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CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE MEDIA IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In many ways, mass media seems to be associated with development. The attainment of sustainable development depends on socio-economic and political environment where the role of mass media is important. The media are meant to serve both elite and those at the grassroot levels. They are expected to focus their time and resources on sensitive issues that matter most to the people. They produce stories that help to make sense of, and sensibilities about social order. Media houses do focus on policy and always see the relevance of their stories to policy bringing about development. They are supposed to bring to the limelight what the people need and what they expect from the government. The media houses are supposed to show case news that are crucial to man's effort to gain a greater control of his life. They are expected to explain, interpret and comment on the implication of events and issues especially as they relate to development. However, certain factors are hindering the ability of the press to carry out some of their development goals in the society. It is against this background that this paper examines the concept of development as well as the challenges and constraints that hider the media from performing their sustainable development roles in Nigeria. It concludes that the role that mass media play in sustaining the development of a society cannot be overemphasized; any media house must strive to live up to the expectations of the people no matter the constraints and challenges that might stand in its ways.

Keywords: Information, Government, Nigeria, Journalism, Society and Development

INTRODUCTION

Over the years the issue of development has come to the fore as one issue that the mass media are expected to focus attention on. Since the 1960s, the modernization theorists (Schramn, 1964) have advocated the importance of the media in the development process of a nation. According to him, the media are expected to explain, inform and educate the society on crucial issues affecting the society's well-being and progress. The media are expected to explain, inform and educate the society on crucial issues affecting the society's well-being and progress. On this note, Aggawala (1979) an advocate of development journalism and a number of other scholars assumed that the media have become pervasive instrumentalities of modern existence.

The media which consist of the radio, television, newspaper, magazine and the internet have been described by Edmund Burke in the late-eighteenth-century England as the *Fourth Estate of the Realm* or the fourth branch of government (McQuail, 2006). This assertion supports the popular statement of Thomas Jefferson, the 3rd American President (1801-1809); which states categorically that ''were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter".

Jefferson's statement has brought to the limelight the important role that the media are playing in ensuring sustainable development in the society. His assertion has given credence to the fact that a society can successfully operate without any form of government but it would be catastrophic for any society to exist without the presence of a virile press. Media's role in national development is fundamental and instrumental to the emancipation of the people from the shackles and bondage of poverty and underdevelopment in all ramifications. The media are agents for providing constructive criticism of government and its various agencies, informing readers on how the development process is affecting them, and highlighting local self-help that would contribute meaningfully to the lives of the people that are exposed to the information.

Kwame Nkrumah, the first African President of Ghana, reiterated the role of the media in the development of the society when he articulated that the media should be used as a revolutionary tool of African liberation. He believed that the media are an extension of the government and its policies of social, economic and cultural development (Cited in Damatob and Hall, 1983:9).

He asserted thus on the role of the media in nation building:
...our revolutionary African press must carry our revolutionary purpose. This is to establish a progressive political and economic system upon our continent that will free men from want and every form of social injustice and enable them to work out their social and cultural destinies in peace and at ease. (In this respect)... the true African ...newspaper is a collective education- a weapon, first and foremost, to overthrow colonialism and imperialism, and to assist total African independence and unity.

The media are meant to serve both elite and those at the grassroots levels. They are expected to focus their time and resources on sensitive issues that matter most to the people. Watson (2003: 110) buttressed this point by saying that the media must be seen as the representatives of order. He further said that ''the media are agencies of policing. They produce stories 'that help to make sense of, and express sensibilities about social order'. Things are represented in terms of correctness or incorrectness rather than in terms of truth or falsehood.'' Media houses must focus on policy and always see the relevance of their stories to policy making and implementations in order to improve journalism and to produce less "soft news" and more "hard news". The media houses are supposed to showcase news that are crucial to man's effort

to gain a greater control of his life. Hence, they are expected to explain, interprete and comment on the implications of events and issues.

The media are supposed to contribute toward making the society achieve its social goals. It must see itself as an instrument of championing a new cause which will empower the people to take an informed decision that will better their lives. The African society need a totally committed mass media based on development of the people's socio-economic and political goal not a resemblance of the idea of either the East or the West.

However, certain factors are hindering the ability of the press to carry out some of their developmental goal in the society. This essay examines the concept of development in its ramifications as it refers to communications as well as the challenges and constraints that hinder the media from performing their developmental roles optimally and also provide some solutions to the challenges.

WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT?

Development was seen in the past by bodies such as the Bretton Woods institutions and their adherents as attainment of high economic indices such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita income, high technology, mass production, urbanization and massive investment in mass communication infrastructure, among other factors (Jimoh, 2008). Jimoh believes that any nation experiencing higher levels of the indices is regarded as developed, even if such statistics do not translate into improvement of material and social life of the people. Though this notion of development is still common among its believers, current thinking on development has shifted towards human development indices.

Different disciplines define development on the basis of their individual orientations. To economists, development is associated with increased production and investment, GDP and per capita income. Political scientists see it as the enhancement of political resources where power and related resources are equitably allocated. On the other hand, sociologists conceive development as the process achieved through structural differentiation, peace, order and social progress (Alanana, 2003). Other definitions of development flow from the various backgrounds and general outlook of the different background presented above.

Inayatullah (1967), for instance, defined development as the capacity of an individual to have greater control over his environment and increased realization of the values of the society, its political destiny and self discipline. At this juncture, he emphasized human development indices as better management and control of the environment, including good system of governance which is good enough for all concerned. This is the realm of sustainable development, or developing without destroying the environment. He further emphasized the endogenous path to development through the participatory approach. This is essential in fulfilling the values of the people. Every human group has its own values, and the imposition of one group's values over another, which modernization theorists see as the way to achieve development, may not, sometimes, lead to development.

Participation by the people in development programmes and policies is a major impetus for development. This perhaps has informs Rogers' (1976a) participatory perspective definition which sees development as:

A widely participatory process of social change in the society, intended to bring both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining control over their environment (Rogers, 1976a: 225).

Similarly, Melkote and Steeves (2001) see development as the process by which societal situations are improved. The human and societal situations include both the social and physical conditions of life including environmental conditions. Developing and improving or maintaining the environment has become a major source of concern to scholars and student of development studies. This stems from the understanding that no society can develop without tampering with its social and physical environment.

Because developing nations are facing afflictions of many types that militate against their development, development could be perspectival. It is important to note that development means different things to different people when we are dealing with groups that are as diverse as the developing countries. Vilanilam (1979), also advised that ‘‘development means different things to different people (and that) its meaning varies according to the changes occurring in the social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, scientific and technological value of a given society.’’ Therefore the development indices of a particular country should not be used as a yardstick to qualify or quantify development indices of another country. Each country has its own peculiarities which forms the basis of their development status; which means that what can be categorized as development indices in one nation may be seen in a different light in another nation.

Development is also understood, on the basis of a renewed thinking on sustainable development as the enhanced capacity of people to manipulate their environment for their betterment (Jimoh, 2005). It is also seen as all efforts, both physical and social including policies and programmes, geared towards a better life for the people. Better life can be deduced from Seers’ (1977) poser on the question of development:

The questions to ask about a country’s development are therefore: What is happening to poverty? What is happening to unemployment? What is happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result ‘‘development’’ even if per capita income doubled. (p.124)

Clearly, Seers’(1977) contention is that social indices of reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequality are better yardsticks for measuring the development status of a nation because high economic indices do not translate to better life and sometimes may worsen it as the state of inequality may increase.

From whatever side of the prism one is viewing development, it could be deduced that development gears towards positive changes. Hence, Opubor (1985:156) contends that ‘‘Any notion of definition of development ... that does not take into account the fundamental change for the better in the life style of peasant farmers, the fishermen, the petty traders, the herdsman or the labourer is grossly inadequate.’’

It follows from the above that development jornalism and reporting developmental issues can only be beneficial if they align with the values enunciated in the concept of development. Development journalism, the harbinger of development news, “has anticident in developing nation leaders’ clamour for New International Economic Order (NIEO) to address the existing inequitable share of the flow in international news’’ (Soola, 2003: 158). In recognition of the importance of

media in the development process, scholars have propounded models and theories, specifically designed to anchor their activities on solid philosophical and professional foundation. Prominent among these models and theories are development journalism and media development theory. Each of these will be examined in the next sections.

DEVELOPMENT JOURNALISM

The issue of Development Journalism was conceptualized in the 1960s at the Press Foundation of Asia in Manila as independent journalism that provided constructive criticism of governor and its agencies, informed readers how the development process was affecting them, and highlighted local self-help projects (see Aggarwala, 1978, 1980; Golding, 1977; Shah, 1992; see Ogan, 1982, for a treatment of the conceptual status of developing journalism).

The concept which started almost immediately after the independence of most developing countries brought to the fore the reality and responsibilities of shaping the destinies of the new nations and the promotion of the welfare of the people, whom they had made to believe that self –governance can only lead to unlimited prosperity (Dare, 2000). The media whose constitutional role was supposed to be used as an instrument of national integration were later turned to the megaphone of the serving government personnel.

Development Journalism sees development as a goal that can be achieved through the collaboration of the media with government to achieve national consciousness and unity among the populace. The press is seen as an ally of the government in promotion of national development. They are to function as a partner to the government of the day in the achievement of development of the state. Tom Mboya, a quintessential Kenyan politician, for instance stated categorically that ‘‘African journalists must join forces with the country’s leaders in the cause of nation-building or face the charge of traitor.’’(Barton, 1969:172)

Mboya’s contention was echoed by the late Kenyatta of Kenya (cited in Damatob and Hall, 1983:10) when he exhorted the press to:

...positively promote national development and growing self-respect since in Africa it can have a tremendous influence on nation-building. It may constantly inspire or could set out to frustrate the spirit of Harambee or national unity which every young country needs as the fundamental of its progress.

Evidence abounds from both literature and empirical studies that the media have a powerful influence in advancing national development in developing countries (Rogers, 1962; Schramm, 1964). Development journalism intends to use the media to inform, educate and sensitise the public on issues that will emancipate and empower the society. The media are used as a tool to pursue and contribute to the social goal of their countries by publicising development work that will enrich the lives of the people that are exposed to it. Also, the media are effectively utilised to achieve national unity, patriotism among the citizens, to foster political stability, promote national integration for the peaceful existence and stability of the government.

Domatob and Hall (1983:11) concisely supported the above assertion when they stated that development journalism is not an easy task because it is relatively difficult to spread the message of patriotism and national unity in the hope of creating a new social values and cohesive national feeling.

DEVELOPMENT MEDIA THEORY

The call for media intervention in development process is hinged on what Denis McQuail called "development media theory". This theory is quite influential because it sees the media as a pivot for national development in developing countries. McQuail (1983: 131) stated that the central thesis of the theory is that the mass media in developing nations should be used for ''the primacy of the national development task (economic, social, cultural and political); the pursuit of cultural and informational autonomy; support for democracy; and solidarity with other developing countries.'' He outlined six main principles of the theory:

- Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.
- Freedom of the media should be open to restriction according to (1) economic priorities and (2) development needs of society.
- Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language.
- Media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally and politically.
- Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
- In the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict media operations and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified (McQuail. 1983:95-96).

Primarily, the theory is rooted in the modernization/functionalist paradigm of mass media's role in development. It presupposes the use of the mass media in achieving development in developing countries. McQuail (1983) is of the view that since the Siebert, et al (1956) 'four theories of the press' (Authoritarian, Libertarian, Soviet/Communist and Social Responsibility) are inadequate in explaining the media systems of developing nations, the need for another theory becomes essential. Thus, he propounded the development media theory to take care of how the media can aid the development of those nations. The assumption is that the mass media are part of the instruments for achieving development in developing nations.

Citing McQuail (1987), Baran and Davis (2000: 112) assert that:

''Development media theory advocates media support for an existing political regime and its efforts to bring about national economic development....By supporting government development efforts, media aid society at large. This theory argues that until a nation is well established and its economic development well underway, media must be supportive rather than critical of government. Journalists must not pick apart government efforts to promote development but, rather, assist government in implementing such policies.''

According to Domatob and Hall (1983:10), the late Kenyan nationalist of repute, Jomo Kenyatta urged the press to ''...positively promote national development and growing self-respect since in Africa it can have a tremendous influence

on nation-building. It may constantly inspire or could set out to frustrate the spirit of Harambe or national unity which every young country needs as the fundamental of its progress.'' In a similar token, Mamman Daura, a former editor-in-chief of the New Nigerian argued that ''...the (mass media), therefore, should be an agent in mobilising the society, in educating the society, in consolidating independence or, in one or two cases, revolution.''(In Domatob and Hall, 1983:10)

Because the tenets of the theory advocate cooperation rather than adversarial relationship between the media and the government, development media theory has been abused by the authoritarian regimes who assume media should be subjected to their whims in the name of development. The authoritarian element of the theory which reigns supreme in most developing countries has brought about tension between government/media relations and role conflict for journalist (Oso, 2002). Thus, professionals are always confused on who they owe their loyalty to: the government or the people? This confused state in which most journalists in the developing countries found themselves finds an agreement in Peter Golding (1977) assertion that:

The tensions between the idea of news as information deliberately selected and shaped to serve defined social purposes, and news as an objective randomly selected captured of reality, disinterestedly distributed, often proved difficult for African journalists caught between two currents of thoughts(Golding, 1977 as cited in Oso, 2002: 84).

Communication research has shown that the media are capable of promoting national development, but must the media become a puppet in the hands of the government of the day all in the name of adhering to the development media theory doctrines? In the developed world, the media are given a pivotal role in the development and sustenance of their countries. However, the opposite seems to be the case in the developing world in which there is still visible poverty everywhere. This brought us to the juncture in which we ask ourselves whether or not development media theory is being practiced in Africa the way it should be. This observation has also brought to the fore the question of whether development media theory is the antidote for the under-development of the developing nations.

THE MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT

It is now a consensus among the scholars of development and communication that communication or information constitutes the critical variable in the process of national development. In fact, scholars have argued that among the six circles of variables of development, developmental information in the mass media (press) is the most important.

Scholars like Rogers, Lerner, Pye and Schramm, saw communication and mass media, though in different ways as an independent variable and causal agent in the game of development. Therefore, all over the world the news media or the mass media have been assigned pivotal roles in national development.

According to Schramm and Lerner (1967), information or communication occupies an important role in the initial development of the Third World countries. They believe that the mass media could better the lives of people by supplementing the information resources and exposing people to learning opportunities.

Particularly, Schramm (1964) conceptualized a relationship between development communication and economic growth which has been the main paradigm for development programmes. He observes that when economic activity spreads, knowledge would automatically be gathered more broadly, information shared widely and transferred swiftly. This

means that development of most nations is premised on the role communication plays or is allowed to play in spreading knowledge, gathering and sharing of information.

Rogers (1976b), remarks that there are three different kinds of tasks for communication to affect social change for development. He observes that ‘‘communication provides information about the need for change methods and also the benefits of adopting new ways of doing things; secondly, it engineers acceptance of change and thirdly, communication plays an essential role in teaching new skills necessary for accepted change to be successful’’ (p.58).

Broadcasting media, radio in particular, have been adjudged to be the most potent in development communication efforts (Moemeka, 1991). Yet the print media have their own advantages. Moemeka (1991) notes that the print media have an enduring characteristic which neither the radio nor the television has. He added that the newspaper can be read and re-read at one's convenience, thus allowing for fuller and better understanding of message contents. The newspaper, according to him can also be stored away for future use, thus making for the preservation of materials that are considered important for future reference.

Generally, the role of the mass media should be to ensure popular acceptance of goals and implementation strategies of the development programme. Mass media should be spaced out with specific communication tasks mapped out for every stage. These tasks, according to Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1991) should include creating awareness of the people's interest in the various programmes and projects, stimulating the desire to participate in planning and execution of those programmes and obtaining feedback from the people as to their own thoughts and conception of those programmes.

In essence, Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1991) remarked that the communication media are expected to set the agenda for positive and enduring change by focusing public attention on the need for such changes and for better and more productive ways of doing things. Via their agenda setting power, the media have the potentials to raise developmental consciousness of the people and galvanise them towards the considerations of developmental projects and programmes.

The following popular remark by Cohen (1963:13) can be used to support the above opinion: ‘‘the news media might not be successful in telling people what to think: but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.’’ Thus by focusing public attention on change, which is what development is often all about, the people can be prepared for making the necessary transforming efforts.

MacBride *et al*. (1980: 108) also acknowledged this fact by suggesting that ‘‘communication should pursue three aims: increase understanding of development problems; build up a spirit of solidarity in a common effort; and enlarge the capacity of men and women to take charge of their own development.’’ It is believed that communication can be employed not only to inform and educate the people but also to mobilize them to participate effectively in the development process. The media ought to report more systematically ‘‘the gradual transformation of the village from backward to a progressive community, the emergence of imaginative rural leaders, the efforts exerted by masses of people to build community projects’’ (Piyasoma, 1980:164). This is the concept that has become known as development journalism or development news.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to ask ourselves 'what development news is'. Development news is a misused expression that has been given different interpretations by different people. However, Soola (2002a) gave a distinguished interpretation to the concept by saying that development news is supposed to ‘‘...show traumas, upheavals, problems and the progress encountered and achieved from the grassroot to the seat of government and the meaningful stage-by-stage

account of the projects on new bridges, schools, offices, hotels and roads and other projects'' (Soola, 2002a:159). Development news focuses on socio-political and economic wellbeing of any given society, anchored on the principle of mobilisation and conscientization of the pubic towards amelioration of the people's negative situation.

In a study of development news in three Indian daily newspapers, Shah (1990: 33) observed that an accepted premise in the study of mass communication in developing countries is that the circulation of specific kinds of information can contribute to social and economic progress. He posits further that:

''Development news should examine critically, evaluate and interpret the relevance of development plans, projects, policies, problems and issues. It should indicate the disparities between plans and actual accomplishments, and include comparisons with how development is progressing in other countries and regions. It should also provide contextual and background information about the development process, discuss the impact of plans, projects, policies, problems and issues on people, and speculate about the future of development.''

Reportage of development news in Nigeria's mass media is somehow relegated to the background. Most of the news reported in Nigeria's mass media is more or less sensational or political news stories. Development news that can contribute positively to the development of the society is not given due prominence like other news stories that are classified as non-development news stories (Jimoh, 2007; Salawu, 2003; Best, 2005). Some scholars believe that most mass media houses are constrained in their efforts at reporting developing because of some obvious and invisible forces which frustrate them. These challenges and constraints in the reportage of development news are highlighted below.

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS OF THE MEDIA

It is an obvious fact that the Nigerian media houses are facing a lot of pressures in the discharge of their duties from political leaders and other private interests. These constraints limit their abilities in the development of the society; however, they must not allow these challenges to get into the way of their job. Though the media are privately or publicly owned, the reason for their existence is not to serve as a propagandist machinery of their owners. Media houses sociologically and philosophically exist to serve as the custodian of the rights of the masses and they are supposed to champion the cause of the masses, from the remotest portion of the society to the highest level. They are the Fourth Estate of the realm and they must stand up to the tasks when the situation demands.

For the mass media to live up to the expectations of the masses, their rights must be guaranteed by the state. However the mass media are restricted from having access to information that has the tendency to develop the society. The military decrees from past military eras still witch-hunt the mass media practitioners in the discharge of their duties. The press in Nigeria are still being checkmated by various previous decrees of the past military administrations in the country.

Olukotun (2002), for example, contends that:

...all the anti-media decrees promulgated by Generals Babangida and Abacha are still on the statute books as at November 2001 inspite of several promises to expunge them, although they are not being enforced. These include offensive publication (proscription) Decree No.35 of 1993; State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No.2 of 1984 under which journalists can be detained and held incommunicado for security reasons; The treason and other offences (Special Military Tribunal) Decree No.1 of 1996; as well as The Constitution (suspension and modification) Decree No.

107 of 1993 which annuls a citizen's right to public apology or compensation, if he was unjustly or unlawfully detained. (p.100)

Late General Sanni Abacha exemplified the might of the government over the right of the press when he mandated one of the most established newspaper, *The Guardian* to nationalise its news contents in 1996. The refusal of the latter to comply, earned it the wrath of the ''power that be''– a manifestation that was made bear in a state-organised arson against the publishing house and an attempted murder of the publisher of the newspaper, Chief Felix Ibru (Kadiri, 2009). The press has equally been treated in disdainful manners even since the advent of the democratic rule in 1999. The Nigerian press has so many problems to cope with, apart from the draconian laws and limitations set by the government to regulate the media by past regimes. The oppression and suppression militate against every existing and potential interest in promoting development news. The economic and social problems are also issues they contend with. One consequence of the economic downturn of the 1980's and 1990's and specifically a result of hostile authoritarian economic policies towards the media is that as at today, the combined circulation of all newspapers barely reach half a million, in a country of more than 140 million people (Olukotun, 2002)

The reason for the oppression on the media by the various governments in Nigeria (particularly the past military governments) is because development journalism was originally conceptualised to serve as an ally of the government. Therefore, any medium that goes contrary to the dictate of the government of the day is either frustrated or forced into extinction.

However, Aggarwala (1979) asserted that development news must live up to what it is supposed to do. It must provide constructive criticism of government and its agencies, inform readers about development process affecting them, and highlight local self-help projects.

Another problem of the press is the irregular power supply in the country which has made newspaper production very frustrating for the media houses. In order to remain in operation, the media houses are always powered by generators which are extra over-head expenditures for them. The use of generator can also be a challenging task during the period of incessant fuel scarcity in the country; which might lead to partial or total paralysis of the business.

Another crucial problem of the Nigeria media is its urban, elite-centred bias, and it's almost cynical neglect of the rural areas (Kadiri, 2009). Kadiri stated that the acquisition of modern technologies by these media houses further increases the gap between the urban and the rural news reportage. ''Urban elite class directly or indirectly call the shot for the mass media ...their agenda and ideology are often at variance with those of the people who receive prominence in the media'' (Soola, 2002a:122).

The situation above gets deteriorated by the fact that most of the media houses only have reporter in the urban centers at the detriment of the rural areas; even the few reporters in the urban areas are so overwhelmed with duties that they sometimes compromise the ethics if their profession in order to live up to the expectation their bosses. Since the best form of development is said to be bottom-up type, the absence of rural presence cosmetic development of the centre at the expense of the rural areas.

Also, some of the 'so-called' development news that is published in the Nigerian newspapers is not well researched, and the few ones reported are mostly culled from international media or sources. This resulted in a setback of which the much

needed local angles on development news that affects the lives of the people are left unattended to. Reliance on foreign/international sources results from minimal investment in investigative reporting. The implication of this is that foreign perspectives to developmental issue become dominant in the news coverage, thus sacrificing local peculiarities and particularities. The reason for the use of the foreign sources is because they are readily available at little or no cost at all.

Also, the need for survival of the various mass media made some of them to report sensational news at the detriment of the development news. Most media exist primarily for profit making and class domination. In simple terms, classical Marxists see the media as being controlled and used for the interests of those who control the economic power, the bourgeoisie in capitalist setting. Also, the media owners' views, which are constantly aired through the mass media, become dominant and invariably contribute immensely to the maintenance of inequality between the upper and the lower classes (Lenin 1972).

In a similar vein, Egbon (1989) said that most media personnel in Nigeria have used the mass media to serve the selfish interest of minority elite of the powerful groups, by helping them to maintain the status quo, thereby serving the interests of the few privileged. He contended further that for a nation to develop, its various mass media must be used properly. He asserted that the mass media is not a personal property of anyone but that they belong to all and should be used in the interest, convenience and necessity of the citizens.

Development news, which is mostly tagged as hard and boring news does not have the capacity to sell newspapers. The truth of the matter is that people would prefer to read news that is not related to development issues. Campbell (2004:56) aptly captures this belief when he suggests that:

''Generally speaking, audiences around the world seem disinclined to be interested in serious news media, tending to prefer news with at least an element of entertainment in it. Where choices are offered between entertainment-oriented and 'serious' news, audiences often seem to prefer the entertainment-based output.''

Murdock and Golding (1973) explain the reasons why media behave the way they do by stating that economic pressures on the media houses make them to select, present and package information, which are exciting and entertaining to suit the demands of the final consumers of the information.

This perspective of Murdock and Golding (1973) to contemporary news packaging is supported by Dennis (2002:36) when he stated that:

''...the media mostly respond to public taste in order to make a profit. It is sad that some of the most critically acclaimed television shows and quality magazines have died for lack of audience to sustain them. But at the same time, others that do honour creative work and quality content, come along and succeed. Some media companies are so greedy and slavish to profits that they cheat the public by producing shallow news and poor quality entertainment.''(Dennis and Merril, 2002).

The triumph of capitalism and its attendant laissez-faire market economy has thrusted economic rationalism into the centre of many organizational activities, media organisation inclusive. The need for the media to survive in this profit centred economy has lead to commodification of news. Therefore, news must be packaged like other commodities, that

is, it must be attractive to the audience. Since the industry relies on the advertisers to remain as a going concern, audiences are turned into commodities and bundled for advertisers, making the latter to be a major factor in news production. The above statement brings to the fore the issue of financial sustainability of the Nigerian media. They are grappling with reality of the economic meltdown, which is 'melting' on most organisations and individuals. The media have to survive and in order to survive they must provide what their target audience will be willing to consume; but this is not the only factor that determines the content of the news. Advertisers have influence on the editorial content of publications their adverts appear in. Hence, they determine what goes into the newspapers.

Herman and Chomsky (1999) (as cited in Campbell, 2004:62) support the statement above by arguing that ''News organisations become 'interested in attracting audiences with buying power, not audience per se, and as a consequence it is the advertisers who can exert influence on news content over above audience interests/needs''. The views of Campbell (2004) confirms the influence of advertisers when he said that even the most established news media outlets can be subjected to the pressures of advertisers.

The financial constraints of the media houses are also taking their toll on the resources at the disposal of the media practitioners. Lack or inadequate resources at the disposal of the media practitioners is another factor inhibiting their productivity on the reportage of development news. Most journalists in Nigeria are largely under-resourced, with some not even paid in months. The basic resources- Internets, reference books, blogging resources, news search engines etc- that journalists need to carry out their daily activities effectively are not readily available. They are also not exposed to training and re-trainings that most of their counterparts in other advanced countries are constantly undergoing. The working conditions together with inadequate resources make journalist to swing priorities from real development issues to those reports that provide immediate gratifications for the reporter.

The standard of education of most journalists covering development news beat is rather unfortunate. Some journalists in some media houses are school certificate holders and the ones that are first degree holders do not have a slightest idea of what journalism is because they don't have first degrees in mass communication, journalism or media studies. These 'so called' journalists do not have orientation on the kind of news that has the potential to develop the society; therefore, they have some peculiar challenges interpreting the information to the satisfaction of the public. An environmental issue like climate change is always challenging for journalists to interpret because it is termed as a science issue. Only few African journalists or their editors have good understanding of science that is often woven around climate change discourse. Hence, the journalists develop their own definition of development news which would later on be inimical to the national development efforts of the nation.

It seems apparent that attention is not given to the professional values and ideology which are known for the practice of development journalism. The reportage of what the media houses call 'development news' is mostly event-oriented. Event-oriented news is the news coverage that does not really have relevance on the lives of the people. They are routine news which is mostly disseminated to serve as a public relations booster for the different organizations of government. Development news, which must be process-oriented, must be covered based on the positive impact that it will make on the lives of the recipient and not the source of the news.

The definition given to development news is relative depending on the source that the news is from. Studies have shown that most of what journalists tagged as development news is nothing but a propaganda summation of the government of

the day or private individual striving to achieve an aim. Development news ought to reflect the needs of the people and it must also have positive impact on the lives of the people involved. Therefore, context of development news must be easily understood and it must be highly relevant to the environment of the people. Apart from the relevance of development news to the people that it is meant for; some development information are not given a good prominence or position that they ought to be accorded. It is often given little airtime on radio and television or it is often relegated to niche columns/magazines and journal.

In fact, the importance attached to development news by scholars has sparked controversy over the value of development news or development communication. Ogan and Fair (1984:173) support the coverage of development news if it has the potential to satisfy the needs of the population. The two scholars do not feel that the acceptance of government handouts from national leaders full of self-serving praise for their economic and social accomplishment can be regarded as development. They further say that ‘‘calling the ‘good news’ in government public relations releases ‘development news’ will not change the situation.’’

Another main challenge that the media have in carrying out their responsibility to society is the issue of ownership and control of the media by government and elite private individuals. Adeyanju (2005) noted that development communication theories, McQuail’s (1983) inclusive, are not valid when it comes to explaining the direction to follow in achieving development. According to Adeyanju (2005) the domination of the lower class by elite media owners exists because the media are operated in a capitalist economic setting where profit maximization is the order. Adeyanju (2005)’s viewpoint is rooted in the much referenced Karl Marx’s position on the mass media. According to Marx (cited in Murdock and Golding, 1977:15)

‘‘The class which has the means of material production has control at the same time over the means of mental production so that, thereby generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it...In so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they...among other things regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are ruling ideas of the epoch.’’

In a nutshell, some communication and media studies summarised the challenges affecting development reporting as: commercialisation of news, ownership pattern, management policy, total dependence on the Press releases, apathy for reading and research by journalists covering development issues, lack of facilities, conflicts and confrontations between the government and the media, pressure on journalists to beat deadlines and money journalism.

THE WAY FORWARD

Reportage of development news should be given more prominence by the various newspaper editors in their editions. The editors should ensure that more spaces are allotted to development related issues and also the use of pictures should be increased. There is also the need for in-depth analysis of development issues in the press.

The media have a huge task of reporting process-oriented and not event-oriented news stories from the government establishments. The media practitioners must check the abuse and misuse of the media by government functionaries who take advantage of the media simply because some journalists are so lazy to critically examine information that is passed down to them. At this juncture, it must be stated categorically that these news stories must be appropriately investigated

and analysed for the development of the society. However, it seems that some advocates of development journalism, share the liberal view that the state and government will always act in the interest of the populace (Oso, 2002).

But, Graham Mytton (1983) (Quoted in Oso, 2002: 125) aptly pointed out that

''The fact that a government holds power to protect the public from harm is no guarantee that the same power will be used in that interest. Development journalism requires that governments or their agencies supervise, decide, judge and act in a field in which they are subject as well as object. Reporting on governments and their activities is a legitimate part of the media's function: therefore, governments are not reliable and independent arbiters of what the media ought to be doing. Because their own activities form a major component of the news, governments have a very obvious and immediate interest in how they are reported.''

The media practitioners must ensure they report news of both the urban and rural inhabitants. They must make sure that the news reported are those that have the tendencies of having positive impact in the lives of the people. Newsworthiness of the news reported must not be based on the value –orientation of the Western media. News presented must be based on the values that it can have on the lives of the people in the rural and urban setting. However, if the information disseminated must have effective impact on the lives of the people, then it must disseminated in the languages they understand most. Media houses must endeavour to reach the rural and urban dwellers in languages that are most favourable for their easy comprehension.

Apart from reporting information about rural and urban dwellers, media practitioners must ensure that the information they report are from both the private and public establishments. The media personnel must ensure that reduce over-dependence on only one source of information. Journalists must involve themselves in investigative journalism which is the cornerstone of development in any society. They must spice up their write–up by ensuring that they ferret out information from both the private and public establishments. Getting different angles to a story has the potential of spicing up the news story thereby making it interesting for the end users, yet serving the public interest and the right to know.

There is also the need to increase the capacity profile of the media houses by carrying out training and retraining programmes for media practitioners in and outside the country. The media practitioners must be taught on computer literacy and the use of technologies; the relevance of reporting development news and also ethos of the profession, which believe that media reports must be characterized by investigations rather than consultation of live or human sources.

It is recommended that development newspapers should be established for the primary aim of canvassing, monitoring development policies and projects including drawing of attention to areas in need of development at both the rural and urban centres. These newspaper can be established as a sister newspaper to the existing one. This will help such papers to report development matters alone as it is the case with the *Public Agenda*, a strictly development focused bi-weekly newspaper published in Ghana.

Finally, the Nigerian government can help the media houses achieve their developmental roles in the society by making sure that the infrastructure facilities such as power supply, good roads, good communication networks, security of lives and properties, etc are in good conditions. Government can inject life into the industry by liberalising the information

sphere through freedom of information and removal of impediments of varying degrees that militate against optimal media representation of events and happenings in the society.

CONCLUSION

The role that media play in the development of a society cannot be over-emphasized; therefore, any media house must strive to live up to the expectations of the people no matter the constraints and challenges that might stand in their ways. The media are the last bastion of hope for Nigeria and the bonds of the society; hence, they must be set the agenda and terms of public debates and in the main, determine the contents of the media. As the Fourth Estate of the realm, they must be willing to perceive newsworthy events with due consideration to their environments and development needs of their people.

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