Traditional Structures and Media for Development and Mass Mobilization in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Traditional communication has not been subliminally perceived as a result of the vicarious experience with western media forms. It would be said that this worldview, much as it raises the questions about cultural imperialism, has largely been unable to diminish the breath of common knowledge exemplified in the skillful arts of a 'town crier' in tradition African settings. Also, with the field of development being dominated by the new media, which bears the marks of the modern paradigm with its scientific search for the laws of development, the far-flung debate on the efficacy of traditional media for development and social mobilization and its neglect in the domain of development studies is the present preoccupation of this study. Using ex-post facto approach and perspectives on value change as theoretical frame, it is believed that the contentions in the following pages point to the direction that those wishing to partner with traditional societies in their development strides should go. The present pessimism with which traditional communication systems are viewed as a means of achieving effective developmental mobilization does not seem to be grounded in any research. This position therefore, calls for a rethink.*
Key Words: *Media, Development, Tradition and Mobilization*

I.   Introduction

The structures of a given society ensure an ordered and organized co-existence of people. In traditional societies, the structures such as kinship systems, (traditional institutions, families, social groups, age grades, village assembly, markets, churches, etc.) are interactional and mutually interdependent [1].

The traditional media support this structure and reflects the peoples' values, norms, beliefs, world view and general culture, which makes them effective for rural-rural communication or rural-urban communication, or vice versa. It should be noted that the existence of social groups that characterize most parts of Africa is responsible for the view which is now held that African societies possesses viral and viable channels for effective transmission of information and grassroots mobilization. And with the growing interest in African studies, it has darned on development agents who hitherto neglected traditional media, that no meaningful development could be achieved without an integrated effort aimed at harmonizing the structural dynamics of the society and its media for development.

This study's concern is that since traditional media is fast assuming their limelight position in the field of mass communication, it is the right time to utilize the potency of these media channels in reaching a vast majority of Nigerians and Africans at large, especially the rural residents. As succinctly put by Ugboaja (1985), [2], "The challenge facing today's policy makers in Africa could be that they do not understand what results folk media would achieve for mobilization and development of the continent. "

Development agents such as: corporate organizations, government and non-non-governmental institutions in Africa that are willing to bring social, economic, political and educational change, that are often bothered by what methods to re-orientate the people especially the rural dwellers can pass the message of development across to the people through these agencies. For example, the rural poor could be easily persuaded to adopted innovations such as mechanized farming instead of the use of cutlasses, hoes and shovels for farming. Farmers can adopt improved soil fertility management practices and crop varieties, thus optimizing profit and yield.

One direction this is pointing is what Okunna (2002), [3], refers to as a dialectical relationship between communication and development, giving rise to sustained elevation of the entire society by pulling together a mass of people to pursue well conceived goals and behaviour patterns likely to enhance their wellbeing and/or jettison a kind of behaviour considered to be inimical to them. Social and grassroots mobilization operates on the premise that those living in the periphery where poverty, hunger and sundry economic vices are more pronounced need to be sensitized, energized and motivated to participate in development programmes and projects with a view to improving their lives. When people are adequately informed about opportunities that

abound within and outside their locality, there will be need to further persuade them to take practical steps towards harnessing them [4].

The researchers relied mainly on ex-post facto research method; from materials, textbooks, newspapers, magazines and journals for theoretical and empirical evidences that helped to shape the study. The penetrating insight thus offered by this evident historical mien was what provided valid and reliable data with which the discourse here was formed and conclusions made.

Theories Anchoring the Study

This study is based on Lasswell Model of communication and Value Change Theory. What is generally known as Lasswell formula does present a useful analytical tool with which to examine any given human communication process. Lasswell maintained that the process of human communication must answer the following questions:

➢ Who?
➢ Says what?
➢ In which channel?
➢ With what effect?

This is most usually presented in a diagrammatic form with the questions which Lasswell posed, matched with various elements or stages already identified in the human communication process.

Who Communication	Says what message	In which channel medium	To whom receiver	With what effect
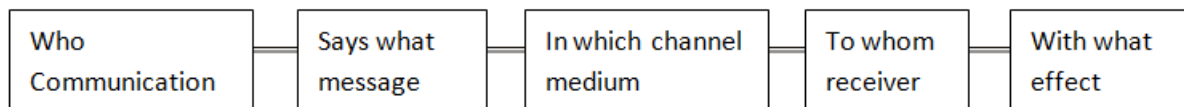
According to Folarin (1998), [5], Harold Lasswell posited that in any society, three main functions are assigned to the media:

1. Surveillance of the environment(news function)
2. Correlation of the different parts of the environment (editorial function).
3. Transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to another

This model is related to the topic of the study in that it is concerned with the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to another, which forms an integral part of traditional communication. It also falls within the ambit of persuasive communication that serves the purpose of softening the ground for effective take off of individual and national development. The interest of the model in who (the traditional communicator) says what (message) in which channel (the traditional media), to whom (the rural residents) and with what effect (the ability to mobilize the people for participatory developments) is quite apt, hence, considered to anchor the study.

To further buttress the Lasswell model, the researchers used Value Change Theory which employs "comparative feedback" technique to induce attitudinal and behavioral change as elaborately explained by [6]. It stipulates that it is not enough to simply inform people about kinds of behavior but it challenges people to test their own values against those of others which could be viewed as being more socially acceptable. When one discovers that he is less socially responsible than he had assumed, this leads to dissatisfaction, which will trigger a value change in the individual. Folarin (1998), [5], holds that the messages that cause social change affect the individual in both cognitive and affective domains and that those who fail to conform may be deviants who refuse to see the need for value change.

Structural Dynamics of Traditional Societies

The segmentary lineage system which is an inherent character in most parts of West Africa is complimentary to the development of a central government. To explain this, one may stray into what Nadel (1978), [7], refers to as 'ideological history' which is not as simple but needs patient analysis. Traditional societies have remained ardent to some invented frames due to long lines of accumulated beliefs that derive from the supernatural: the divinity of kings, that his person is sacred, touching is forbidden as it is said that white blood ran in his veins, the fact that he is immovable on a raised platform is substantiated by his elaborate existence.

Comparative studies of traditional societies show a radical system that makes the king the centre of all important activities. The citizens have vested interest in his administration as evident vehicle for transfer of rights and privileges. Due to effective interpersonal nature of the society, spheres of intercultural milieu exist. There is the market place - where people engage in buying and selling and interact in the process, a political system traits depicted by rituals, cults, ceremonies and deities [8].

For example, the Benin and Yoruba who invented their kings from Ile-Ife and give the state a divine origin and sanction, made awesomely powerful the position of the *Oba* and *Oni*. In fact, the Benin monarchy belongs to a moral community that is cast on stone - cannot be disintegrated by any force. Perhaps, such influence may exist in other city-states and nowhere else. While this is not an all-conclusive factor in social mobilization, it is imperative that in both literate and pre-literate societies in West Africa, social mobilization is mainly fostered by this rich caste structure [9].

Traditional Communication Structure and Form

"Africa's traditional mode of communication may be defined as the forms of communication emanating from the interplay of synthesis of traditional customs and conflicts of a community, its harmony and cultural affinities and disparity as well as its cultural specific values and practices"[10]. These include symbols, codes, oral traditions, interpersonal relations, mythology, oral literature such as poetry, storytelling or narratives, proverbs, folktales, masquerade rites, music dance drama and customs). They also involve the use of folklore, music, town/village crier, village square meetings, age groups, festival, the market place,

The definition offered by Nwosu (1990), [11], in his book *Mass Communication and National Development* where he says that traditional African societies possesses viral and viable system of communication for the transmission of effective grassroots information is to be noted. He avers that:

every culture, literate and preliterate, produces   a "transcript", a record which is in more or less permanent form, handed from one generation to another for activation and continuation of cultural heritage. This record is necessarily oral and usually conveyed in forms of songs, poems, legends, myths, and so on.

Traditional communication system revolve around the use of town criers, age grades, elders, council kings and the use of royal chiefs, community heads, women and social groupings, deities that link historical ancestors, folklores and dances, sports, moonlight plays, use of instruments of drums, gongs, dressing patterns, festivals religion, marriages, markets and trade relations, use of days, framing and cropping seasons, annual dates, ritual and sacrifices, crafts and sculptures, visioning and star gauzing among others. Ebeze (2000), [12], in Okunna (2002), [3], said that traditional communication can be divided into two major categories, mainly verbal and non- verbal communication. Under the verbal communication Uche (ibid) discussed the major traditional communication channels under the market place, town crier, visits, church and village square. He called these verbal traditional communication channels. Under the non-verbal communication channels, Uche list and explains further:

Idiophones:- a self-sounding instruments or technical wares which produce sound such as Ichaka, metal gong, ekwe, and Ikoro (wooden gongs bells and rattles)

Membranophones:- sound is produced through the vibration of membranes. All varieties of skin or leather drum beaten or struck with carved sticks. Skin drums of various sizes and shapes and perhaps the most popular because it is the most exposed and intricate in its craftsmanship is the Yoruba talking drum, *'dundun'*

Aerophones:- which are produces sounds as a result of vibration of a column of air. e.g. the flute family, whistle *Oja,* reed pipes, horns *opi* trumpets,

Objectives:- they are provided in concrete items which have significance for specific culture. For example kolanut, native white chalk, *(nzu)* charcoal, white pigeon, white hen, the young tender bud of a palm known in Igbo as *omu*.

The Concept of Mass Mobilization

Mobilization involves using good communication strategies in appealing to people in a convincing manner to adopt particular patterns of desirable behaviour. For Example, Nwabueze in Okoro, (2005), [13], states that "people need to be convinced before they can willingly participate in accomplishing a task" Accordingly, they defined mobilization as a "term used in a most persuasive and convincing effort at getting people involved in an execution of a project or programmes by equipping them with necessary knowledge and attitude required for participating.

According to Ucheanya   (2003), [14], in Nwosu (2003), [11], "Mobilization increases people's participation in any social change issue or process. In other words, it has also been described as efforts aimed at mustering informed involvement of the target public on an issue that requires their participation [15]. In the same vein, Umechukwu (2004), defines Mobilization as " all efforts and means legitimately aimed at achieving the goals and aspirations of society". He contends that for development to be successful there is need to involve the people that will benefit from the process in the development task and effort. There is need for people to be constructively engaged in the process that sees to the development of their society.

This is apparently why Rogers (1976), [16], in Des Wilson (2005), [17], defines development as" a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about social and material advancement for the majority of the people through their gaining control over their environment" Consequently, mass mobilization which means mobilizing the people to participate in development becomes imperative in the

process of activating participatory development at community rural or national level. To mobilize means to rally for a purpose. Mobilization implies getting together for service. It has to do with achieving a goal through a properly articulated group action. It contends as Okafor (2003), [18], in Nwosu (2003), [11], observes that social and political mass mobilization and awareness are necessary elements which are absolutely unavoidable in the distribution of national wealth and power as well as in ensuring citizen's participation in government policy formulation and programme implementation.

According to Anukwu (1987), [19],

Social and political mobilization involves awareness creation as well as decolorizing aspects of the political culture which requires the fertilization of many ingredients such as political suffrage, integrated rural development, mass education, family organization, economic mobility, innovation, punishments, rewards, equity and justice and able leadership.

The immediate task of social and political mobilization is how to ensure the agitation of the minds of the citizenry towards participating in government programmes and activities and contributing meaningfully in the realization of the success of major objectives of development. This factor is central to the actualization of development objectives especially those aimed at the attainment of the millennium development goal; ensuring the people's participation in general elections, especially where there is a growing apathy and cynicism among the electorates. This is why the current effort in Nigeria to bring about a new national awakening may suffer because of lack of mobilizing both human and material resources through existing structures for the physical and environmental challenges the nation is facing. Donald Trump, the Republican Party Presidential candidate in the 2016 US elections made the point at a rally in Wichita, Kansas, when he blasted Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari for dwelling so much in complain over past national flaws. Instead, he advised him against jumping from one part of the globe to another, rather to strategize towards meaningful national mobilization. Succinctly put, national mobilization is a collective action for promoting human welfare. **Development Communication and Mass Mobilization**

Development communication as used in this study entails the employment of the various traditional media and channel for the purpose of communicating development messages to rural communities in particular and the nation in general and the use of same to mobilize the people to effectively participate in fashioning out their development needs and helping in their execution. Adesanoye (1990), [20], in Des Wilson (2005), [17] says:

in order to assuage the lack of voluntary collective action which has been responsible for the non-participation of the rural people in projects that concern them, a well articulated and intensive mobilization programme becomes imperative if, meaningful contribution is expected to be made, by a community to rural development.

The application of technology geared to mass production and wide dissemination. Radio, television, cinema, newspapers, and books are some of the mass media that have been heralded by science and technology. Among the list of characteristics of mass communication are: the nature of audience, a collectivity (supposedly) unique (urban industrial) society: an aggregate of individuals united by a common focus of interest, engaging in an identical form of behaviour oriented towards common ends; yet the individuals are unknown to each other, have only a restricted amount of interaction, do not orient their action to each other and are only loosely organized with no leadership or feelings of identity [21].

Compared to the audience in the indigenous channels of community communication that are known to each other, freely interact, orient their actions to each other, and have organic solidarity, what then happens when such an audience is open to a modern society? Since development is seen as transcending both cultural and social barriers, it is important, therefore, to identify the specific innovation and development programmes that can be communicated through the use of traditional media.

Uyo (1987), [21], has a list of them: it could include mobilization for communal labour at community level, government sponsored programmes such as immunization exercise against various children diseases like polio, measles, meningitis, cholera, and others, education to eliminate illiteracy, self development, agricultural information and so on.

Part of the process of development lies in finding appropriate means and model of communication, its ideals and plans to the relevant segments of the society. Many scholars have argued that many development plans fail because they were not properly communicated to the recipients. That was why such rural development programmes suffer failure due to non-involvement of the end users from the point of conceptualization and planning.

Application of Traditional Communication in Rural Mass Mobilization

Indigenous communication modes and channels tend to have variations from one cultural region or ethic group to another. In Nigeria, these modes and channels reflect the social structure of each community. Such social structures are equally determined by the totality of the historical and economic experiences of the

people. Some of these modes include: festivals, drama, music/songs, dance styles and steps, bush or wood fire, smoke ashes, clothing (colour of it), tales and proverbs, gun shots, animals, birds and insects, grass knots, fresh leaves, hair looks, tribal marks, body language, talking drums, weather, pottery and wood carvings, legends and myths, and so on.

They are activated by given values and mystified by groups who communicate the patterns embedded in the social structure and organization of the society. Communication is not through the big media but by face-to-face, interpersonal and group communication channels. The functionality, vertically and horizontally has proven to be very useful in the tasks of solving problems. This has been documented in field work experiences in the dissemination of change messages, especially of new farm practices in the rural areas. (Williams and Williams 1969, Bogunjoko, 1980, Orhewere 2004, and Emenyeonu, 1987), [22, 23, 24 and 25], corroborate this perspective. From their studies after a decade, it was found that with all the advantages of community radio in providing necessary knowledge, it overlooked the fact that learning consists of self-expression and self-education.

Emenyonu (1987), [25], adds to this from his experience on local radio in Burkina Faso, by underscoring the fact that; one has to live in a village to understand its unique networks. Most of the times people get things done through others, they want to listen to what others are thinking about in order to call for a more collective approach. There are no uses for the sophisticated structures and technologies to which the people do not even have access, and do not underestimate or disrespect rural values and technologies. Rural people do not lose the opportunity for feedback from the experience gained, neither keep on making the same mistakes. Group/community interest overrides that of the individual, and participatory development is the watchword

Thus, mass mobilization in traditional societies takes the shape and colouration of the system of traditional communication considered to be the first bond of relationship firmly tied to the language of communication and a way of life of people for which the indigenous citizens in a locality, are initiated by birth and the norms imposed by their common ancestral and cultural heritage. To attain its goals, National development policy must anchor and manifest on this ground. Wilson's (2005), [17], approach that emphasizes that "what constitutes traditional communication is not necessarily a matter of age, civilization or technology conflicting with change, but rather, a system which can be viewed within a communication continuum…" is relevant in this discussion. He maintains that there must be a channel for actualizing the changes and they should be brought into proper focus.

Government must communicate its strategies to the end users, the rural man, to encourage their participation in determined programmes and projects. The thrust of traditional communication in mass mobilization is synonymous with communication for development economics. Wilson (2005), [17], says that "development is understood to mean simply a gradual growth or advancement through progressive changes that typifies power and social control."

In some communities in Zaria North East Nigeria, where polio was a major problem at a time, National Health Officials tried to mobilize the rural residents to allow health agents to administer immunization. They made use of radio, pamphlets, and bill boards in local languages, but very little impact was realized due to status differentiation in various aspects of Hausa culture and society. First, it was difficult for public health agents to penetrate the households because of the system that does not allow exposure of women and children. Second, a rough picture of political and occupational roles that combine to define status and class has always had the *Masu Sarauta na Asali* as the 'upper' class: Emirs chiefs and top state officials; some politicians and members of the ruling class are in the next category – the *Masu Sarauta Na Cafka,* while the (*Talakawa*) are commoners without offices. It is interesting to note that not until it was realized by health officials to approach mobilization through this organized structures: the capitals (*Birn*i), the districts, (*gundumoni*), villages(*kauyka*), wards (*unguwoyi)* and compounds,(*gidajai)*, the polio scourge continued its ravaging spree in the affected communities. Eventually, the Emirs gave their consent and passed the change message down the line. Again, if the 'classless'- the serfs, beggars, porters, strangers who have the option of moving to another part of Hausa land to live and achieve wealth and prestige there have issues with class, then, mobilization efforts through specific media in Hausa society needs a close study as present knowledge is still very tentative and sketchy. (see Caste and Village Politics p.157)

The obvious use of both individual and group communication method to achieve polio reduction in the communities in less than two years was considered an important milestone in mass mobilization effort in Nigeria. The diffusion of information and response implies that the selection and interpretation of messages by the community is done to suit the local situation and not in a vacuum. This is why mobilization can only succeed if the initial benefits are highlighted before working with institutions or organizations to execute them.

Challenges of Effective use of Traditional Media for Mass Mobilization

Technological growth in the communication world is a source of threat to traditional communication agencies because rural dwellers no longer visit the village square regularly, due to the ravages of television sets, radio sets, satellite and newspapers. Those who can afford these communication gadgets now watch them in the comfort of their homes. Again, they have limitations in channels and messages as well as in the institutions. Wilson, (1994), [17], in Okunna,(2002), [3], maintain that messages that come from channels such as the town crier's voice is limited to the distance the voice can get to. Also, the spread of information by the town crier is slow and this tends to retard the growth of traditional media. The inability of traditional communication to reach a large audience at the same time in contrast with the modern mass media is a source of concern for development communicators.

One of the challenges facing development communicators and other stakeholders in mass mobilization and development process is how to ensure a synchronization of ICT facilities such as: internet cyber cafes, video conferencing equipment, computers as well as providing training opportunities for traditional people in the Diaspora especially on how to utilize these communication gadgets along with traditional media forms. This may seem expensive to countries in Africa but the advantages far outweigh the fears.

There is also the urgent need to train development communicators and mobilization agents on how to effectively communicate with rural dwellers using the ICTs in spite of obvious limitations as:

- The lack of standard technical vocabulary in the description and analysis of traditional communication processes.
- The absence of appropriate language which can be universally applied to all similar and identical concepts, problem created by diversity of language in Africa.
- Diversity in traditional political systems and conflicts between it and adopted systems (i.e. Western system).

While enumerating the potentials of cross fertilizing ideas between the rural communities and development agencies, which is to engender sustainable rural development, Richardson (1997), [26], observed that there is no society in the world that does not resort to traditional communication system whenever the issue to be addressed has to do with the affairs of the local citizens. If it is immunization programmes in Nigeria for instance, people need explanation on why their children should be immunized again. So the questions to be addressed to convince them could be:

i. Why should my child be immunized again when the child has had all the immunization at nine months in the routine immunization programme?
ii. Does this mean that the immunization administered during the routine immunization is not effective?
iii. Will additional immunization hurt my child?
iv. Will this immunization not be an overdose?
v. Are the immunizations safe?

There is no doubt that traditional communication will be most effective in persuading the rural dwellers as to why they should embrace the supplementary immunization. The traditional rulers, institutions, town/village/family unions, voluntary Organizations, student union of a town, market women associations, traders association, religious group, churches, mosque, and village meetings political rural training centers among others include the channels for the delivery of mobilization messages. To ensure the survival of the traditional media of communication, the sustenance and improvement of mass mobilization efforts need to be well integrated or blended.

With (ICTs), the integration of traditional medial of communication with the modern mass media will not only ensure the survival and progress of the traditional media but also lead to accelerated development in rural areas. Nwosu (2006), [11], says that "rural people needs information about the direction of prices of agricultural produce; farmers also need information about those in urgent need of their farm produce which they also want to quietly dispose of." Information and communication technologies like radio, internet, could provide the much-needed link between the farmer; rural people need to benefit from the vast array of information available through ICTs.

II. Conclusion

In the preceding pages it has been well established that traditional media of communication are the pivot of mass mobilization of the citizens in every society. The study has attempted to showcase the wealth of ideas that are open to research in traditional media studies especially from the perspective of the Diaspora academia. What should be the concern now is securing sustenance assurance for mass mobilization efforts

which is the touch stone of this discussion, through the integration of both traditional and modern communication forms.

It can be inferred from the study that for any development programme to be successful, the people for which the development is meant must be a part of it. Why most development benefits are not realizable is due to mistake of not explaining the idea to target audience and the use of wrong channels of communication to reach them. For this reason development planners should know the cultural background of the areas as well as their problems in the way that will interest and motivate to contribute to the development process.

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