THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION IN NIGERIAN NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT
This study attentively focuses on the domains of the roles of Development Communication in National Integration and Development in Nigeria. No nation of the world can attain national cohesion and holistic national development without a crave for Development Communication strategies. This study examines the challenges of Development Communication and stresses out the pertinence of Development Journalism in Nigeria as a democratic nation. It equally examines the development communication approaches to enhance national integration and development in the country. It looks at the social media in enhancing effective communication process for national integration and development which provides the way forward in Nigeria. The study adopts Development Media Theory as the philosophical background for the study. It uses qualitative research approach and focuses on secondary materials for data generation and analysis. The study concludes that the government does not recognize Development Communication role to actively deploy strategies for national integration and development in the country. It amongst others recommends that development communication experts be duly recognised and be made relevant in policies and programmes of the government regarding national integration and development of Nigeria.

Introduction

It is not hasty and shabbily impromptu to say that a nation or country with a unified solid political, cultural and religious structural system functioning as one indivisible entity. A nation is body of heterogeneous people who share sameness in feelings and see themselves as one. The spirit of "Adam is our father" bond them together in body and spirit. They see nation's interest as paramount to their individual and regional interests. They see national flag as a sign of unity with the anthem which bind their togetherness. A nation grows with activities of national sports festival, National Youth Service Corps Scheme, inter-state marriages and religious tolerance amongst many. The togetherness is built on common history, religious values and cultural uniqueness.

An embodiment of national cohesion without which development at various levels of a nation can attain and sustain national integration is the development communication through the media. In the Nigerian Constitutional provision in section 39 subsection (1) of 1999 as amended, empowers the citizens of Nigeria to seek and receive information while subsection (2)

empowers individuals or government to own a medium or media through which such information can be disseminated to the larger audience. Everyone in Nigeria clamours and yearns for development and such development cannot take place without integration at all the levels of the country. Development communication becomes a veritable tool to enhancing integration and development in Nigeria. The media are saddled with the responsibility to inform, educate and entertain the citizens of Nigeria. This responsibility includes right to know what the government is and should do for the development of people and infrastructural entities in the country.

To lay a solid emphasis on the role of communication in the development of people, Asemah (2011: 114) states that development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people through what Rasario-Braid describes as the identification and utilisation of appropriate expertise in the development that will assist in increasing participation intended beneficiaries at the grassroot level. Serveas (2002:1) lends an underpinning to the statement above that "development communication is concerned with informing and educating all people to get to the point where they need to create change that will meet their deepest needs. It is a social process and media organizations are important tools for achieving this process". It implies therefore, that development communication requires a gradual process that adopts strategies for the development of a nation.

In the words of Wilson (1991: 133) cited Agada-Mba (2017) states that "the mass media of communication are so pervasive in their socio-cultural and political influence that there is hardly any field of human endeavor that they do not have a specific role to play. They act as eye and ear of society (i.e watch dogs) and as mobilisers, informers, educators, entertainers and channels for disseminating information, propagating culture, educating, entertaining, mobilizing, correlating the environment and promoting the general economic wellbeing of the society and owners". Lack of development and equitable distribution of amenities leads to uncontrollable clamours for disintegration from the component regions that make up Nigeria.

Akpoveta (2006) states that "that the mass media has capacity to reach large audiences at the same time at different locations. Hence, government depends on them for dissemination of policies and programs "cited in (Santas & Ogoshi, 2015). From the above submission, it is apparent that the role of the mass media is to anchor development agenda which will enhance integration of Nigeria since everyone in the country depends on the media for dissemination of policies and programs of the government. In situation where the government has no need to develop any section of the country, the populace depends on the development media to communicate to the government on the need to develop a region that has been abandoned. Development Communication plays the role that brings development and national integration to bear.

On the issue of the role of development communication in fostering national integration, Asemah (2011: 317) states that "development communication is the application of the processes of communication to development process. In other words, development communication is the use of principles and practices of exchange of ideas to fulfill development objectives". It not a disputation that development communication has a mandatory role of chanting embers of development in a nation. Every media organisation has its social responsibility to ensure gradual or rapid development of the nation. The masses entrust the media to investigate and report where the nation needs development to foster equality devoid of marginalisation that brings disintegration.

The practicality of development communication in the world can be traced to ceaseless efforts undertaken in various parts of the world during the 1940s, but at the widespread application of the concept came about because of the issues that shot in the aftermath of World War II. The wake of the communication sciences in the 1950s made cognition of the field as an academic discipline, with Daniel Lerner, Wilbur Schramm, and Everett Rogers being the earliest influential advocates. The term "Development Communication" was first coined in 1972 by Nora C. Quebral, who defines the field as "the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential." Wikipedia (2021).

Conceptual Clarification

The Role of Development Communication

Gaining access to assess historical narratives of the primitive stone age of existence, the need to communicate for mutual benefits that enhanced development in the society started as early as man's inhabitation in life. Traditional media form of communication or " oramedia " was the form of African communication system which was used to inform, educate, influence, and entertain people in the society. The need for development necessitated communication among people in the various ethnicities which encouraged trade-by-batter. In lieu of the above, Agada-Mba (2017) underscores that "the mainstream media (comprising Radio, Television and Print) used to inform, educate and entertain and the new media (consisting of social media, internet, mobile phones) used to inform, educate, entertain and network people, has been a powerful tool necessary for societal development". However, Akinfeleye (2008) underpins that

> *"at the initial stage of television development in Nigeria, the basic philosophical foundation was for education. He nevertheless, added that the it now includes entertainment, information and national development and mobilisation of the citizens for developmental efforts". The print media (newspapers) is said to be older than Nigeria. It is the means of communication for development through information, education and influencing decisions for development and national integration. Hajara (2005) states that "Iwe-Irohin was established in 1859 by (print media) by Reverend Townsend older than Nigerian nation which came into being with the amalgamation in 1914. It was established in Abeokuta thus, laying the foundation for the Southern West of Nigeria as the pioneer in the media". Akinfeleye (1980) cited Hajara (2005) states that "there is confusion as to the origin of the Nigerian press before or after British colonisation of the country, or even before the white men set their feet on the country's soil precisely 1551. But, by 1880s, secular newspapers began to appear and became substantial vehicles for nationalism".*

The media are the vehicles for national development and integration through communication for development strategies. Jeremiah (2011: 25) observed that "the Nigerian Press in 1922 became a megaphone of political agitation and Sir Herbert McCauley first established the 'Daily News' (print media) which he used to support his NDP but, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe delved into journalism from 1937-1960 to advocate for nationalism". The need for development and national integration gave birth to the media through which people can air their demands and aspirations for positive changes that integrate the nation.

Development communication engages stakeholders and policy makers, establishes conducive environments, assesses risks and opportunities and promotes information exchange to create positive social change via sustainable development (Mefalopulos, 2008). In his support, Alexander (2007) states that "development communication has not been labelled as the "fifth theory of the press" with "social transformation and development "and the fulfilment of basic needs as it's primary purposes". The philosophy of development communication which is anchored on three main ideas. The three main ideas are; purposive, value-laden, and pragmatic". *Wikipedia (2021)*

National Integration

The concept of national integration has been a relay technique over flogged by many development communication scholars who attempt to clamour to see the unity of the nation. Since the independence in 1960, the pluralistic, multicultural and ethno-religious diverse entity called Nigeria has incessantly suffered catastrophic integration both at the local and national levels. The immaculate call for humane national integration has been repeatedly fallen on deaf ears of Nigerians. This from events unfolding on daily basis can be attributed to lack of commitment to equitable development of all the nooks and crannies of the country by both the military and democratic leaders in the country. Many sections of the nation have expressed agonizing flabbergasting dismay that they have been marginalised and abandoned. Calls for equality in appointments into governments offices and adherence to Federal Character Principle deepen ceaselessly.

Odetomi (2013) believe that national integration is commonly used to refer to specific problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality, which eliminates parochial loyalties. In this sense, it is generally presumed that there exists an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterized by its own languages or other self-conscious cultural qualities. Onyeakazi & Okoroafor (2018) posits that "it involves the uniting of formerly separate groups into one with the obliteration of any previous social and cultural group differences as well as the obliteration of separate group identification". Abia (2006) adds that "national integration implies both the capacity of the government to control the territory under its jurisdiction as we as a popular set attitude towards the nation generally described as loyalty, allegiance and intelligence to place national above local and parochial concerns".

In national integration, the thrust is to amalgamate various ethnic, religious, political, cultural and social groups together and work out modalities for their development through effective communication strategies. With the aid of the media, development communication can easily harmonise different aggrieved groups of individuals in the society who do not see hope in living together as one nation.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework helps the researcher to sail smoothly on guideline of success as it helps the researcher to possess a direction. According to Daramola (2007, p. 62) " a theory is a statement of prediction" Poopola 2013, p. 63) state that "It is a guide to action as well as an aid in the quest to finding solutions to human problems".

This study is anchored on Development Media Theory as the philosophical background for the smooth sailing to its fullest. This theory was propounded by McQuail in 1987. The theory assumes that "certain freedom of the media and Journalist is subordinate to their responsibility for the development purpose, at the same time, collective ends rather than individual freedoms are emphasized (Lakew, 2013). Asemah, Nwamnuo & Nkwam-Uwaoma (2017: 55-56) say that "development media theory state that there can no be development without communication. Under the development communication theory or development support communication as it is otherwise called, the media undertook the role of carrying out positive developmental programmes, accepting restrictions and instructions from the state. Shah (2010) states that "the media subordinate themselves to political, economic, social and cultural needs; hence, the stress on development communication and development journalism"

> *UNESCO gave a tacit underpinning to the development media theory in the McBride Commission of 1979 which opposed to dependency and foreign domination and to arbitrary authoritarianism. The theory accepts Economic development and nation building as overriding objectives. Ndolo (2005) continues that "the press should be free and open to restrictions according to economic priorities and the development needs of the society. In the interest of development ends, the state has the ultimate control". Development media theory seeks to explain the normative role of the media toward the development of the society.*

McQuail (2000) sates the tenets of development media theory as:

i. Media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with naturally established policy.

ii. Media should give priority in the content to the national culture and language.

iii. Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination take.

iv. Freedom of the media should be opened to economic priorities and development needs of the society.

Primarily, the role of development communication is to see that research is carried out and information on how to develop the society will be given to the government and the public is briefed. Solely it is, for development communication to facilitate the processes that enhance the development and national integration of Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Kombol ((2006) state the role of development in national integration as "a means of improvement on the country's economic and social conditions, more specifically improvement in ways of managing an area's natural and human resources in order to create wealth and improve people's lives". Moemaka (2000) states that "development is a rational process of organising and carrying out prudently conceived and staffed programmes or projects as one would carry out military or engineering operation. In order to develop, a society must remain true to itself, draw its strength from its own culture and ways of thought and action, and set its objectives constant with value and felt-need".

Sule (2006) notes that " development communication involves deliberate well-desire and articulate communication codes aimed at bringing development messages to the knowledge of the targets" Communication for development according to Akase, Zakari & Ibrahim (2017) refers to spectrum of communication process, strategies and principles within the field of international development aimed at improving the conditions and quality of life of people struggling with underdevelopment and marginalisation. Akase, et'al added that "development is central to man's survival on earth and communication is needed to bring about this meaningful development. It is a media philosophy adopted by the developing countries after adopting the declaration on the use of the mass media in developing activities"

Taking some notable nations like Poland, India, Ukraine and many more, development Journalism activated prospects for their development and national integration. Coyne & Lesson (2002) maintain that "the role of the media in economic development by analysing the role of the media as coordination-enhancing mechanism in policy development". Citing Sen (1984), Agada-Mba (2017) states that "India has not had famine since independence, and given the nature of Indian politics and society, it is not likely that India can have a famine even in years of great food problems. The government cannot afford to fail to take prompt action when large scale starvation threatens; newspapers play an important part in this, in making the facts known and forcing the challenges to be faced". In a conform reaction, Khurana (2020) in his study, explicates that "In Indian constitution, our founding fathers were aware that there were threats to our unity from various forces. Consequently, certain safeguards were placed in our constitution.

Islam (2002) states that "the ultimate survival of the media depends on state that regulates them, on the firms that pay to advertise through them and the consumers they serve… to advocate for unity and integration, the media must be independent, provide quality information and have a broad reach". In support, Waisboard (2005) states that development communication plays vital role in the development of a nation. He states the role of the development communication to include: communication for development, communication for social change, information, education and communication, behaviour change communication, social mobilisation, media literacy, strategic communication, participatory communication, strategic-participatory communication and so on".

Looking at national integration, jstor.com (2021) states that "national integration is seen as involving a process of holding tightly together the various nationalities or ethnic groups and institutions a dovetailed manner through the bounds of contrived structures, norms and values. It is construed as the process by which hitherto, distinctive and autonomous people and cultures incorporated into a multi-national state, can achieve higher level of mutual trust, cooperation and independence, shared values and national consciousness".

Efforts Towards Achieving National Integration in Nigeria

According to Raji (2017), many efforts have been geared towards achieving national Integration. "In the effort for Nigeria to be integrated, many measures have been put in place starting from the beginning of the colonial era to the present post-colonial independence era. In the colonial era, efforts and measures taken include: The amalgamation of 1914 by Lord Lugard, Adoption of English language as the common lingua-franca, Common currency the British pounds sterling, Common administrative system Judiciary, Executive and Legislature, Common network of road transportation system, Common educational system, Common constitution, etc. During the post-colonial era to date, the successive regimes had taken the following steps like Introduction of National

Youth Service Corps Scheme, Establishment of Federal Government institutions such as the Command Schools, Federal Government Colleges, Federal Polytechnics, Federal Colleges of Education and Federal Universities, Introduction of federal character principle and Quota system for even representation, Adoption of the language of the three major ethnic groups as national languages, Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba, Creation of national symbols like Coat of Arm, National flag, National Anthem, National Pledge etc. Encouragement of sports, Arts and Cultural festivals. However, despite the various steps that had been taken by successive government at promoting national integration in Nigeria since its existence. Many pitfall can still be identified. These include ethnic colouration and manipulation, culminating in ethnic violence across the country**".**

Challenges of Development Communication in Nigeria Towards National Integration

Many challenges face development communication especially in Nigeria. From the military to the inception of democratic government in Nigeria, the media are faced with multiplicity of constraints which inhibit them from carrying out development functions that will benefit the citizens. Military decrees and ordinances enveloped the development media in enclaves of muteness and tacit oppressions. Democratic bills seeking to gauge the media are challenges for development communication to thrive in Nigeria. The passage of hate-speech law and others poses threats to development communication.

> *"…all the anti-media decrees promulgated by generals Babangida and Abacha are on the statue books as at November 2001 in spite 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 citizens' right to public apology or compensation if he is unjustly or unlawfully detained (Project.com, 2021).*

The second problem according to United Nations (2002) as cited in Waisboard (2005) is "preoccupation is the sustainability of development projects. 'Sustainable development' features prominently on the agenda of donors and agencies, referring to development actions that put communities at the center and have long-lasting impact. The concern for the duration of development work (and results) derives from a sense that projects show results as long as donors regularly inject funds and make a long-term commitment"

However, some development communication scholars have identified some of the challenges/barriers to development and its communication. Parsons, Scott & Landenberg (2011) cited in Ate & Akintayo (2017) identified the following challenges/barriers:

i. **Physical Barriers:** in development, geography is an overwhelming obstacle in the national media system of operation. The vast differences between media-centers and media-audiences make communication herculean or impossible to understand. A suitably sizeable example is in the mainstream print media where newspapers and magazines operating mainly in Abuja and Lagos. From the two areas, it makes it difficult to reach all parts of the country thereby making development communication difficult to the people of the rural areas in Nigeria as a result of bad roads and many factors.

ii. **Cultural Barriers:** Sometimes, inability of some persons to read and write limits their capacity to communicate. Some persons in the Nigeria prior to this 21st century was denied access to go to school as a cultural and belief system. This practice hinder communication and in turn, hinders development communication to attract impactful development.

iii. **Government Barriers:** Censorship of the media by the government poses serious challenges to the effectiveness of communication for development in Nigeria. "Where government does not own the means of communication, it setup barriers to control the private or

independent press. Censorship, licensing and the use of "insult laws" to protect the honour of public officials are common practices used by the government around the world who fear that free expression as open media system could galvanize public opinion to change the status-quo. Parsons et'al (2011).

iv. **Technological Barriers:** Technology is both a barrier to media development and a potential destroyer of barriers. Technology is a barrier in the world of established media where nations who can operate electronically in terms of receiving satellite information can easily have access to information on development while poorer nations who cannot afford electronic version of information, lack the means to access such information for development.

Challenges of National Integration in Nigeria

Plethora of studies have shown that there are many issues facing Nigerian national integration. Though, Nigeria as a country was not in existence as a nation before 1914. It was in 1914 that different regions that make up Nigeria got amalgamated and subsequently brought together as a nation that became one indivisible entity. After the exit of the colonial rule, the founding fathers of Nigeria; Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Professor Ayo Ita and others stood for the integration of Nigeria as one indivisible entity despite their diversity in ethnicity, religion, cultural and politics. The founding fathers came from diverse ethnic groups but chanted the course for one Nigeria. The Development of different parts of the nation was their focal course of struggles.

The colonial masters did not want the integration of Nigeria. Shively (2003) states that "Nigeria like other colonies was not constructed for internal cohesion, but administrative convenience of the British. The state assumed the status of a supreme institution capable of intervening in three regions of North, East and West. The ruling class met a structure without modification; they use state paraphernalia to accumulate surplus without going through the process of producing surplus. The contradiction institutionalized ethnic leadership with political outlook".

Popoola (2002) argued that the chronic bane of federal character principle in Nigeria invade the integrity and standards of public bureaucracy such that other government institutions require safeguards from the ravage of politics. The result has not promoted national loyalty but inertia, and alienation from states and communities that suffered federal character discrimination become resentful from the body politics. Chukwura, Nwachukwu, Nnamani & Ifeanyi (2020) assert that competent people are disqualified on the altar of statism and other spurious criteria cannot erect unity of the nation. The federal character principle has exacerbated division among Nigerians rather than uniting them, President Obasanjo administration lack institutional arrangement to improve the position of marginalized ethnic groups despite calls for decentralization, Yar'adua and Jonathan government did not deviate from the approach of nepotism and favoritism, all this has failed to resolve ethnic diversity for national integration. The concept of federal character principle has done more harm than good to the fragile unity of Nigeria; it has robbed Peter to pay Paul but automatically this settling payment cannot unite peter and Paul".

According to Pearl (2018), there are many problems posing threats to Nigeria's national integration. Over the years, Nigerian national integration started suffering some threats leading to divisions along the lines of social status, ethnicity and religion; ethnicity and religion being the most prominent".

Pearl briefly outlines the problems as thus:

i. **Ethnic Diversity**: Many ethnic groups in Nigeria, and members of a particular ethnic groups tend to be loyal to their people in the government. Favoritism from people of a particular ethnic group in government in terms job opportunities without considering the provision for federal character principle. This is a threat to national integration and unity.

ii. **Language Multiplicity:** There are over 400 languages in Nigeria that form diverse ethnicities in the country. People of same language tend to love its members and extend loyalty to it. People who speak same language tend to show love to themselves than others who do not

speak theirs. This is a responsible problem of national integration.

iii. **Structural Imbalance:** There is an apparent structural Imbalance between Northern and Southern Nigeria. The Northern part of Nigeria has more political power than any other part and this seen as a problem for national integration.

iv. **Revenue Allocation:** The diverse parts of the nation are not equally accorded sameness of treatment as it regards to revenue allocation. Money given to the Northern part of the country proportionately more than that given to the other parts and this is a threat to national integration and development as ill-feelings arise among the citizens of Nigeria.

v. **Religious Fanatism:** It is on record that togetherness of Nigeria is acutely threatened by religious intolerance amongst the adherents of religious bodies. Most people in power like to share government positions to the members of their religious beliefs. Members of other religions feel cheated thereby creating animosity between members of different religions. This is a threat to the national unity of Nigeria.

vi. **Youth Restiveness:** Many youths in Nigeria get angry as a result of hunger for no employment or empowerment in the country. They are used by greedy politicians and selfish individuals in the society to create tension among citizens of the nation for their egocentric interest which leads to national disintegration.

vii. **Corruption:** The giving an receiving bribes for services makes it impossible for those who are in need of that service to have a level playing ground, thus, robbing them of their rights to equal treatment. The effects of corruption in Nigeria economic development cannot be overemphasized and this has lead to terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and calls for national disintegration.

Other studies on the challenges of National Integration

According to (nios.ac.in/media, 2020) " the factors responsible for national disintegration are: religion, language and region. The feeling of oneness towards one's religion, region and language as against the interest of the national integration poses greatest challenges to the unity of a nation".

In a study by Onyeakazi (2018) states that "the problems of national integration in Nigeria includes;

i. **Absence of Rule of Law:** one of the major challenges confronting Nigeria's national integration is lack of respect for rule of law which is evident in government's lack of respect for the constitution. Some wealthy and powerful Nigerians undermine the constitution and carryout whatever they like just because they feel above the law. In support of the assertion above, Onosede (2013) states that " the rampant incidence of flouting of the constitution and the instrument of rule of law portends danger to building the Nigerian nation in the 21st century". The oppressed feel betrayed and marginalised thereby, clamour for national disintegration.

ii. **Poverty/Deprivation:** This is a social problem that is devastating the majority of Nigerian population as people become poorer every day. Johnson (2016) states that "poverty is the grandmaster of all sorts of the problems and destabilizes individuals and organisations to the level that only its reduction or elimination can bring relief and hope" Excessive poverty and deprivation of less-privileged Nigerians of having access to good life can cause national integration problem.

iii. **Insecurities:** The issues of terrorism occasioned by the Boko Haram bombings, banditries, kidnappings, farmers-herders clashes, armed robberies, rising rate of religious intolerance, political violence amongst other things lead ways for national disintegration in Nigeria. According to Udeh, Okoroafor & Ihezie (2013) "the panic state of the nation is a reflection of

the state of minds of its citizens their fear for the fear of the future. Insecurity stands as one obstacle confronting the building of strong national integration that can help to forge ahead with significant development strides ".

Conclusion

The study examined the role of development communication in Nigeria National Integration focusing on the challenges of development communication and the barriers to national integration. National Integration is a focal course for development communication to anchor development in Nigeria. The watchdog function of the media is paramount when chanting the embers of national integration. Nwokeafor (2015) states that for national development and integration "the media can educate citizens through stories that adequately explain the national situation (political, social economic) so that the citizenry will not only benefit from improved service delivery but will also take part in the development process of the nation".

National Integration has been bedeviled by certain factors indicated to be indices responsible for subterraneous inhibitor, dilapidating national cohesion and holistic approach to development. The founding fathers and proponents of nationalism when they clamoured for the decolonisation of the country from the colonial masters before 1960. As part of the problems of national integration in Nigeria, corruption, multiplicity of languages, regional, religious intolerance, political violence structural Imbalance, youth restiveness and many more are responsible for national disintegration in Nigeria.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings above, the study recommends that:

i. Government should provide an enabling ground for development communication journalism to effectively carry out the watch dog of the society unhindered.

ii. Media organizations (both private and public) should ensure mouth-watering salaries for the development communication journalists to carry out their ethical balance duties of researching, reporting, entertaining and influencing decisions that will bring national integration in Nigeria.

iii. Corruption should be killed before it kills the nation which leads to agitations to disintegrate

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