



The Role of the Media in Cultural and National Integration: Broadcast Media in Focus

Kaikara Akiki

Department of Mass Communication Kampala International University Uganda

ABSTRACT

Broadcasting by its nature, is the singular most powerful universal means of instant public communication. Amongst its unique attributes is the ability to instantly reach a wider, more varied group of consumers than any other medium. With this very nature of the broadcast media, it could therefore be a useful tool in promoting the ideals of national development. This paper evaluated the role of the broadcast media in cultural and national integration. The linkage between broadcasting and culture was first established by Harold Lasswell when he noted that part of the responsibilities of the mass media is the transmission of social heritage from one generation to another by way of taking intellectual contributions of one generation and passing them on to the next. In the service of national development, the mass media are agents of social change. The specific kind of social change they are expected to accomplish is the transition to new customs and practices and, in some cases, to different social relationships. Besides, such changes in behaviour must consist of substantial change in attitudes, beliefs, skills and social norms. This therefore points to the fact that the broadcast media is not only tailored to promote cultural integration but development as well.

Keywords: Media, Culture, National Integration, Broadcast, Role

INTRODUCTION

The mass media and mass communication stimulate and diffuse values and institutions that are favourable to achievement, mobility, innovation and consumption [1-5]. According to modernization theory, the developed world played an important role in modernizing and facilitating economic development in the developing world [6-8]. The mass media were seen as being instrumental in achieving this goal, as it was believed that media messages had a powerful impact in these underdeveloped societies [9-14]. The media were seen as the mobility multipliers' [1] or diffusers of innovations' [2]. [3, 4] have noted that, this model was essentially elitist and a top-down process. More than three decades ago, [5], emphasized that the press in Nigeria should be an effective and vibrant independent entity that could be instrumental to achieving sustainable development goals [15-18]. Much of the 20th Century, news sources in Nigeria were involved in promoting political awareness, encouraging civic engagement, sensitizing citizens to national issues, and shaping public opinions on a variety of political issues [19-23]. The media, nevertheless, was noted to play these roles under a controlled, confrontational, controversial atmosphere which compromised the effectiveness of news sources and made objectivity of the press difficult [24-27]. As Nigeria's development crisis continues to take a large dimension, recent studies have obviously reinforced the position of previous researchers that a robust and free press is capable of dismantling negative images and stereotypes which the country has faced over time, both at home and abroad [6, 7]. [8], explained that early development efforts in Nigeria and other emerging African Nations were grossly unsuccessful and untamable largely, because of the inadequate role which the news sources were relegated to play, and which resulted in the widespread criticism of the national media as ineffective to gather and analyze salient issues [28-32]. [9], stressed that, the establishment of government newspapers in the country, weakened the credibility and competitiveness of communication channels, demoralizing the citizens from depending on national news and information. He further noted that, government newspapers were better funded, strategically positioned, and adequately staffed to cover news and events [33-36]. While in recent years, there has been a proliferation of news sources in the country which remains to be seen whether their journalistic political content, analysis of government programmes; political actions and policies will be objectively and critically explained to the citizens [37-40]. Similarly, development studies [10, 11] of recent years indicate that responsible and effective governance is a *sin qua non* for sustainable democracy and political stability in developing nations of Africa, especially in a country like Nigeria, where the citizens and other significant stakeholders have been clamoring for policy reforms, improved quality of life, and a more robust media presence. [12, 13, 6] explain that over the past two decades, participatory democratic process

has taken a dramatic turn in the emerging democracies in the wake of citizens' agitation for good governance, expanded, ethnic integration, independent and vibrant press, increased citizen participation, freedom of speech, and informed public debate [41-48]. Past and present leaders of Nigeria have consistently indicated a commitment to sustainable national and political development, and have introduced various measures to support their development objectives, social policies, and economic agenda [49-52]. [8], report strongly indicated that the country has not been able to achieve its seemingly ambitious national development programmes because of misplaced focus on tribal and ethnic issues and politics, rather than focusing on an integrated national development that would unify the country towards a common national purpose. Thus, this paper's objective is to ascertain the influence of the mass media in enthroning cultural and national integration.

Concept of Integration

[14], explain that in the broadest sense, integration means the process by which people who are relatively new to a country (whose roots do not reach deeper than two or three generations) become part of society. Applying in the context of European Integration, the concept refers to shaping a new structure out of individual entities, the nation states. This emphasis on the new, collectively determined unity which could be useful for conceiving two-way process of integrating migrants and established nationals. [15], defined national integration as the creation of a feeling of oneness where the diversities are recognized and respected by imbibing a sense of nationhood; while [16] said integration's ultimate aim is to create a multicultural, pluralist society. In a nutshell, integration is in essence the act of bringing people from diverse background and culture to be united, yet at the same time keeping their original identity without changing it. It is a highly normative concept consisting of complex and multi layered economic, social and cultural practices especially when applied in the context of nation building. When one tries to objectify the highly fluid and normative term of integration for the purpose of policymaking, it implies an assumption of an ideal social order with high degree of internal cohesion. The idealistic form of integration suggests stability and order. However, designation of a specific path and outcome of integration process impede the very thing it aims to achieve, which is to recognize and accept differences. Therefore, many nations who seeks to promote integration seems to struggle to come to a common ground on how oneness could be achieved while reconciling stark differences between races, ethnicity, gender, background and so on.

Mass Media

According to [17], every society's growth, survival and continuity depends among other things, a system of communication, through which people exchange ideas and feelings. Prior to the advent of colonialism, however, Africans have been communicating. For instance, the use of talking drums, age groups, long brass and ivory horns; smoke signals and open market methods were multi-directional ways by which wars, peace, cohesion, transactions etc were maintained in sub-Saharan Africa. Modern communication came, however to provide a solution to the challenges of the globalized world which the traditional instruments could not solve due to their unscientific nature. [18]. Edmund Burke, in the late eighteenth century in England coined the term 'fourth estate', while making a reference to the powers of the mass media. "The power of the press arose from its ability to give or withhold publicity and from its informative capacity'. The first key freedom was to report and comment on deliberations, assemblies and acts of government." [19]. All the revolutionary and reformist movements from the eighteenth century onwards inscribe liberty of the press on their banners and made use of it in practice to advance their causes [20]. Still on the usefulness of the mass media as a reformation agent, John (1869) in [19] writes: The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation, those who dissent from opinion even more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging errors for the truth; if wrong, they lose what is almost great a benefit, the clearer the perception and live liver impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. Integration in Africa is increasingly being accepted as essential in promoting and facilitating economic and political development; the mass media being the fulcrum upon which all developmental endeavours anchor, must be accepted in the first place as essential agent in exchange for this mission. Harold Lasswell once stated that "man has always something to watch over his environment and report to him on dangers, discoveries, opportunities, opinions, facts, decisions, changes and current trends – something to entertain people on a broad scale, something to broaden trade and commerce." The role of the mass media cannot therefore be over-emphasized. The mass media fully saturate our everyday lives that we are often unconscious of their presence not to mention their influence. Media inform us, delight us, annoy us. They move our emotions, challenge our intellects, and insult our intelligence. Media often reduce us to mere commodities to the highest bidder. Media help define us; they shape our realities..." [21]. The media perform the functions of servicing the political system and holding society together as a sort of cultural glue among other things. On the other hand, [19] itemized the basic functions of the mass media. They are as follows: correlation, cultural transmission, entertainment, mobilization, personal identity, social integration and interaction, information, surveillance etc.

Theoretical Framework

Press Participation-Based Integrative Model

This paper employed press participation-based integrative model as a balanced approach for achieving sustainable political development and governance in Nigeria. Drawing considerably from political development experiences of Nigeria and research evidence from [8], as well as from past and recent studies [12, 11, 7] this paper maintains that democratic governance and political development objectives of Nigeria have so far been deficient and inadequate. National strategies would have been successful if: (a) the civilian/military leaderships had allowed the news sources adequate latitude to analyze development information, address political improprieties, and expose and hold leaders to public accountability, (b) the press were allowed to make constructive criticisms of government decisions, activities, and programs; and if political parties had not grossly influenced the activities of the press; and (c) government ownership of the press did not translate into control and censorship of national news and information. The press participation-based integrative model, which derives substantially from general system theory, was developed as a constructive model for political governance shortcomings in the country. Inherent in this model is the idea that communication channels or news sources must be considered an integral part of development objectives in Nigeria for long-term growth and prosperity. Further, the participation-based integrative concept substantiates the need for collectivity in the design and implementation of strategic development goals in a developing nation. The concept is not only concerned with the integration of the under-utilized Nigerian press in the pursuit of political development agenda, but is also concerned with the integration of all other national institutions and establishments in the country associated with making change toward sustainability of political governance and national unity. In the twenty-first century information-rich society, news sources should be more analytical, proactive, and critical of strategic development efforts that impede or forestall constructive attempts at raising citizens' consciousness and patriotism beyond tribal sentiments. Consistently, historical and empirical studies of past decades [22, 8] noted that Nigeria's development problem hinged on the relationship between the nation's news sources and political system and the ability of the press/news sources to contribute significantly to the bid for sustainable national development. In other words, communication channels, especially the press by virtue of its responsibility and obligation, should be able to set the agenda for political and informed debates to guide the actions of the citizenry, electorate, and stakeholders in general. As echoed in [8], sustainable democratic governance is critical for the emerging democracies and developing nations of Africa. For example, to attract foreign investments and global entrepreneurs, encourage strategic global business alliances, and create a competitive business environment, governments of Nigeria and other African nations, must be transparent and be consistently trustworthy in their actions, and ethical in their relationships and business decisions. Therefore, the press should be independent and strong enough to expose and analyze government wrongdoings and abuses, and should play a powerful role in the cultural and socio-political advancement of democratic governance.

The Role of Broadcasting in National Integration through Culture Promotion

Broadcast journalism has to do with the transmission of information through radio waves from a radio or television, to the audience in far and near places, through their receivers which help in decoding such information [23]. Amongst its unique attributes is the ability to instantly reach a wider, more varied group of consumers than any other medium. Its unique usefulness lies in its capacity to surmount geographic and economic barriers to extend to the rich and the poor, old and young, rural and urban dwellers, the educated and the illiterate, the professionals, the majority and the minority. With this very nature of the broadcast media, it could therefore be a useful tool in promoting the ideals of national development. Broadcasting and broadcast media are one of the nation's cultural institutions' with responsibilities for informing, educating and entertaining. The linkage between broadcasting and culture was first established by Harold Lasswell when he noted that part of the responsibilities of the mass media is the transmission of social heritage from one generation to another by way of taking intellectual contributions of one generation and passing them on the next. [24], also drew on Lasswell's position in his functional analysis of the role of the broadcast media. The involvement of broadcasting in the promotion of arts and culture came to the fore with the 1977 Nigeria Television Authority Policy document. The cultural objectives of broadcasting were spelt out as follows:

- Seek, identify, preserve and promote the nations diverse cultures.
- Select critically, the positive aspects of foreign cultures for the purpose of enriching the nation's culture.
- Develop and promote the application of indigenous aesthetic values.
- Promote the development of a high level of intellectual and artistic creativity and;
- Foster generally acceptable moral and spiritual values.

The Broadcast Media and National Integration

Scholars such as Turner, Pye, Schramm and others opine that, the role of the mass media in national development is to teach people new norms, attitudes and behaviours in places of old ones, so that they can be more productive. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited

In the service of national development, the mass media are agents of social change. The specific kind of social change they are expected to accomplish is the transition to new customs and practices and, in some cases, to different social relationships. Besides, such changes in behaviour must consist of substantial change in attitudes, beliefs, skills and social norms. Perhaps, a better way to describe what increased flow of information does in a nation is to say that it provides a climate for national development. It makes the expert knowledge available where it is needed, and provides a forum for discussion, leadership and decision making [1]. This therefore points to the fact that the broadcast media is not only tailored to promote cultural integration but development as well.

[25], states that "we have proof-that development and communication can be complementary. We know that communication may fail to generate development. But after making all the allowances for accident in nature and society, we are still left with a paradigm that links communication with development". [26], therefore states that, Africa's development problems should be credited to communication breakdown, and the fact that many Africans are neither in touch with their leaders, nor with the cities where decisions are made. For you to effectively mobilise the people, you as the as the message designer must first of all understand the environment in which you want to mobilise for a cause action. Therefore, the cultural, religious, traditional and political climate and diversities of such an environment must be clearly understood by the message designer [27].

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