

Repositioning Public Broadcasting for Participatory Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract

Corpus literature in broadcasting indicate that the federal government deliberately extended the networks of both the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), as Nigeria's foremost public broadcast stations to foster effective information delivery germane for popular participation in government programmes, policies and directives. This is no doubt a right step in positioning public broadcasting to brace for the challenges of the enduring democratic dispensation in Nigeria. However, the very fundamental issue of managing and financing public broadcasting to involve the people in content determination for participatory democracy to be free from government and commercial pressures either seem not to have been explored or may have not been given the appropriate emphasis required to spark-off the response of stakeholders in the direction. Thus, as its preoccupation, this paper emphasizes a meta-theoretical dimension that would establish basic premises in the direction by suggesting, among others, ways of financing and administrative modalities for repositioning public broadcasting to become a strong non-governmental public sphere and a more community-based activity within the domain of civil society, as a precondition for the emergence of a strong liberal democracy in Nigeria.

Key Words: Repositioning, Public Broadcasting, Participatory Democracy, Good Governance, National Development

Introduction

Any analysis of available literature on mass media influence on political systems of societies around the world has always revealed that the media, including broadcasting, have exceedingly had collective and even individual influence on groups and individuals within a geopolitical group. It has also been noted that such influence while appearing to be prominent at the information and awareness creation level, equally have limited and sometimes mixed influence in political activities at the attitudinal, opinion and behavior change level. When public broadcasting was the undeniable focal point of things in the coverage of political activities, Nwosu (2003) reports a one-time president of the United States of America, Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson as particularly telling broadcasters in a press conference that they have enormous power in their hands because they (the broadcast-journalists) have the power to clarify and confuse to the extent that men in public life cannot rival their opportunities. This is more so as day after day, night after night and hour after hour, the broadcasters shape the nation's dialogue. In the same vein, Schwarts (1977) who does not limit his own affirmation of the power of the mass media to the broadcast or electronic media informs that the media like the press, radio, television, books, magazines and motion pictures have grown almost geometrically in recent decades with the potential of controlling the minds, actions and destiny of citizenry.

Over the years, the art and act of repositioning, reviewing, restructuring or reappraising media strategies for effective communication delivery has never been coincidental or accidental among media practitioners, development agencies and policy makers and implementers, rather it has always been functionally and sporadically incidental to the ever changing media landscape. This situation has played

out with the advent of media convergence; digitization and media pluralism, the new and social media as well as private broadcasting assuming a prominent posture in the coverage of politics in Nigeria's democracy. Nwafor, Odemelam, Orji-Egwu, Nwankwo and Nweze (2013) observe that before the advent of the new and social media, the older or conventional media (radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc), i.e. the public broadcasters of the time under review, prevailed in the coverage of politics and even established a kind of monopoly that directly or indirectly severed popular participation in the electoral process. They, therefore, heaved a sigh of relief that the ubiquitous access to the online devices of the new and social media has "democratizing effects as they offer citizens opportunities for fuller engagement in the electoral process" (p. 66). By this posture and the value direction on the side of media scholars and practitioners, the new and social media have, arguably, shifted the attention of political followers in our democracy from public broadcasting only to glory in the production of the limited or mixed forms of influence on politics especially in the area of participatory democracy. The development with its forbidden consequences may have not come as a surprise as even Nwafor, et al (2003) at the point of paying glowing tribute to the new and social media, also acknowledged that their explosion might lead to erosion of African values, inaccessibility due to illiteracy and erratic power supply, moral panic, invasion of territorial sovereignty, promotion of violence and uneven penetration as required of an ideal public sphere for political participation. However, this simply confirms the historical position of Berelson (1960), also cited in Nwosu (2003) who, deriving from the findings of his research, reveals that although the media of mass communication have a major influence in producing an interest in public affairs, they may be promoting, in actuality but without intention, a sense of political apathy among some of their audience. Evidently, the new and social media, which have also been the major source of hate speech, bad blood and other characteristics of user-generated content that continually decimate the nation's polity, might have toed this trajectory. To arrest the development, there is the urgent need to reposition conventional media platforms, at least, as a reassurance that would contain the skepticism of Nigerian citizenry about the efficacy of the gradually enduring democracy in the country. Public service broadcasting is one of those alternative media platforms. It is a readily available, time-honored, potent and grassroots-centric media outlet which, if repositioned, will help in fashioning out effective and creative ways to relate and share experiences aimed at advancing participatory democracy in the country. In addition, the repositioning strategy will, among other advantages, return the loyalty of Nigerians from private broadcasting, the new and social media to the public broadcaster as a tested and trusted public sphere.

After many years of existence, it is now clear that private broadcasting has not been able to replace the public broadcaster as an ideal public sphere, and may never to do so, particularly in terms bridging distances and cross language barriers, mobilizing rural masses for rural and national development, providing a platform for political communication and debate and promoting local culture. For instance, although private broadcasting has sometimes been commended for the provision of channel and program diversity, such positive development has always been recorded with the incidentals of gradual extinction local cultures and languages (Blankson, 2005). Similarly, because of its over-dependence on foreign language programming, it has equally failed to serve as a viable alternative medium of educational broadcasting, national dialogue and consensus in the rural communities and for the provision of a market place for locally produced goods and services.

Like private broadcasting, the erroneous assumption and usage of the social and new media as an ideal public sphere have, apart from influencing crises of confidence and sometimes insurrection among citizens, unduly facilitated the localization of the global, including foreign cultures that are clearly at variance with the nation's political culture. Particularly, the usage of the internet has always depended on the information infrastructure or info-structure that is determined by foreign communities. Nevertheless, the role of public broadcasting, at least, in reversing cultural effervescence, over the years, has proved its imperativeness in the globalization of the local not only to balance the rate of cultural exchange between foreign countries but also in ensuring participatory democracy especially at the grassroots.

This calls for a rethink as a way forward that will reinforce the public broadcaster to rehash its statutory responsibilities of preserving and promoting the ethos of liberal democracy and other national core values that project Nigeria's image elsewhere around the world as a nation with unique and distinct cultural identity. Interestingly, broadcasting, which traditionally limited its operations to radio and television has since recent time utilized the culture of mass media and telecommunications convergence to explore a new dimension known as web casting. Thus, it is not only possible for broadcast operations to take place with the aid of computer-mediated infrastructure like internet and telephone but also for broadcast transmission to take place simultaneously, in form of simulcasting, on radio, television and the internet (Betiang, 2004). According to (Bassey-Duke and Ugorji (2015), the digital media have only increased accessibility to radio and television contents, while the role of the broadcast practitioners in the program production process has remained the same. However, bearing in mind the variables of multiplicity of Nigeria as a nation state and the need for effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery, public broadcasting requires a critical reappraisal to accommodate the communication interests of the rich and the poor as well as the majority and the minority that must participate actively in the nation's democracy.

Development media scholars have since expanded and modified the functional model of the mass media to service the political system by providing information, discussion and debate on public affairs. Nwosu (1990) informs that the mass media, when premised on the expanded and modified paradigm, should, among other functions, be able to enlighten the public to be capable of self government and safeguard the rights of the individuals by serving as a watch-dog against government. Similarly, Osofisan (2001) insists that all media practitioners, including playwrights, should jettison the innocuous aesthetics of mere amusement and brace themselves for ideas of political commitment in all content production and transmission, exhibition distribution, and should never think of surrendering media arts to the politics of a capitalist state.

In Nigeria's democracy, participation has remained elusive on the side of the citizenry for so many reasons. The first is that, although so much has changed, and is changing all around us, nothing really in Nigeria has changed; the conditions, which we have sought to battle, are still very much with us. For instance, the economy has remained backward, static and decaying, and the principal reasons for the backwardness, according to Femi Osofisan cited above, are still very much the same, i.e. a treacherous leadership and elite, which very frequently, is in collusion with neocolonial interests. The elite and their allies still gobble up the wealth of the land, leaving the vast majority in abject poverty. According to Osofisan (2001), it is pathetic to find that at this stage of world development, Nigerians have not solved the basic problems of modern living. Thus, they do not produce enough food to eat, they cannot supply sufficient potable water, and electricity supply is still erratic while the majority of the citizens live in conditions of primitive barbarity. Therefore, it certainly requires only the mass media like public broadcasting that have public service and interest as their preoccupation to expose the scavenging elite and redistribute power to those who are presently the victims of their exploitations. Secondly, it should be noted that one of the causes, as well as one of the consequences, of the current mismanagement of the nation's economy, is the appalling ignorance of our people, who are often deliberately shielded from the kind of knowledge that would help them to liberate themselves, to recognize and identify their real enemies as well as their authentic destinies. The way out is to enlighten our people, help to increase their awareness and wean them away from the dark pit of false consciousness against the status quo of negative propaganda and improper information that have retained the people in a position of feeble or false consciousness that continuously make them to be unaware of their options. The people, regrettably, continue to be well at ease as both a ready fodder in the barren intra-elitist squabbles and victims of feeble oligarchy in the guise of democracy.

To reverse the trend and build a new world that would ensure participation of the masses in democracy, public broadcasting needs to be strengthened to spread ideas, communicate government

policies, programs and directives to the people and help the people to understand the policies, programs and directives. The logic needs no over emphasis because it is clear that if the people constitute the repository of power in a democracy, then the people must be enlightened and carried along in virtually all mosaic of governance. The people must understand what is going on within and around the country to be able to make choices, to be able to follow up the programs, to be able to monitor, effectively, those who had been elected to govern on behalf of the people. People need not just information but credible information that would enable them to play their part in the overall pact of democracy. Equally true is that development is facilitated by a peaceful understanding of the role of the people themselves in the development process. To do this requires the communication strategy of mobilization. Effective mobilization of the people takes place only if the people have good effective information at their disposal. This information must be two-way so that the government should be able reach out to the people while the people should be able to send feedback to government. The ensuing scenario of two-way communication flow between the government and the governed will further make it possible for government at all levels to understand the needs of the people, particularly the major issues disturbing them. With the creation of understanding between the government and the people, valid information will replace the terrible issues of rumors, often perpetrated by the new and social media, which have created a lot of tensions and disturbances in various parts of the country. Thus, in the process, development will be facilitated generally as people will no longer be manipulated, misdirected or misinformed.

Therefore, in ensuring participatory and sustainable democracy, the people must be regularly briefed, well informed and cultivated in terms of accessibility to the events of government. Understanding, as often facilitated by radio and television, as local media of mass communication, creates a good environment for democracy to be deep-rooted. Radio, for instance, has powerful grassroots' reach in the sense that people can receive radio signals anywhere they have a receiver set (even if battery-powered), and therefore it can be used for communication with rural people, especially during the periods of enlightenment and mobilization. Television, with the aids of its visuals, gives credibility to what the people hear on radio. Accordingly, effective combination of radio and television as public broadcast media is metaphorically effective enlightenment and mobilization. The other side is also true and dangerous because radio and television, when poorly financed and managed, can as well be negatively used to misinform the people and coerce them to take actions that are inimical to their collective peace and stability. The latter is always obtainable in situations of severed accessibility on the side of the people even in the context large networks and long reach as obtainable with private broadcasting, the new and social media.

Corpus literature indicates that the federal government deliberately extended the networks of both the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) to create a wider reach that foster people's participation in government policies and programs, all in a bid to position public broadcasting to brace for the challenges of the enduring democratic dispensation in Nigeria. However, ways of managing and financing public broadcasting to involve the people in content determination for participation social debate as a democratic ethic either seem not to have been explored or may have not been given the appropriate emphasis required to trigger action on the side of stakeholders in the broadcasting industry. Thus, as part of the literature deriving from the growing body of empirical work on the administrative and financial management of public broadcasting, there is the need to emphasize a meta-theoretical dimension that would establish basic premises in the direction. The vortex of discussion in this paper, therefore, seeks to close this gap in knowledge by suggesting ways of making public broadcasting a strong non-governmental public sphere as well as a more community-based activity within the domain of civil society, which can be seen as a precondition for the emergence of a strong liberal democracy. In doing this, rapt attention is to be paid to a clearly defined management and financing techniques for the public broadcaster to shed light on its functions, politics, uses, ownership, control and regulation for the purpose of participatory democracy and national development. This is in line with the position of Nwosu (1990) that the government should view the mass media of

communication as an institution that needs to be properly developed and managed so that it can contribute effectively and efficiently to a country's rural and national development.

There are, therefore, two challenges to be resolved in the treatment of facts. One is to explain an ideal administrative framework for the public broadcaster, and the second is to suggest a financing option for it, all of which are calculated to make public broadcasting as effective as needed to guarantee participatory democracy in Nigeria. In dealing with the challenges, the paper begins with a conceptual explanation as a pivot around which the discussion is built around.

What then is Public Broadcasting?

Public broadcasting is the acquisition, production and transmission of public service-driven content on radio, television, internet and other electronic media outlets. It is one of the major divisions of broadcasting according to ownership and content patterns. Public broadcasting is devoid of consumer freedom, individual right and market forces. The government runs it either directly as a public sector or by financing provision of services. As an aspect of public-service like military, police, infrastructure like roads, bridges, water supply, electricity, education, etc, public broadcasting is provided by government through an act of parliament to people living within its jurisdiction. It is therefore seen as a public sector that provides services that a non-tax payer cannot be excluded from, because they benefit all members of society. The content of public broadcasting is not meant for the individual listener or viewer who tune to the stations. Generally, the term public service is associated with a social consensus, often expressed through democratic elections, which certain services should be made available to all, regardless of income, physical ability and mental acuity. Again, where public broadcasting is not provided or financed by government, perhaps for social and political reasons, it is usually subject to government regulation.

However, in much of the world, funding comes from the government, especially through annual fees charged on receivers. For instance, in the United States, public broadcasters may receive some funding from both federal and state sources, but the bulk of financial support comes from foundations and businesses (including small shops and corporations) as well as audience contributions through pledge drives. All revenues generated from these sources are used to underwrite both the capital and recurrent expenditures required for public broadcasting. In addition, public broadcasting may be nationally or locally operated, depending on the country and the station. In some countries, public broadcasting is run by a single organization, while other countries like Nigeria have multiple public broadcasting organizations that operate regionally, nationally and in different languages. With the notable exception of the United States of America, public broadcasting was once the dominant or only form of broadcasting in many countries. An ideal model of public broadcasting has as its principles universal geographic accessibility, universal appeal, attention to minorities, contribution to national identity and sense of community and distance from vested interests. Others are direct funding and universality of license-fee payment, competition in good programming rather than numbers and guidelines that liberate rather than restrict. The great majority are also operated as private not-for-profit corporations. In order to make democracy participatory, commercial and community tiers of broadcasting now coexist with public broadcasting in most of these countries.

When Is Democracy Participatory?

Participatory democracy emphasizes the broad participation of all people within the direction and operation of political systems of a society. Etymological roots of democracy presuppose that the people are in power and thus, all democracies are participatory. However, participatory democracy tends to advocate more involved forms of citizen participation and greater political representation than traditional representative democracy. The latter being a type of democracy premised on the principle of elected officials representing a group of people. Participatory democracy strives to create opportunities for all

members of a population to make meaningful contributions to decision-making, and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities. Since so much information must be gathered for the overall decision-making process to succeed, technology may provide important forces leading to the type of empowerment needed for participatory models, especially those technological tools that enable community narratives and correspond to the accretion of knowledge.

As pointed out in the introductory part of this paper, the trajectory of the paper is to explore the possibilities of making public broadcasting a more community-based activity within the domain of civil society and a strong non-governmental public sphere that can be seen as a precondition for the emergence of a strong liberal democracy.

What is Liberal Democracy?

Liberal democracy is an offshoot of liberal political ideology and a form of government that operates representative democracy in the guise of an ideal liberalism. In its pristine standard, liberalism is a political and moral philosophy based on liberty and equality of all human beings. Although there are many interpretations of liberals, the universal view supports civil rights, democracy, secularism, gender and race equality, internationalization and the freedoms of speech, the press, religion and markets. Historically, liberalism became a distinct movement in the Age of Enlightenment, when it became popular among Western philosophers and economists (Iji, 2014). According to him, liberalism sought to replace the norms of hereditary privilege, state religion and absolute monarchy, the divine right of kings and traditional conservatism with representative democracy and the rule of law.

Liberal democracy (often called western democracy) is characterized by election contested by multiple and distinct political parties, a separation of powers into different arms of government, the rule of law in everyday life as part of an open society and the equal protection of human rights, civil rights, civil liberties and political freedoms for all people. In practice, liberal democracies use the constitution either formally written or oral to delineate the powers of government and enshrine the social contract. After a period of sustained expansion throughout the 20th century, liberal democracy became the predominant political system in the world.

Relating Public Broadcasting to Liberal Democracy

Since the emergence of liberal democratic theory as an intellectual force in democracies around the world, the relationship between democracy and the media has been a regular topic of discussion. In Europe, according to Okunna (1990), John Milton in his seventeenth century's *Aeropagitica* provided a libertarian argument for the right of free discussion; as such discussion presumably would lead to the rejection of false and unsound opinion and the discovery of truth. Although the free press guarantee in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution received surprisingly little attention at the time of the adoption of the First Amendment, that guarantee has been the object of much debate ever since. In part, because of frustration with the early Federalists, Thomas Jefferson and other anti-Federalists were passionate defenders of the free press in the early days of the American republic. In the nineteenth century, the English philosopher John Stuart Mill articulated a fully developed justification for free speech and a free press, as silencing anyone might prevent the truth from being told and would run the risk that errors would not be discovered.

It is, therefore, the ultimate in hydra-headedness to talk intelligently about democracy without considering the role played by the electronic media, especially public broadcasting, in disseminating political messages to the public. With the evolution of broadcasting since several centuries ago, the interface between democracies, political campaigns, public opinions, and journalistic practices have

generated much involuntary attention on the side of media critics and generally among communication scholars. Even private broadcasting and the new media are all innovations aimed at expanding the deliberative space of democracy. Thus, it is commonplace to critique broadcast media practitioners for practices that are perceived in one way or another as being antidemocratic.

Interestingly, the traditional functions of the media have been applied in different recipes and combinations by different countries depending on their national policy options. However, the technological innovations in print media and the rapid development of electronic media forms have only been able to convey up-to-date political information to the public though not without some criticisms. In lending credence to the point, Habermas (1989) explains in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* that the rise of the politically oriented public sphere in parts of Europe and the United States was fundamentally linked to the development of the media. In the emerging democratic societies of Europe, North America and Africa, South of Sahara, broadcasting became not only purveyors of public-service centred news but shapers of public opinion as well. Again, with deregulation, broadcasting became increasingly dependent on commercial advertising for support; economic considerations meant that broadcast-content policy and broadcast-journalistic practice could also be influenced by those who controlled financial resources. Commercial broadcasting has always been associated with consumer freedom, individual right and market forces. The result of this, as described by Jürgen Habermas cited above, is that there is now a shift of the monopoly of broadcast infrastructure and content from government to wealthy individuals or controllers of wealth who have more influence over public opinion and, ultimately, over what policies are changed than do members of the lower and middle classes. Media scholars, generally, have been worried that, in addition to the economic forces that might distort public debate, the heavy reliance of the modern media on governmental sources of information might lead in some cases to less scrutiny and criticism of governmental policies.

In the same vein, the relationship between democracy and broadcasting has been considered to the extent of evaluating the latter's effects on the people, especially following the experience with government-produced propaganda to safeguard its positions. The fact remains that if media coverage of politics and political campaigns has little influence on public attitudes and behaviours, then presumably people need not be concerned over the quantity and quality of attention that is paid to politics in the media. Conversely, if media coverage of politics and political campaigns has a moderate or strong influence on public attitudes and behaviours, then protecting democratic government requires careful review, and possibly governmental regulation of media, whether print or electronic, mainstream or alternative. Historically, some scholars have maintained that the media have a strong, direct effect on audiences, while the vast majority of contemporary scholars believe that the media have some, usually moderate, effects on some audiences in some situations.

The emergence of computer-based interactive media, including the internet and other new technologies such as facsimile machines, has further complicated the relationship between democracy and the media. New media forms provide ordinary people with unparalleled opportunities to distribute information quickly and inexpensively to large numbers of their fellow citizens. The democratic potential of such new media is sometimes described as being a way to compensate for the ownership of traditional media forms (e.g., public broadcasting) by fewer and fewer large corporations, given the concern that this trend to "media monopolies" has or will reduce the diversity of opinions that are expressed in established media. However, the proliferation of Internet sources has meant that the information provided on the internet often is not accurate. In a nutshell, internet information has not been properly checked for accuracy. Thus, while some political observers have discussed the potential of internet voting and campaign material distribution to rejuvenate interest in voting and in political activism, others have argued that the tendency of internet websites to engage in shallow political humour and parody is more likely to foster cynicism than to combat it. Of course, given the rapid development of the internet and its

steady increase in availability and ease of use, the political implications of emerging electronic media are far from certain, whether in historically democratic societies or in authoritarian nations where governments are struggling, usually with uneven success, to restrain the free flow of information.

Issues with Existing Normative Frameworks for Public Broadcasting in Nigeria

To reposition public broadcasting in Nigeria, there is the need to identify the issues that negatively affect its effective operations. Some of the issues are direct government management and financing, advertising, clash of freedom and responsibility, digital media and globalization.

The direct involvement of government in the management of public broadcasting has remained a running sore in its existence as an ideal public sphere. In most cases, the appointment of the officials of the public broadcaster has defied the due process of screening by both broadcasting council and parliament only to be actualized as a form of dispensation of political patronage and welfare package for political supporters. Similarly, each of the three major sources of financing public broadcasting, including government, viewers and corporate donors, has its own peculiar issues. For instance, the most valuable of the three is license fees, which is the tax that is linked to the ownership of receivers (Aufderheide and Clark, 2008)). License fees create a direct relationship between the broadcaster and its public but the enduring issue of tax evasion remains the bane of the financing system. Again, in Nigeria tax money is always used to establish and service infrastructure that ordinary fund-raising procedure cannot do. However, the fact remains that the infrastructure that is funded by government is prone to political attack, and political broadcasting is no exception. The interference and attacks by government have adversely affected the content of the public broadcaster as the chief executives of the stations become gun-shy. In most cases, direct government funding has ridiculously reduced public broadcasting to the status of government propaganda machinery meant to broadcast self-styled information, policies and machineries to the detriment of public service-centric information. Furthermore, corporate funding also has its inherent issues. According to Aufderheide and Clark (2008), corporations would want either their names to be associated with specific programs or participate in joint ventures, a scenario, which they maintain, often leads to ambush marketing (strategy of reaching people who avoid advertising).

The clash of freedom and responsibility has remained an enduring wedge between the public broadcaster and its mandate. The question is how the public broadcaster can be necessarily accountable in the context of its freedom from government control. The same complexity is obtainable with advertising, which in the main predisposes public broadcasting to commercial pressures, and this would mean renegeing on the public-service obligations of the public broadcaster for, perhaps, subjective programming. The consequences of commercialization is even worse if the public broadcaster is coerced into competitions in hustling for ad revenue as there will be no distinction between it and its commercial variant.

Digital media and globalization have also crippled the performance of public broadcasting. This is more so if the definition of globalization by Giddens (2006) is to be taken seriously. According to him, globalization refers to the intensification of world-wide social relations, which link distinct localities in such a way that local happening are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa. The striking issue about contemporary globalization according to Shetima (2011) is the central role the central role of information and communication technologies especially the internet, satellite television and GSM phones. The dramatic increase in access to mobile phones, for instance, have compressed time, space and distance and facilitated the contact between peoples and cultures across the globe much more than conventional broadcasting, especially under intense political and commercial pressures, have done. Little wonder then why Nwafor, et al (2013) insist that the information and communication technologies make it possible for everyone to become a mass communicator, who can stay right in his bedroom, sitting room

or even in a moving vehicle to access information, entertainment, events and enjoy all interactions with the world just by pressing a button.

The Flaws of the Existing Normative Frameworks

The flaws of the existing frameworks (direct government involvement in the administration and financing, advertising, clash of freedom and responsibility, digital media and globalization) for public broadcasting simply resonate with far reaching negative implications, especially on the very participatory and liberal democracy it set out, right from its cradle, to support. For instance, with direct government in the management and financing, public broadcasting remains an exclusive monopoly of state authorities who explore all possibilities to suppress dissenting voices. The public broadcaster has therefore failed to address power and existing forms exclusion, a backdrop that questions its much vaunted status as a deliberative public sphere. Karppinen (2008) argues that by such posture, public broadcasting as a public sphere has not adequately theorized the themes of plurality, openness and 'undecidedability', and thus inevitably excludes the articulation of difference and conflict outside democratic deliberation, particularly among the members of its public. In other words, Nigerian public service broadcasters appear to relish so much on the classical postulates of public broadcasting that justify themselves, above any other broadcasting nuances, as a critique of political theorists that assess their success by the elimination of dissonance and conflict (Honig, 1993). In such political arrangement, he continues, public broadcasting engage in, as a major thrust of programming, stabilizing moral and political subjects, building consensus or consolidating communities and identities. This implies that such broadcasting system only represents a marked shift of emphasis from the democratic core values of media surveillance and correlation to the grandstanding process of dislocation, contestation and resistance. It should be noted that the primary role of the media in a democratic dispensation has never manifested as a direct participation in governance but is rather understood as a critique of state power. This calls a renewed attention to the ideal management and financing options for the public broadcaster in Nigeria as exemplified by this discourse. The implication of radical public-service- perspectives on a heterogeneous audience such as our multi-plural Nigeria equally needs a critical appraisal. Thus, there is evidence of unlimited assumption of public service as the actual societal composition of diversity, difference and identity movements that should be articulated in a public-service driven content are artfully evaded in the public broadcaster's programming. The inherent danger in the development is that in concentrating programming on events in and around the government house and other broader political and economic structures, the situation of equal possibilities open to different groups that would have been afforded by an ideal deliberative space of the public broadcaster are trampled upon.

Again, the attitude of rural dwellers to public broadcasting has been characterized by ambivalence and enthusiasm over the years. The reason for such oscillation is, on one hand, that they are treated as having no interest in the determination and production of content, and as such, they are passive recipients of information coming from state authorities. This is in spite of the fact that they are ever anxious to know the happenings within their society, especially as they concern their relationship with political authorities. The enthusiasm has heightened with the failure of the digital media of interactivity to replace public broadcasting as all-embracing public sphere against earlier propositions. To say the most obvious, actuality about computers and interactivity have contradicted and defied earlier assumptions that they would ubiquitous and accessible to all, only to be readily available to first world countries but a distant memory to the rural communities. According to Latukefu (2006) cited in Ginsburg (2008), the power of the ICT medium has become so seductive that it brilliantly deceived the people into believing that centralized control has been removed from the hands of government and into the hands of the people, giving them the notion of empowerment. With this revelation, it is clear that the internet has not been able to replace the public broadcaster nor has it been able to replicate its role in rural communities because, as noted in the introductory section of this paper, the usage of the internet depends on the information

infrastructure or info-structure that is determined by exogenous communities. The overarching question, according to Alopi Latukefu cited above, becomes “who determines knowledge within these remote communities and for wider populations of the world” (p. 4). Indeed, the new and social media explosion has culminated into a most worrying core national question (Iji, 2016). According to him, globalization that is prompted by the new and social media has continually threatened Nigerian culture as over 350 languages, ethnic or tribal, have suddenly become endangered species, especially under the aegis of post-modernist sensibilities. In the context of the above circumstances, public sphere has become an urban phenomenon even when 80% of the Nigerians live in the rural areas (Nwosu, 1990).

Repositioning Public Broadcasting for enhanced Participatory Democracy

Having observed that public broadcasting is central to such participatory democracy that would engender rural and national development, there is the need for the planners and implementers of the nation’s development to do moonlight walk from the prevalent half-hearted recognition to the real, adequate and full-fledged recognition it deserves as a viable tier of broadcasting and purveyor of rural and national development messages. At this point in the discussion of facts, the paper offers some strategies for re-conceptualizing, rethinking and repositioning public service broadcasting to yield the required platform for civic discourse and socio-political awareness as well as a force for social and political integration and accountability.

In the first place, the direct government financing of the public broadcaster should be replaced by license fees. Elsewhere around the world, including Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, South Korea, Japan, etc, public broadcasting has been successful because it depends primarily on license fees for both capital and recurrent expenditure. In principle, license fees create a direct relationship between the public broadcaster and its audience and public. However, government funding can only be acceptable if it is in form of direct federal allocation so that freedom and autonomy of the public broadcaster will be guaranteed and all political pressures eliminated. Similarly, the public broadcaster may accept such advertising that will not interfere with its public-service obligations, because over-dependence on commercial financing will no doubt commodify its programming. The sources of finance for the public broadcaster should be stable enough so that it cannot be forced into competition for advertising that will make it embark on the same pattern of programming as the private and commercial counterparts. Generally, its financing must be substantial enough to provide a counterweight to commercial services, be independent from commercial and political pressures with the aid of license fees and predictable and stable with assured all-year character. It should be simple and equitable to be devoid of political controversy, and as well grow in tandem with the broadcaster’s cost.

Secondly, the independence of public broadcasting from government and its necessary accountability should be reconciled. To do this requires effective organization of public broadcasting. Its autonomy can be secured by distinguishing, in its administrative structure, between two levels of management comprising the day-to-day business, on one hand, and on the other, general policies and long-term decisions. The appointments of public broadcasting officials should not be made according to ideological affinities nor as reward to political friends as this would jeopardize the credibility of its programs. There should be a board of directors, which members are geographically drawn from the localities or states and are to be appointed by a broadcasting council. The broadcasting council is to be made up of non-government representatives of various political, religious, economic and cultural groups. The length of mandates and terms of dismissal of the officials of public broadcasting should be determined so that they will not be subjected to the whims and caprices of government officials, government changes and the mood swings of politicians. The same goes for the grounds for dismissing a board member or a chief executive officer to avoid arbitrary dismissal. In practice, the board of directors should be responsible for such general policies like approval for the budget and policies, and should also

appoint the executive officers (director general, directors of engineering, programs, news and current affairs, etc). The chief executive, director general or general manager (depending on the nomenclature) is responsible for the day-to-day management of the public broadcasting station, and is directly in charge of human or material resources as well as programming decisions. To ensure that there is no political interference with the daily operations of public broadcasting, the chief executive officer, director general or general manager should only be accountable to the board of directors, which in turn reports on general activities to political authorities. Thus, the board of directors with its chairman should act as a buffer between the chief executive and the government.

On the other hand, public broadcasting should be accountable only to parliament at regular (usually annual) intervals, but never to the executive arm of government. The public broadcaster should submit an annual report of its use of public funds and general performance over the period. Therefore, the regular practice of public broadcasting officials' romance with the executive arm of government is diametrically unhealthy to the credibility of public broadcasting and should be stopped as part of the repositioning project.

Furthermore, although it is not possible for all public broadcasting stations to produce and transmit the same programs, there are yet some programs that must be given preference over others. For instance, the programming model should reflect the culture and nuances of the various peoples of the public broadcaster's public. There should be indigenization of the public broadcaster's content, which according to Mazrui (2011) involves greater use of indigenous languages as a major step in changing the imperial culture of perception. In the same vein, Udoakah (1998) informs that the present practice of concentration of the media of mass information in urban centers is a contradiction of the cardinal objective of development communication, which is mobilization of the citizenry for self-development and eventually national development. A good step in the direction will also redirect the public broadcaster's news value to capture Nigerian rural conditions and events as a news-worthy phenomenon.

To promote participation and development among the people, public broadcasting should judiciously use program formats that can spark-off group consciousness among the people. Some of the formats are news, group discussion, lecture or straight talk, interview, testimonial, entertainment, magazine, jingles, spot announcements and poetry (Ojebode, 2012). Generally, there should be in-house production of programs that leave their mark, and are of course national in content. The content should also be unbiased, enlightening and of general interest and service programming. Participation in content production and accessibility to the programs should equally be ensured. Akpunonu (1999) insists that although the heterogeneous mass population is the audience of the electronic media, specific audience segmentation is necessary for the identification, reach and retention of the audience of the medium. It is near impossibility to have a group of people that are similar in all respect, but the implication of Christiana Akpunonu's submission cited above is that the audience of public broadcasting should be isolated into homogeneous sub-sets, which offers the greatest potential for successful and effective broadcasting. People should be classified into groups of men, women, children, youths, boys, girls, married and non-married men, married and single women, school children, upper income group, lower income group, general public (Akpunonu, 1999), and should be reflected in program diversity. Again, demographic parameter should also be used for audience segmentation, and should be done to explore such characteristics of the audience as age, sex, income, education, occupation, religion, family size, tribe, race, etc in the programming process. Furthermore, such socio-psychological and non-demographic characteristics of the audience as social class, lifestyle, etc should be considered in program production in furtherance of audience segmentation. Geographic location and language are as well important in identifying, reaching and retaining the audience. The audience of public broadcasting should be understood for what it is in the main. Indeed, the audience is reasonable enough to make its alternative wishes known, resist persuasion, use and react to broadcast content and resist being used by the content.

Generally, public broadcasting should respond to the desires and demands of the audience particularly by restricting the use of professional autonomy to creativity. The audience who expects to be informed and entertained also expects that the programs, as the source of its information and entertainment, conform to norms of good taste and morality.

Conclusion

With the status quo of public broadcasting especially in the context of new and social media predominance in Nigeria and, perhaps, other developing nations of the world, the people, particularly the rural dwellers, will remain the object of other people's image-making practices in ways that have been damaging to their lives. Apart from resisting the culture of dislocation and globalization without commensurate localization of local nuances, public broadcasting, if repositioned, has the capacity to return Nigerian citizenry to the mainstream of governance by providing a platform for them to hear from the government while the government also hears and views their viewpoints on and reactions to government policies, programs and directives. Participation is an indispensable part of democratic ethos, which has only been, arguably, perfectly achieved through the public space for two-way interactive broadcasting system of the public broadcaster, hence, the dire need for its repositioning for quality and optimal service delivery.

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Before the new dawn of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, successive military regimes systematically violated the rights of Nigerians with impunity. This large-scale denial of human rights in Nigeria reached its peak between November 1994 and June 1998. The abysmal situation of human rights under this regime resulted in Nigeria becoming a pariah state at the international arena and the country was put on the agenda of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for five consecutive years. Developing Nigeria's National Action Plan (NAP) for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. The Federal Government of Nigeria has consciously chosen a participatory, consultative and collaborative approach to develop the NAP. Ahmad, Murtada Busair, and Kamaldin Abdulsalam Babatunde. "Communicating Democracy through Participatory Radio in Nigeria: The Question of Political Economy." In *Political Influence of the Media in Developing Countries*. edited by Lynete Lusike Mukhongo, and Juliet Wambui Macharia, 97-112. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2016. <http://doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-9613-6.ch007>. Parpolity or Participatory Polity- which is a theoretical form of democracy that is ruled by a Nested Council structure. An ideal democracy is about the people. It is a system that empowers the people to make a free choice of leadership to pilot the affairs of the society. In Nigeria for instance, post independence, most of the major achievements recorded in this country were achieved during civilian rule and such achievements can only be said to have been disrupted as a result of military intervention. If on the other hand, we base our evaluation on the past years of our acclaimed democratic governance, then the claim of this paper becomes more propounded. A Nigerian newspaper and Online version of the Vanguard, a daily publication in Nigeria covering Nigeria news, Niger delta, general national news, politics, business, energy, sports, entertainment, fashion, lifestyle human interest stories, etc. —. Web. Running away from the toxicity of the Nigeria challenge caused by the unscrupulous tendencies of a few vested interests will only make the situation worse. Chief Nwosu noted that "To properly position IPAC therefore, as a viable inter-party organization to help in developing an enviable political culture, we have taken the pain to institute large scale changes in the way the body is being run."