

Re-Thinking Nigerian Technological Deficiency And Solutions Through The Mass Media

Windy S. Alikor & Stella I. G. Ikiriko

Department of Mass Communication
Captain ElechiAmadi Polytechnic, Rumuola, Port Harcourt

Abstract

This paper aimed to re-think Nigerian technological deficiency and solutions through the mass media. The rationale behind the paper is predicated on the downturn technological development in Nigeria, which in no small measure has affected almost all facets of the nation's development. The paper anchored on the development media theory and adopted descriptive research design. The findings of this papers among others are: Policy somersault of successive governments, corruption, misappropriation of public funds, lack of committed interest in technological development, lack of science and technological village, poor funding of science and technology development centres, politicization of science and technology policy, poor state-of-the-art-in the tertiary institutions, perennial dumping of research findings of tertiary institutions, poor motivation and incentives for researchers are the causes of low technological development and deficiency in Nigeria. Consequently, the paper advocates for attitudinal change and paradigm shift among policy formulators, planners and implementers of government policies and programmes especially in areas of science and technology in Nigeria. The paper also advocates for improved funding of science and technology centres. The study also advocates for establishment of science and technology villages in all the geo-political regions in Nigeria. Similarly, the paper advocates for robust incentives and motivation for researchers, scientists, inventors and technologists in Nigeria to encourage them to more explore and exploit their full potential for the technological advancement of the nation while the mass media should set agenda on the grand breaking innovations and inventions made in science and technology in Nigeria nation.

Keywords: *Rethinking, technological deficiency, mass media*

Introduction

The mass media play critical role in every nation despite the colouration of the government. They serve as agent of development and stimulating all government institutions and non-state actors for the development of the nation. Even in the worst military regime, the mass media mobilize the citizenry for development, convey government development policies and programmes to the people, strive to justify the legitimacy of the government or embark on constructive criticism of the government. In democratic government, the media serve as an instrument of democracy and the muckraking of the government actions and inactions. They set agenda for technological and socio-economic development of the nation. According to Lasswell (1948), the media play three critical roles in every society, among which are: “the surveillance of the environment, correlation of the society and the transmission of cultural heritage.” This means that the media are critical partners or stakeholders with the government and other international development agencies in the quest for national development be it political, social, cultural, scientific and technological. It is almost an aberration for media to remain silent in the face of technological and socio-economic quagmire in any nation that worth its salt hence the media are expected to set agenda and confer status on the technological and socio-economic needs of the nation. Whether under totalitarian contraction, military aberration, civilian rule or participatory democracy, the role of the media as the conscience of the nation has never been in controversy, what has rather been the issue is whether the media should compromise their responsibilities in the face of mountainous dangers, underdevelopment, fear of the bullets and tyranny of the dictators (Obi, 1999).

According to Joseph Pulitzer as cited in Obi the media are there to watch over the safety, welfare of the people and the overall development of the people who are bestowed the responsibilities of watch-dogging and correlation of the society. But how far have the media pursued the aforementioned role in the face of growing technological and socio-economic downturn in Nigeria? Again, apart from creating a greater sense of cohesion, the mass media could also play an important role in the formal and non-formal education vis-a-vis knowledge acquisition in areas of science and technology. According to Alumuku (2006), development communication via the media often aims at continually focusing the attention of both the leaders and the led in the short and long terms needs of the people thereby, forestalling the distraction which leads to economic mismanagement, as well as corruption and graft. Alumuku further avers that the media are important in the process of social development, and at the centre of such development are the people. However, their effectiveness in a nation depends on how firmly laced they are into the social fabric. What is needed therefore, is a development communication paradigm which puts people not at one end as sources, and at the other end as receivers, but right at the centre where the media channels usually are with such a paradigm, the media become tools in the hands of people desirous of their own development. In the view of Abati (1999), whether the media are patriotic or cynical is a question of responsibility. It presupposes the idea that the media, in any society, ought to exercise responsibility one-way or the other. Responsibility itself is about power to cause change and impact on the society positively. Therefore, media establishments and their practitioners both above-the-line and below-the-line personnel must demonstrate uncommon commitment towards tackling the technological and socio-economic deficiency in Nigeria. Undoubtedly, Nigerian nation is facing technological draught and poor economic growth caused by plethora of problems. Some of these problems may be explored later in this paper. Media as part of communication channel should channel their energy towards technological and socio-economic change in the nation under review. The model of communication for this kind of change must be centred on people-participatory and people-centric communication.

Originally, most media institutions were established to drive development in nations via their contents but in some cases, they were established to serve as the “opium of the people” aimed at diverting the attention of the people from socio-economic and technological problems to trivial entertainment programmes.

Media especially the broadcast organizations can play a crucial role in the developmental life of any nation. In developing countries where many people are illiterates, technological level is low and people are widely scattered, radio can overcome the barriers of distance and illiteracy. It can constitute an essential link between the government and the people and among the people themselves, creating unlimited possibilities for mobilization, progress and development (Alumuku, 2006). Ansah in Alumuku (2006), argues that although nationalist leaders were able to mobilize their people for independence struggle without abundance access to broadcasting facility which was then in the hands of the colonial government, it is almost impossible now to imagine a modern African state today striving for technological and socio-economic development without the mass media especially the broadcast media. This explains why no matter how small countries are, every African country has a broadcasting station. For many governments, broadcasting has become a necessary instrument for development which ultimate interest rests on developing the people in all facets of life. Writing on this form of communication, Casmir (2011) notes that people-participatory-communication is pro-people since its language and cultural content have given room for a special model of development communication as proposed by the United Nations Communication Model for people’s empowerment as the ‘C4E’ (Communication For Empowerment). According to African Communication Policy as cited in Wilson (2005), every channel or medium of communication which ultimate interest rests on developing the people in all facets of life must be anchored on MELDS Policy. The policy holds that whether modern or orthodox communication in Africa, communication should focus on the communication acronym known as MELDS to promote socio-economic and technological development in African. In unmasking the acronym of MELDS,

M stands for Mobilization
E stands for Education
L stands for Liberation
D stands for Development and
S stands for Self-reliance or Self-esteem

This implies that communication is expected to mobilize people, educate them, liberate them, drive rural, state and national development in African and equally give Africans a sense of self-reliance or self-esteem. But to what extent have the mass media as part of channels of communication re-engineered the technological and socio-economic deficiency in Nigerian state using the MELDS Policy and acronym as a launching pad?

Theoretical framework

This paper is anchored on the development media theory because of its relevance to this discourse. Development media theory owes its origin to the UNESCO’s McBride Commission set up in 1979. This theory is opposed to dependency and foreign domination, and to arbitrary authoritarianism or totalitarianism of the Western power and their media in global information dissemination. It accepts technological and socio-economic development of a nation as the overriding objectives (Ndolo, 2005). According to Ndolo, press freedom should be open to restriction according to economic priorities and development needs of society.

In the interest of the development ends, the state has the ultimate control to transform the nation from poor technological know-how, poor standard of living, high level of unemployment, high level of illiteracy, poverty, and hunger among other elements of underdevelopment in contemporary society. In the wisdom of Hasan (2013), development communication theory is a spectrum of communication processes, strategies and principles within the field of international development, aimed at improving the conditions and quality of life of people struggling with underdevelopment and marginalization. Development communication is characterized by conceptual flexibility and diversity in the application of communication techniques used to address the problems of development. Without mincing words, development communication is aimed at transforming the poor socio-economic and technological development of the people to a better standard hence it is a communication for the people and for the good of the people. The core idea behind development communication is to identify the yearnings and aspirations of the people, and direct media efforts toward such needs via agenda setting role of the media on such developmental problems and the public desire to change them positively. Development communication is for the betterment of the society. The major thrust of development communication theory has been on the use of media as an agent and a tool for national development in all facets of life (Hasan, 2013).

Essentials of technology to nation building

The role and importance of technology to national building in any developing nation are sacrosanct. Technology is needed in almost all aspects of a nation's endeavour especially in driving the economy. The banking institutions, media establishments, health institutions, security agencies, manufacturing industries, service providers, tertiary institutions and other knowledge and capacity building centres need technology to carry out their mandate for national development. Therefore, technology is helpful in the following ways especially in media content production and presentation geared towards national development:

1. In media industry, technology helps in graphic design and presentation.
2. It facilitates synchronization of sound and visual signals in media content production and presentation.
3. It is an enabler of sight and sound editing in television content production.
4. It facilitates content editing in print media production.
5. It is also an enabler of sting journalism.
6. It is a catalyst for migration from analogue studio to digital studio in broadcast media.
7. It facilitates teleconferencing between communicators and communicatees.
8. It serves as a tonic for information processing and retrieval in media content production both in print and electronic media.
9. It gives colour and beauty in the production of media content for television stations.
10. It is helpful in importing and exporting of media content from one platform to another.

Methodology

The paper adopted Focus Group Discussion (FGD) because of its relevance to this kind of work. This research approach helped us in engaging a selected group of persons at Old Port Harcourt Township in discussion to ascertain their perception on the level of technological development, deficiency and solutions using the media as a key factor. Some questions formed the baseline for the discussion. Among the questions are: Is Nigeria developed technologically? What are the causes of the technological deficiency in Nigeria? What is the way forward and what are the expected roles of the media in rethinking and tackling the science and technological deficiencies in Nigeria? The answers to these questions formed the findings of this paper.

Conclusion

It is surprising that most nations globally are competing to take a huge space in the cyber firmament to drive science and technology while Nigerian nation is struggling to build and maintain local, state and federal roads. This is a nation where science and technology are downplayed for ethnic and religious jingoism. A country where funding of tertiary institutions that are meant to drive our science and technological development have is at the abysmal level. A nation where emphasis is placed on politics and power struggle rather than home-grown technology. Nigeria is a nation where the efforts of tertiary education toward homegrown science and technology are received with mixed-feelings hence not acknowledged and inventors not motivated. Again, a country where funds meant for the funding of science and technology development are widely reported to have been misappropriated for personal aggrandizement. It is in the light of this, we advocate for a paradigm shift in the funding and management of funds meant for the development of science and technology sector to make Nigeria a centre of attraction technologically and scientifically.

Findings

1. Policy somersault of successive governments on science and technology has been the bane of technological development in Nigeria.
2. Corruption and misappropriation of public funds for the development of science and technology in Nigeria have been identified as a-twin cause of the poor technological development in Nigerian nation.
3. Lack of committed interest in technological revolution in the nation is another cause of the technological deficiency in Nigeria.
4. Excessive dumping of research results at the library shelves is another trigger to poor technological deficiency in this nation.
5. Lack of incentives and motivation for researchers on science and technology is a barrier to technological development in Nigeria.
6. Lack of science and technology villages in all the geo-political zones in Nigeria is also a constraint in the development of technology in Nigeria.
7. Poor state-of-the-art in science and technology based institutions is another cause of the technological deficiency in Nigeria.
8. Overdependence on western technological artifacts is another problem to Nigeria's development in technology.

Recommendations

1. Aggressive war against anti-grafts devoid of political, ethnic and religious interest should be intensified
2. Tertiary education should be highly funded to motivate technological researchers to proffer realistic solutions to Nigerian's technological problems.
3. Well-equipped science and technological villages should be built in the six geo-political regions or zones in Nigeria to boost the technological innovations and inventions in the nation.
4. Research findings in tertiary institutions should be viewed and seen as major instruments for science and technological revolution in the nation.
5. Research findings in the tertiary institutions should not end their lives at the departmental, faculty or school library but efforts should be directed toward turning them into tangible technological and socio-economic blueprints or solutions to Nigeria's problems.
6. Mass media should aggressively publicize the notable inventions and innovations made in science and technology in Nigeria and by Nigerians through agenda-setting and status conferral roles.

7. Government in collaboration with captains of industries should initiate an accessible and workable technological and research endowment funds to motivate researchers in science and technology in the nation to aid them in conducting of research on science and technology to boost the quest for technological development of Nigeria and Nigerians.
8. Government should declare a state of emergency on technological deficiency in Nigeria to trigger interest in the technological development in the nation.

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Appendice

Public Relations Theories

1. Social Exchange Theory
2. Public Spheres Theory
3. Iron Law of Responsibility Theory
4. Excellence Theory
5. Attribution Theory
6. Socio- Economic Theory
7. Classic Economic Theory
8. Hypocritic Theory
9. Situational Theory
10. Systems Theory
11. Persuasive Theory
12. Communitarian Theory
13. Relative Deprivation Theory
14. Conspiracy Theory
15. Conspiracy Theory