose of transforming or changing human behaviour for the better. Philip Taylor asserts that this form of practice is characterised by "its desire to influence human activity, to raise issue and have members of the audience resolving the issues (3)". Applied Communication is a form of communication that is created for specific needs. It usually takes place in non-conventional spaces and is motivated by a desire to generate social change. As mentioned earlier this theatre happens in a wide variety of settings and communities from formal institutions such as schools, prisons and hospitals to informal spaces such as community centres in deprived urban areas and rural communities. It creates no borders between performers and participants and finds its forms in the existing cultural expression of the communities that create it. It offers the means of creating an analysis of the economic, cultural and social conditions, particularly of the very poor.

Several advantages have been put forward for using applied communication in social and human communication development. The performances serve to concretise, rather than abstract, the experiences of participants and the communities or institutions involved. Often, applied theatre is created through multiple

components as focal points for audience members to discuss their own experiences of topics and is often used to gain access to reveal the inner feelings of the participants. Mienczakowski observes that it is "a means to give insight into the lives of those who have become marginalised and disempowered through their relationships with different social and human challenges in life (163)." Applied communication is a method that fits in to the critical social development approach that research, workshops and performances should empower participants to change the context in which they operate and perceive life.

 Under the umbrella of Applied Communication, there exist theatre/ communication forms as community theatre, community performance, theatre for social change, popular theatre, interventionist theatre, drama in education, theatre for development and many others. These various forms and techniques are used around the world in diverse ways for varied purposes. According to Philip Taylor, Applied theatre teaches "us to teach others, helps communities to process issues and heightens awareness: raises awareness, poses alternatives, heals psychological wounds, challenges contemporary discourse as well as voices the views of the silent and marginal (xix - xxx)".

As mentioned somewhere else the engaging nature of Participatory Communication allows for dialogic process that ensures that the most significant changes are voiced, brought to common attention and assessed for a proper follow-up (Adeyemi, 2015). However, for a meaningful follow-up, indicators and measurements should be defined at the very beginning of the workshop to include relevant stakeholders. Advancing further on the participatory nature of the communicatory aspect of PC, Tufte and Mefalopulos gave three typologies of participation: "Passive Participation, Participation by Consultation and Empowerment Participation (6)". These are further explained below:

1. Passive Participation is when the people of the community are not fully involved in what is happening. The facilitators just come to the community without prior information or notification. In this form of participation, people's feedback is minimal or non-existent and their participation is assessed through head counting.
2. Participation by Consultation is an extractive process, whereby community members provide answers to questions posed by facilitators. Input is not limited to meetings but can be provided at different points in time. In the end, the consultative process keeps all the decision-making power in the hands of the facilitators who are under no obligation to incorporate the people's input. In this form of participation, the level of participation does not result in dramatic changes in what should be accomplished, which is already determined by the PC facilitators.
3. Empowerment Participation is when the stakeholders are allowed to fully participate, initiate ideas and take part in the analysis. This leads to joint decision making about what should be achieved and how it will be achieved. While facilitators are equal partners in the development effort, the community members have significant say in the decisions concerning their lives.

However, of all the three participation typologies, the one that would be adopted for this study is empowerment participation because of its relevance and collaborative effort which aims at social empowerment and advancement. In fact, this is the essence of any PC practice as Odhiambo in his own observation affirms that it allows the community it is meant for to be "involved in all its stages from inception to implementation through a theatrical process: research, analysis of research findings, prioritization of problems, devising of a theatre piece, and its performance and post-performance activities (9)". In summation, PC is community development centred and originated as another means of social conscientisation and liberation in which the members learn how to be independent and always take their own initiatives.

In this discourse, conflict in Nigeria is synonymous with social disturbance as it is axiomatic that conflict is part of human and social relationship. Ibeanu O once asserted that "the range of issues involved in conflict situation are caused as a result of struggle for political participation or over political space and persist attachment to territory" (32). On the contrary, it is clear that apart from political space, and fight for territory, religion is also a major factor used in fuelling crisis globally. This is exactly the case when discussing Bokoh Haram in Nigeria in which religion was the initial reason for its emergence and later metamorphosed into an insurgent group.

Bokoh Haram as the name implies in Hausa language connotatively means Western Education is forbidden" an Islamic religious organization sect that aspires to create an Islamic state out of Nigeria and is willing to kill Christians and Muslims that deem to be sufficiently pious in order to achieve it. (Henry Jackson Society, 2014).On a contrary analysis, the group is not absolutely against Western education and civilization as the group in the words of Walker**:**

> Clearly does not utterly reject the modern world out of hand. The group uses modern phones, video cameras, DVDs, YouTube, chemical explosives, automatic weapons and cars shows it is more than prepared to use the fruits of Western education when it suits them. (20)

The group's intention is that, it is against Northern elites, popularly referred to in Hausa Language as *yan bokoh* meaning "child of the book". To the Bokoh Haram, these Northern elites have used indirect rule policy to turn the peoples mind away from Allah, to easy money and corruption. This is an indication the elites are however spiritually and morally corrupt, lacking religious piety and guilty of criminally enriching themselves rather than dedicating themselves to the Muslim *umma* (community) (Walker, 2012).

Bokoh Haram, as a group was set up in 2002 by an Islamic Cleric, Mohammed Yusuf and initially started as a religious group but later metamorphosed into a notorious terrorist group that has succeeded in attacking and bombing people and places ranging from Nigerian Police and other security forces, Churches, Schools, Mosques, Suicide attacks, kidnapping and attacks on banks in other to finance their operations.

The four cardinal points and ideologies of the group lie in the following assumptions:

1. The rejection of secularism and the pursuit of its replacement with Shariah law
2. The rejection of Western Democracy, partisan politics and its subversive elements and potential threats to monarchy
3. Rejection of Western education
4. Rejection of un-Islamic governance

In a sermon delivered by Mohammed Yusuf, to the group in June 2006, rendered in Hausa language and translated to English by Kyari Mohammed (2014:15), he says thus:

> In this dawah we agreed that we are going to suffer like Bilal was dragged on the ground, just like Ammar Ibn Yasir was tortured, just like a spear was thrust into Summayyah's vagina. These are trials we are awaiting… *These are the hurdles we want to cross. Anyone who dies in the process goes to paradise. This is our dawah…*In the process, they will abuse you, call you names and some of you can even die. They will shoot some of you and we will just pray May Allah give you Aljanah (paradise) and proceed without any qualms. Can we endure? May Allah give us the will to endure? This is how our dawah is. (Emphasis mine).

It is our opinion however, that the above statement might have prompted and energized the followers to engage in suicide attack and bombing.

In the first seven years of its operation, Bokoh Haram's terrorist activities were very minimal until when Yusuf was killed. On July 26, 2009, the group launched mass uprising with attack on the Dutsen Tanshi police station in Bauchi which invariably spread to Maiduguri and elsewhere. This attack, tagged the '2009 Nigerian sectarian violence' was a conflict between Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces led to the killing of Hammed Yusuf. A chronological survey of the group's attack before August, 2009 is however stated in line with Samson Liolio's analysis.

Analysis of Bokoh Haram Attack and Government Counter-Attack between 2004 and 2009

Bokoh Haram's Attack

Date	Place of Attack	Number of Casualties
December, 23-31, 2003	Kunama and Geidam Police Station in Yobe State	7 Policemen and 18 members of Bokoh Haram
September 23rd, 2004	Gwiza and Bama Police Stations in Borno State	4 Policemen and 2 civilians
October 10, 2004	Kala-balge Town, Nigerian border with Chad	60 Policemen was ambushed. 12 were taken hostage. No death was recorded

Government's Counter Attack:

June, 2004	Damaturu, Yobe State	Four members of Bokoh Haram were shot dead by Prison guards in a foiled jail break
September 23, 2004	Gwaza and Bama, Borno State	27 members of Bokoh Haram were killed by Nigerian Military while escaping
November, 13th 2008	Maiduguri, Borno State	Mohammed Yusuf was arrested and later granted bail by Abuja High Court
July 29, 2009	Maiduguri, Borno State	Bokoh Haram members were killed by Police on their way to bury some of their members
July 29, 2009		Mohammed Yusuf was arrested by the Military and handed over to the Police who killed him within hours without trial

The group's terrorist activities increased tremendously immediately Mohammed Yusuf was allegedly killed by the police in July, 2009. Some legal scholars and human right activists were against the police decision of the murder and they termed it an "extrajudicial execution". Jaafar Ibrahim, a Lawyer, who wrote from Dala Local Government Area of Kano State, claims that Yusuf was not proven guilty by a court of law and he was not allowed the following process as the Nigerian constitution has stated:

· Informed promptly in the language he understands and in detail of the nature of the offence
· Be given adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence.
· Be given a lawyer for his defence free of charge if he cannot afford
· Right to fair trial before imposition of the sentence, the trail must be in an open court, right to defence (2013, 4).

None of above rights contained under 36 (5) (6) of The 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria and Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights have been given to Muhammad Yusuf before deprivation of his right to life under sect 33 (1) of The 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria(Jafar, 2013). Up till the time of this research, the group has killed over 7000 Nigerians. It is pertinent however to ask these salient questions;

1. What are the demands of Bokoh Haram?
2. What is the response of Nigerian government to the Bokoh Haram's demands?
3. What measures have been taken by the government address the terrorist acts of Bokoh Haram?
4. How successful are the measures taken by the government?

However, through participatory communication approach, this paper investigates the questions and the findings are recorded in the conclusion.

II.   Research Methodology

This research was carried out in Abuja, the federal capital of Nigeria and in carrying out the research, Participatory Communication practitioners/facilitators need to adopt the methodology or approach that is different from that of conventional communication. The approach postulated by scholars like Kidd (1981), Hagher(2000), Akinwale(2001) and Komolafe(2011) involves: information/ data collection, data analysis, scenario building and creation through improvisation, play rehearsal, play performance, evaluation and interaction with audience and follow-up. This approach can be modified into three phases, the Preliminary phase, the Workshop phase and the Post-Workshop phase.

However, this particular PC research was carried out through the adoption of Homestead Approach and Participation-observatory research methodology. The Homestead approach indicates that the research participants and facilitators reside in the community throughout the workshop period, so as to be able to carry out the research survey effectively rather than the Migrant approach which stipulates that the researchers resume to the community in the morning and return to their base at a stipulated time. The Participatory-Observatory method employed methods like interview, observation, interaction and dialogue as instruments of data collection. Through this means, the researchers are able to observe and carry out the survey by joining in, and sharing in the communal activities of the community. In this process, the researchers/ PC facilitators incorporated the people's view point in order to contribute to the social transformation system which eliminates some of the challenges the community faces.

With the Homestead approach, the PC researchers started with the identification of the problems, which were later analyzed and developed into different drama skits and scenarios for presentation to the community. It also served as catalysts for the people to face the reality of their problems and critically work out the methods of resolving them, as Komolafe advances that " this is certainly an empowering process; a process of reinvigoration through which the people can find meaning to their lives and a justification for their existence"(37). This methodology was of great importance to this research because it served as potential tools for the diffusion of innovative ideas among the people towards solving their own peculiar challenges.

III.   Aim and Objectives

The Abuja Participatory Communication workshop was organized to achieve the following:

1. To assess the demands of the Bokoh Haram group.
2. To understand to what level has Nigerian Government responded to the demands of the Bokoh Haram group?
3. To measure the success achieved by the government in tackling Bokoh Haram insurgency.
4. To suggest steps that can be taking by the government to engage insurgency.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Data gathering is at the core of the research in PC, without which there will be no basis to draw any reasonable conclusions. To facilitate effective data gathering process, the researcher and the facilitators adopted qualitative

data gathering methods, which involved field collection, participatory- observation, descriptive and experimental methods. A good understanding and practice of all of these gave the researcher and the facilitators the insights into the historical, religious, social, political and economic contexts in which the people in the Northern part of the country lived.

A study tour was embarked upon by the researcher and the participants as a means of engaging the members of the community in participatory dialogue and communication. From the research conducted, it is obvious that the strategies adopted by the government in tackling Bokoh Haram have failed. In fact, since President Mohammadu Buhari was sworn in as the President in May 29th, 2015, Bokoh Haram group has stepped up its series of attacks into nearly weekly occurrence ranging from deadly ambushes across Nigerian borders, suicide bombing in which many of the perpetrators are young girls and women to poisoning of drinking water and water sources across communities in Maiduguri and Yobe.

The challenge here lies in the understanding of the measures to be taken by the government in solving the onslaught of the terrorists group once and for all.

IV.   Interactive Session

After series of deliberation, the members of the interactive session suggest that one of the ways to tackling the issue of Bokoh Haram insurgency should be a combative approach. The government should engage the members in peaceful negotiation towards having a final resolution to the crisis that has engulfed the North Eastern part of the country. It could be remembered that the group had once proclaimed in 2013 that:

> We will consider negotiation only when we have brought government to its knees…You don't put down your arms in Islam, you only put them aside. (Niyi Akinaso, March, 2013)

It is clear that there is controversy over the government's attempt to negotiate with Bokoh Haram. Some scholars and political analysts like Ayo Ojerinde (2013), Niyi Akinoso (2013), Clinton Iweaale (2014) and Ibrahim Kalo (2014) have argued against the negotiation attempt of the government. They argue that the group is rooted in faith-based fanaticism and anti-Western ideology; hence such negotiation will not take away their faith or change their anti-Western stance.

Some participants among the interacting group however agree that the government should enter into negotiation with the leaders of the group while other members amnesty for all the members of the group. Their arguments was based on the premise that in as much the Niger Militant groups were pardon and given amnesty, the members of Bokoh Haram should also be considered for amnesty if they give up terrorism

At the end of the deliberation, the participatory communication researchers who also doubled as the moderators of the interactive session were able to record the resolution of the communities   and members involved in the workshop;

   a. Negotiation with Bokoh Haram is not a bad approach to conflict resolution. In fact, the practice of engagement of international diplomacy is premised on the idea that the two parties involved in conflict must deliberate either directly or indirectly through some mediators in order to achieve a positive resolution. In view of this, the government could Bokoh Haram in peace talk through negotiation.
   b. Before the proper negotiation could be carried out, the government should have a subsisting terrorism policy in place. There is the need for an in depth study of the mode of operations of the group in order to produce specific counter attack strategies that are not offensive to the group. This can be relied on to engage in a fulfilling negotiation with the terrorist group.
   c. The leaders and financiers of the group must be identified through the government intelligent departments like the police, the Department of State Service (DSS), Nigerian Intelligent Agency (NIA), the Military and Local Vigilante group.
   d. The process of negotiation must be limited in scope and targeted at specific goals.
   e. The terrorist group must have been sufficiently weaken by the Multi Joint Task Force (MJTF) in order to make the negotiation attractive to the group
   f. The government should set up a highly trained and well-equipped antiterrorism multitask force that can quell the activities of the insurgent.

V.   Conclusion

It is important to emphasise that an alternative approach that the government could embark on to solve the challenges of Bokoh Haram insurgency is peaceful dialogue and negotiation. This is where Alternative Conflict Resolution (ACR) proposed in this paper comes to the fore. The ACR is engaged in conflict resolution to foster dialogue and restore peaceful communication between two warring parties which according to Gwaza Andrew is "to helping them to (re)consider the areas of disagreement and do something about them" (16). This however

will spur the warring parties to consider ways of creating a common ground on how the problems can be amicably resolved. It is therefore recommended that before the ACR process is embarked on, the government should have initiated a participatory communication Agency that would have done series of workshops with the members of the public, with the sole aim of incorporating their ideas and inputs into the government's plans towards addressing the ways of solving Bokoh Haram's terrorist acts. In order to share information, knowledge, trust and commitment in development project, participation is very important. Participatory communication in proffering solutions to the challenges of insurgency then becomes a process through which people collectively become involved in development project that gradually transform them from almost completely passive spectators into agents of self-development. It is a situation whereby people collectively gain an understanding of their situation and work together to solve the situation positively. The workforce of participatory communication involves three interrelated part which are collective definition of problems and investigation of the problems, group analysis of the underlying causes of the problems and group action to attempt to solve the problems.

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