MEDIA AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: THE CH ALLENGES AND PROSPECT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN 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 essential. 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. 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.As a watchdog of the society,the media owe it as a duty to monitor governance closely and hold public office holders accountable to the people who elected them as require by the constitution. 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 hinder 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: Media, Information, Government, Governance, Development Journalism

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.. On this note, Aggarwala (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" (https://www.libertyfund.org).

Jefferson's statement has brought to the limelight the significant 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 (Damatob and Hall, 1983). 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

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man's effort to gain a greater control of his life. Hence, they are expected to explain, interpret 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 study 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.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

INFORMATION

The concept of information as we use it in everyday English in the sense knowledge communicated plays a central role in today's society. The concept became particularly predominant since end of World War II with the widespread use of media networks. It might be that the word information is useful in particular when we try to raise our professional status in relation to other professions; it sounds smart and imposing and gives an air of technicality. There are no moral objections to this sort of use of words; language is certainly not only for informative uses ("informative" here refers to the so-called intellectual or factual meaning of a text or an utterance). Almost every scientific discipline today uses the concept of information within its own context and with regard to specific phenomena. The skepticism about a definitive analysis of information acknowledges the infamous versatility of information. The notion of information has been taken to characterize a measure of physical organization (or decrease in entropy), a pattern of communication between source and receiver, a form of control and feedback, the probability of a message being transmitted d over a communication channel, the content of a cognitive state and the reduction of an uncertainty. The requirement of truth or correctness should exclude false or incorrect messages; the requirement of value or usefulness should exclude messages not helpful in decisions and actions; the requirement of novelty should exclude repeated or redundant messages; the requirement of surprise should exclude messages that the recipient expected; the requirement of

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uncertainty-reduction should exclude messages that leave the recipient's state of uncertainty unchanged or increased; and so forth. No exhaustive enumeration of persuasive or dictatorial restrictions is here intended.

According to Bougnoux (1993, 1995) the concepts of information and communication are inversely related: Communication is concerned with forecasting and redundancy; information with the new and the unforeseen. There is no pure information or "information- in-itself" (that is, information is always related to some kind of redundancy or "noise"). To inform (others or oneself) means to select and to evaluate. This is particularly relevant in the field of journalism and mass media. The information age is also called "the age of access" (Rifkin, 2000). Information production, distribution, and access are at the heart of the new economy. The terminological shift from information society to knowledge society signals that the content, and not information technology, is the main challenge for economy and for effective governance as well as for society in general. From the perspective of knowledge management, information is used to designate isolated pieces of meaningful data that, when integrated within a context, constitute knowledge (Gundry 2001; Probst, Raub,and Romhard, 1999).This kind of knowledge helps the citizens to be well equipped of the activities of the government; it is as well propel the attainment of government set goals.

GOVERNMENT

Government is authority or function of governing. Governing: having control or rule over oneself. Governance: the activity of governing. Accordingly, governance is a set of decisions and processes made to reflect social expectations through the management or leadership of the government (by extension, under liberal democratic ideals, the will of 'the people' as they rule themselves). There are many issues implicit in this set of relationships whose core revolves around the notion of citizenship as this defines the body politic over which claims of self-rule apply. In the most general sense we have the difference between a liberal democratic view that the government (state) serves citizens who have a natural claim on services as a benefit and right of citizenship on the one hand, and on the other the counter enlightenment view often associated with fascism: that the citizen must serve the state and has no rights other than those granted by the

state. In what may be called the American model citizenship is a broadly endowed set of rights representing potential claims for benefits, as defined by the state. The result is that in the USA what constitutes a valid claim of citizens is contested, and then the question of who qualifies to have claims met is debated. This offers us an opportunity to understand a number of pressing issues hotly contested.

MEDIA

If we affirm that independence and pluralism in the media are in fact preconditions for democracy to flourish, it is possible for key elements in government to be committed to media that do not simply repeat what they would like to hear. A positive relationship between the state and media goes beyond pure laissez-faire to nourishing an independent and pluralistic media scape. A current issue in many countries is the monopolization of media by powerful interests, whether private or public, which lessens the plurality of voices in the public sphere. Perhaps the most important expression of an open relationship between media and the government is the airing of unpopular viewpoints that may reflect tensions in the society. If the mediascape is not open and pluralistic, these viewpoints may leave the democratic sphere and foment violence. Governance of the media also includes the dimension of governance among the different sectors and interests present in the media themselves. The implementation of a legal and regulatory environment that encourages freedom and pluralism in public information is often facilitated when governments and professional associations have access to comparative examples of media legislation, codes, and cooperation strategies for media development. Associations dedicated to media accountability such as ombudsmen and press councils also have a key role to play in the governance of media. One important role they play is in encouraging discussion within the media sector about ethical practices and their professional responsibilities. They can thereby strengthen the media's internal professional standards and increase public confidence in the reliability of the information provided. In countries with emerging independent mediascapes, professional media industry associations can take the lead in assisting various media outlets to understand their role as independent media and encourage them to find ways to be economically self-sustaining. This should include both media as well as information services such as news agencies, community-based radio, web-based distribution and media production networks. Considering the smaller number of women in the media in most societies and the special situations they may face, professional associations should actively encourage training for women and greater gender equity within the profession. These associations should also promote training among media professionals and broad education for those who wish to enter the profession. Such training should emphasize the values of independence, professional ethics, gender equity and the role of media in democratic societies. Such associations can sponsor debates that touch at the

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heart of the particular circumstances and challenges confronting the media in particular societies, while opening up wider discussions about the relationship between governance and media in the state and in the global context.

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. 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 sensitize 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 publicizing development work that will enrich the lives of the people that are exposed to it. Also, the media are effectively utilized 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. Media plays a crucial role in shaping a healthy democracy and ensuring good governs. As an important source of information media has been functioning the role of the heart of democratic society and Good governance. According to Norris, the media has three key roles in contributing to democratization and good governance. The very vital function of media is to act as a watchdog over the powerful, promoting accountability, transparency and public scrutiny. The second important role of media is to function as a civic forum for political debate, facilitating informed electoral choices and actions; and the third function is to act as an agenda setter for policy makers, strengthening government responsiveness for instance to social problems and to exclusion In their 'watchdog' role, the media can play an important role to promote transparency, accountability, and public scrutiny of decision-makers, by highlighting policy failures, maladministration by public officials, corruption in the judiciary, and scandals in the corporate sector. Investigative journalism can open the government's secret records to external scrutiny and critical evaluation, and hold authorities answerable for their actions. The media also exposes maneuverings and abuses of fundamental human rights. It castigate elections rigging and offer objective assessments of the process and results of elections and offer recommendations for improvement. The media also has a critical role to mediate between the state and citizens through the debates and discussions about the major issues of the day and informing people about the stand of their leaders on such issues. If the channels of communication reflect the cultural and social pluralism and diversity of the society, in a fair and balanced manner, then only various opinion and different voices can be heard in public debates.

Democracy requires that people should have the right to know all the activities of the government, particularly the decisions of the government that affects their life, liberty and property. Information is very vital for people to make decisions regarding their involvement in the State and the civil society. Adequate information helps the citizens to decide sensibly and take the right course of action favorable to them. Media thus helps people to know what is happening around the world and socialize them with the values of pluralism. By publicizing information the media also make public services more responsive to the people. Media has been playing a crucial role in protection of rights by making people aware of their rights. Media also makes people to be vigilant on political developments in the world and helping to stimulate debate, drawing attention to all social evils including the institutional failures, corruption, inefficiency and illegal activities.

The role of the media in promoting good governance is clear. All aspects of good governance are facilitated by a strong and independent media cape within a society. Only when journalists are free to monitor, investigate and criticize the public administration's policies and actions can good governance take hold. Independent media are like a beacon that should be welcomed when there is nothing to hide and much to improve. Indeed, this is the concrete link between the functioning of the media and good governance--the media allow for ongoing checks and assessments by the population of the activities of government and assist in bringing public concerns and voices into the open by providing a platform for discussion. Instead, all too often governments devise laws and informal means of keeping their activities hidden from public view or only available to media favorable to their viewpoint. In recent years, many governments have tried to co-opt journalists by paying part of their salaries or by giving them certain kinds of access on condition that they will not report from other perspectives. If the media are to function in the public interest, governments have to protect the independent functioning of the media and allow various viewpoints to flourish in society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses some theories and models to explain the relationship between the media and government as well as political rhetoric and news management. The relationship between the media and government has attracted scholarly attention since the use of propaganda increasingly after the First World War to transform public for different purposes by the governments. The rise of ideological movements in Europe and the Second World War as well as the rise of the alternative media such as radio and TV increased the attention of scholars to the media and government relationship and its implication on public opinion (Cobb and Elder 1971). As Lipmann (1922: 29) rightly observes "the world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind". In fact, most of the time, we face a world with which we do not have direct experience. Under this condition, the media help us reach out the world which is inevitably constructed by certain news frames which are selected under different motivations with consistent biases (McQuail 2005). As we don't have opportunity for independent validation of information for most of the events, public inevitably relies on the media (Van Gorp 2005). At this point, the media does not operate as a fully independent actor. It has a reciprocal relationship with governments which certainly influences the news management and the information public gets. Scholars of mass communication have developed different theories and models to explain this dynamic relationship and its consequences on the information public gets. Communication scholars mainly have referred the concept of 'hegemony', 'propaganda model', 'indexing approach', and 'cascademodel' to explain the relationship between the government and the media.

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'*Hegemony*' which was developed by Gramsci,emphasize the role of powerful groups to constitute a direction to society on economic, cultural, judicial and political levels. Media is claimed to be as key apparatus of state to produce hegemony. As Hallin and Mancini (2004: 23) summarized this view, "cultural institutions like the media are part of the process by which a world-view compatible with the existing structure of power in society is reproduced". In this sense, media does not represent things that already exist; it produces what we believe to be natural, and leading the domination of some interests (Deetz 1994). Any statement which looks like the report of truth or a fact may involve some taken for granted propositions of dominant ideology.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) presented'*propaganda model*'in their 1988 book 'Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media' to explain the dynamics of the media and government relationship. Although propaganda model does not directly refer to hegemony, it provides a testable theory which basically includes the components of sustaining hegemonic power of governments over the system by using the media. In this model, the ownership (profit oriented media giants), advertising (main income), heavy reliance to official sources for information (beat system, PR operations of government, use of expert), flak (negative responses to a media statement and program), and ideology help elites to manage news and marginalize dissent, and in this way allow government and other elite groups to dominate public discourse and reproduce existing structure of power in society (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). In contrast, for the '*indexing approach*', elite disagreement is central (Bennett, 1990; Entman, 1991). The indexing approach argues that when there is a consensus between elites on a certain issue, media coverage supports and promotes government policy. However, where there is a lack of consensus between the elites and division in the government, the media is free to cover the range of views presented by these people which in a way limits the media's role as mere transmission of propaganda (Bennett, 1990). That is, "the range of media opinion in a time of conflict in the administration will only reflect the range of that conflict and will not, at least in the mainstream media, go beyond it" (Robertson, 2004).

CONCLUSION

There are certainly clear differences in each country. The essential instruments needed for informed public in any country for both foreign policies and political communication is pluralism, independence and access. Although scholars mostly assert that the public is not well informed in times of war and international conflicts, there are still some grounds for hope as suggested by the model. Moreover, it is not enough for media to present information in ill digested and scattered morsels. Rather, what citizens need is a counter frame constructed of culturally resonant words and images, one that attains sufficient magnitude to gain wide understanding as a sensible alternative to the

government's interpretation. If a counter frame has been provided in the media side, public do have a better chance to construct their own opinions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ 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 favorable 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 programs 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.

❖ 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 centers. These newspaper can be established as a sister newspaper to the existing one. This will help such papers to report development matters alone.

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