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THE CHALLENGES OF CULTURAL AGENCIES AND MASS MEDIA IN PROMOTING THE TRANSFORMATION AGENDA IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to x-ray the challenges of the cultural agencies and the mass media in promoting the implementation of the Transformation Agenda of the Jonathan Administration, as well as mapping out effective strategies for improved performance of the media in the transformation process. Secondary data, generated through documentary evidence, were used for the analysis, while the Systems theory, as enunciates by David Easton, was adopted as a theoretical framework. It was discovered that the media and cultural agencies would play active role in the information dissemination process of the agenda through editorials, news and features stories, special projects, documentaries, special and sponsored programmes, drama and video shows among others. However, the role of the media and cultural agencies are hampered by economic woes, lack of basic infrastructural facilities, high tariffs on media materials and equipment, existence of some obnoxious media laws, editorial interference, limited and poor education of some media men, high rate of westernization, insecurity and ethnocentrism, among others. It is recommended that improved welfare package and insurance scheme, removal of tariffs on media equipment improved media participation in the propagation of the transformation agenda.

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Keywords: Information, Dissemination, Strategies, Performance, Development and Transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Transformation Agenda is a blueprint or a general framework of the Jonathan Administration to achieve a balanced growth and holistic national development of Nigeria. The Agenda, floated few months after the inauguration of the Jonathan Administration on May 29, 2011 was based on the Vision:2020, which itself was a derivative of the Millennium Development

Goals, MDGs, was aimed at giving priority attention to all agreed policies, programmes and projects of the government in the next four years, 2011 through 2015.

Worried that the efforts of the successive [past] regimes of Nigeria were characterized by lack of continuity, consistency and commitments [3Cs] to policies, programmes and projects, the Jonathan administration enunciated a roadmap for immediate transformation of the country. Trade, tourism and entertainment were among the critical drivers of this transformation agenda, as they bother on our value orientation, belief system, religion, dressing code, consumption pattern, attitude to work, and the gamut of arts and culture that must be fine tuned, altered or even changed for full implementation and success of the Transformation Agenda. Commenting on this pet policy of the Jonathan administration, former military president, General Ibrahim Babangida advised that the transformation agenda must widen the scope and capacity of the present administration to generate wealth and providing incentives to foreign and local investments (Onwuemenyi, 2011) On the implications of the Transformation Agenda, Babangida notes that a paradigm shift in Nigeria, as envisaged by the new policy direction of the government, obviously requires a change in beliefs, values and references, something of a fundamental alteration of attitudes by the citizenry through the instrumentality of education and attitudinal orientation (Onwuemenyi, 2011).

Similarly, Michael (2011) observes that the national economic transformation will be achieved with steady growth and development when the people of Nigeria have good orientation and understand the political economy in which they operate, and increase their capacity in dealing with physical environment as a sovereign nation. He argues that the process of economic transformation requires a new and different approach to policy making and implementation.

Differing from the above views, Uwagboe (2011) is pessimistic about the success of the Transformation Agenda because of the current insecurity, religious and sectarian violence, terrorism and bomb blasts and the apparent helpless situation of the security agencies over the menace. 'Given the prevailing circumstances in the country- fear, uncertainty, insecurity of life and property etc arising from these aforementioned issues, particularly the Boko-haram- I wonder how the transformation would happen,' he argues.

Since the achievement of the transformation agenda depends essentially on the government's ability to integrate and coordinate policy making and implementation across the public sector, as well as the social, economic and environmental policy portfolios, all the relevant public and private institutions should be actively involved in the mobilization, public education and orientation.

The media, therefore, have an uphill task of mobilizing the ethnic and religious conscious Nigerians for successful implementation of the transformation agenda. Akinfele (1995) has observed that the mass media are effective tools for creating linkages between the society and the type of socio-political ideology- whether democracy, autocracy or militocracy. The National Institute for Cultural Orientation, NICO, National Council for Arts and Culture, NCAC, National Gallery of Art, National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism, NIHOTOUR, and Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, NTDC, among other similar institutions or parastatals under the Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, have enormous responsibilities to contain the above challenges. For instance NICO has the primary responsibility of harnessing the cultural resources to meet the challenges of social integration, peace, unity and national development, as @ 2014 AESS Publications. All Rights Reserved.

well as serve as a vital force for promoting Nigeria's cultural diplomacy and energizing the various cultural establishments in the new direction advocated by Nigeria Cultural Policy and the World Decade for Cultural Development [1988-1997] declared by the United Nations (National Institute for Cultural Orientation, 2013). This raises some fundamental questions on the exact role of the mass media in the mobilization process of the citizens towards successful implementation of the transformation agenda despite the environmental challenges. How can the mass media facilitate the efforts of the cultural agencies in transformation process? What strategies are they likely to adopt in order to contain the wave of westernization, religious, ethnic and political violence now rampaging the country? Answers to the above issues are the foci of this paper.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory provides a frame for the analysis, interpretation and prediction of the research findings. Ordinarily, the Agenda setting theory would have been quite relevant as a framework for the analysis of this topic. However, because the transformation agenda involves both the government and major sub-systems in the polity, the Systems theory as propounds by David Easton, has been adopted because of its holistic disposition. The critical element to systems theory is that every system performs the input-output functions. The input consists of demand and support that are made on the system, while the output comprises policies, programmes and projects that government churned out into the society. The demands come in form of requests, appeals, protests, criticisms, among others, that are made on the system by the people through several institutions, structures and channels that support or facilitate them. These are processed through the bureaucratic processing unit, which converts and releases them as outputs into the society as policies, programmes and projects. The acceptance, rejection, reactions and feelings of the people over such policies, programmes and projects come back into the system as feedback (Nwekeaku, 2011). Whenever there is a system overload and the system can no longer perform its input-output functions, the system breaks down as the authoritative allocation of values cannot be made any more. Lawlessness, crises, unrest, insecurity, among others, become the order of the day, as the policies, programmes and projects of the government may no longer be successfully implemented. Every system comprises many sub-systems, which though seemingly different and divergent, still strive for harmony for collective performance of its [system] input-output functions. If any subsystem is malfunctioned or dysfunctional, it affects the entire system. This presupposes that every subsystem is very vital for the survival and efficiency of the system.

3. THE TRANSFORMATION AGENDA [2011-2015]

The concept, transformation, has been defined as an act or process of transforming or being transformed (Meriam-Webster, 2012) Similarly, the Wiktionary (2011) sees it as 1] the act of transforming or the state of being transformed, and 2] a marked change in appearance or character, especially one for the better.

In molecular biology, transformation is a genetic alteration of a cell resulting from the direct uptake, incorporation and expression of exogenous genetic material (Wikipedia, 2012).

Transformation, generally, has to do with a complete alteration or change of a phenomenon from one state to a new form, which differs fundamentally from its original state.

Professed to make a difference from his preceding successive regimes, The Jonathan administration rolled out an administrative framework called Transformation Agenda, which was based on the Vision 2020, and in tandem with the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, MDGs, target. The agenda, according to the blueprint, is based on some priority policies and programmes which, if well implemented will transform the country's economy capable of meeting the future needs of the citizenry. The scope of the agenda covers macro -economic direction, governance, sector priority policies, programmes and projects of these thematic areas: real sector ; infrastructure; human capital; enablers [which include private investment, finance mobilization, external economic relations and diplomacy]; and monitoring and evaluation[]

Generally, the agenda is geared towards stimulating productivity of the various sectors and diversifying the economy, enthroning accountability, transparency and democratic governance, boosting employment opportunities for the army of unemployed youths, security of lives and property, providing a stimulating and challenging business environment, and making Nigeria a tourism destination country.

The macro-economic framework of the agenda is summarized thus:

For the period, 2011-2015, a baseline GDP growth rate of 11.7 per cent per annum is assumed in this report. This will translate to real and nominal GDP of about N428.86billion and N73.2trillion, respectively at the end of the programme period. projected GDP growth for This is also in line with NV: 20:2020 targets. The the period will be driven largely by the oil and gas, solid minerals, agriculture, ICT equipment and software, telecommunications, wholesale and retail trade, tourism building and construction sectors. A total and entertainment, manufacturing, and N40.75trillion (Onwuemenyi, 2011). investment size of

Summarizing the implications of the agenda, Nnamani (2011) noted that it required all Nigerians to make fundamental changes in who they are and what they do. Nnamani further advised that the agenda:

And how we do it, but to accomplish this in such substantial way that we individually and collectively, are remade into better versions of ourselves. That we begin to believe, think and act differently in relation to one another and to our nation.

The cultural agencies have herculean tasks to mobilize Nigerians for their support and success of the programme, as the bottom line of its implementation is the attitudinal change of Nigerians. This is where the media come in as they should set the agenda for all Nigerians to start acting the new agenda.

4. THE CULTURAL AGENCIES

Fotopoulus (1999) defines culture as the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour. Fotopoulos likens culture with what he calls dominant social paradigm, which he explains as the system of beliefs, ideas and the corresponding values that are dominant in a particular society at a particular moment of its history.

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In a similar vein Duke (2013) sees culture as a way of life of a given people which includes any piece of a pattern of behaviour, the attitude, norms, values, objects, skills, belief system, and world outlook which human beings learn and adopt as members of a living human group or society. Generally, culture can be seen as the gamut of a people's maze way, which includes value and belief system, religion, language, art, customs and traditions, ethnocentrism and technology that are dear and particular to them and transmitted from one generation to another.

Nigeria is made up of over 250 ethnic groups, each of which has its distinct culture that constantly strives for survival, relevance or even outright domination in the country's multicultural contest. The culture of the major ethnic groups struggle for dominance at the national, geopolitical zone and state levels, while the rest fight back for recognition and relevance in the scheme of things.

The cultural agencies are the institutions whose mandate or official duties include the sustenance, protection and promotion of the country's art and cultural heritage. These cultural agencies include National Institute for Cultural Orientation, NICO, National Council for Arts and Culture, NCAC, National Gallery of Arts, NGA, National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism, NIHOTOUR, and Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, NTDC. Others are Centre for Black and Africans Arts and Civilization, CBAAC, National Commission of Museums and Monuments, National Theatre/National Troupe of Nigeria, among others, including several state councils of Arts and Culture.

These institutions, individually and collectively, are entrusted with the enormous responsibilities of sustaining, packaging, promoting, marketing and protecting Nigeria's cultural heritage for the realization of the objectives of the Transformation Agenda. To realize these objectives, the various cultural agencies have to partner with the media for proper packaging, dissemination, orientation, education, propagation and marketing of the agenda.

NICO has the mandate to train cultural officers, motivators and communicators who would be grounded in Nigerian cultural realities, philosophy and practices that are essential for national integration, peace, unity and development of the multi-ethnic Nigeria (National Institute for Cultural Orientation, 2013). Other agencies have similar mandate, which, collectively are expected to facilitate the implementation of the development agenda.

5. THE MASS MEDIA

The mass media are the instruments of information dissemination in any modern society, as they are central to the input-output functions of any state, whether democratic or authoritarian. Turner (1984) observes that popular culture and the mass media have a symbiotic relationship, as each depends on the other in an intimate relationship.

Lasswell (1968) has noted that man usually looked forward to something to learn and watch over his environment, such as, new opportunities, trade and commerce, conflicts resolution, social changes, scientific discoveries and inventions, among other issues that have public consequences.

The mass media disseminate information on public policies, government development programmes, public laws and decisions, activities, budgets, other revenue and monetary matters, as well as such matters as health, security, social and political issues that bother on nation building. © 2014 AESS Publications. All Rights Reserved.

The media also entertain and educate the public, make surveillance of the society and expose any potential danger to the public, as well as set the agenda on the salient public issues that affect the society (Nwekeaku, 2010).

Section 21 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contain in this chapter, and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people.

Generally, the media have both the legal and social mandate to partner with the cultural agencies for proper orientation, education and mobilization of the citizenry for full implementation of the Transformation agenda of the Jonathan administration

6. THE PARADOXES OF NIGERIAN ENVIRONMENT

Hitherto to the transformation agenda, the Nigerian economy was characterized by heavy reliance on oil, declining gross national product, GNP, regular depreciation of the naira, increasing domestic and foreign debts, under industrial capacity utilization, erratic power supply, inefficient bureaucracy, abandonment of public projects, monumental corruption of public officers and agencies, rising unemployment rate, as well as prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping, civil/industrial unrest, insecurity of lives and property, ethnocentrism, religious and political violence among other social vices. The agenda was packaged to be holistic in order to facilitate the economic, social and political transformation of the country. Though the Marxian concept of the dialectical materialism of the society recognizes the economy as the pivot on which other critical elements or sub-systems revolve, the Jonathan administration resolved to accord priority attention to all segments of the state. The agenda strives to integrate the economic, socio-cultural and political elements into a composite and holistic pattern for national development and transformation. This explains the rationale for the prominence accorded to culture, entertainment and tourism in the agenda as the Federal Government was convinced of their [culture, entertainment and tourism] relevance and critical role in the implementation of economic policies, programmes and projects. Many years of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism have fundamentally altered the Nigerian value orientation, belief system, customs and traditions, including our dressing code, food or feeding culture, music, drama, entertainment, language, religion and substituted them with alien ones that constantly contradict and frustrate our development efforts and programmes, thereby giving rise to worrisome paradoxes that have become terrible features of Nigeria which must be uprooted for successful implementation of the Transformation Agenda. These paradoxes include:

- Producing what we do not consume, but consuming what we do not produce
- Denigration of home- made or local products, and worshipping of foreign and imported goods and services
- Dislike for hard work, but excessive obsession for pleasure and luxury
- Preference for expatriates and foreign companies and total relegation of national professionals and indigenous companies

- Using public positions to loot public treasury, rather than rendering selfless services to the people
- Elevation of corruption to an index of success, and relegation of transparency and accountability to the strata of failure
- Enthronement of mediocrity in public service and educational system in recruitment and promotion of civil servants and admission of students into public universities and other institutions, respectively and relegation of merit and personal competence to the background
- Stealing of public funds meant for national development and stashing them away in foreign and secret personal bank accounts, and refusing to bring home any foreign currency for domestic investment. Foreigners make money in Nigeria and send it home for investment, but our own nationals steal public money and hide it in foreign countries.
- Giving priority to sharing of national revenue generated for us through oil and gas by foreigners and multinationals at the expense of baking or producing more revenue by harnessing other national resources
- Recognition of religion and ethnicity as the most powerful instruments for acquisition of national political powers and public appointments at the expense of personal integrity, merit and service, thereby elevating ethnocentrism over patriotism.

The above paradoxes are the potential cogs in the wheels of transformation agenda which the cultural agencies in partnership with the media must fight against for successful implementation of the programme. Duke (2013) notes that Nigeria is made up of over 250 ethnic groups with distinct traits and culture, and each ethnic group acts as an interest group that aggregates and advances the interests of its members, a tendency that has been greater emphasis under our nascent democracy.

Odugbemi (2013) has set out what could be regarded as the benchmark of transformation agenda when he states that it should ensure optimization of economic growth, develop a knowledge -based economy, enhanced security of lives and property, employment opportunities and reduce youth restiveness, guarantee the rule of law, free and fair elections, multi-party democracy, freedom of expression, justice for all, and other principles of democracy.

The big question now is: what role should the media play to facilitate the cultural agencies efforts for successful implementation of government policies, programmes and projects?

7. ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The role of the media will be summarized thus:

7.1. Information Dissemination

The media should disseminate information on the transformation agenda to Nigerian citizens through news stories, features stories, news commentaries/analysis, among others. Communication media serve to transmit information and symbolic content to individuals whose manners remain fundamentally unchanged (Sociology, 2012). Education and enlightenment- The media should educate the people on all government policies, programmes and projects of the transformation © 2014 AESS Publications. All Rights Reserved.

agenda. Many Nigerians, including some public officers do not really understand what the transformation agenda entails. Sewant (2000) captures this role of the media when he notes thus:

... None of the functions which the citizens have to perform in democracy can be performed by them in the absence of full and truthful information. Who can furnish information to the people at large, constantly and regularly, except the mass communication like the media?...Media, whether print or electronic are the only institution which can keep people, as well as those in authority informed on all matters and at all times of the day.

7.2. Interpretation and Analysis

The media should analyze and interpret government policies, programmes and projects, as well as let both the government and the citizens know their implications and consequences when implemented.

7.3. Watch Dog and Surveillance

The media should be the watchdog of government by monitoring the activities of public officers and exposing the ills of the government and the society. UNESCO (2007) observes that:

The media can fulfill a watchdog role by reporting on the activities of governments, civil society and the private sector. A plurality of media outlets is the key for this to occur because of the breadth of material to report on and to ensure that different opinions will be heard. The media enable the citizens to be informed and participate in their society, which generates real empowerment.

7.4. Entertainment

The media entertain the public through music, dance, drama, film, among others, thus reducing tension and the tendency to run hypertension and eventual stroke among the populace. Government policies, programmes and projects could be disseminated through the instrumentality of the mediabacked entertainment industry.

7.5. Sustainability and Continuity of Culture

The media help to sustain and perpetuate the culture of a people through a variety of channels. Corporate media are used primarily to represent and reproduce dominant ideologies (Wikipedia, 2013)

7.6. Advertising and Public Relations

Government policies, programmes and projects could communicate or disseminated to the public through advertising and public relations. Wikipedia (2013) note that media culture, with its declinations of advertising and public relations, is often considered as a system centered on the manipulation of the mass of society.

8. MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMATION AGENDA

The cultural agencies and the media can adopt a number of strategies to disseminate and market the policies, programmes and projects of the Transformation agenda. These strategies may include:

- News stories- The media can generate news stories on the transformation agenda through organized press conference[s], press briefings, interviews and monitoring visits, workshops, conferences, among others.
- News commentaries and analysis- media men can always interpret and analyze the agenda activities and educate the public on their likely consequences. The media, through news commentaries and analysis can offer alternative options for any policy or action of government.
- Features stories- Features stories offer journalists the opportunity to package, garnish and deliver stories in a soft and comprehensible pattern or state to the society.
- Editorials-Editorial is a powerful instrument to x-ray important public policies, programmes and projects. It offers a media organization the opportunity to give a comprehensive analysis of any public matter, bringing out clearly its possible implications.
- Special projects- The media can do special and commissioned reports on various sections [programmes, projects and activities] of the transformation agenda.
- Special programmes- Special media programmes, such as, who wants to be a millionaire? kakaki of AIT, omenani Igbo, among others, could be used to disseminate some aspects of the agenda to the public.
- Documentary- This offers the media a great opportunity to do a comprehensive package of a programme, project and activity integrating the past, present and future of that phenomenon into a complete hole.
- Drama-Special media drama, such as, the masquerade, the Fuji house of commotion, the super story, papa Ajaccio, among others, could be created and regularly aired through several media outlets.
- Multi-media-Special and deliberate multi-media programmes should be designed and adopted to interpret, analyze, disseminate and educate the public on the activities of the agenda.

9. MEDIA CONSTRAINTS ON TRANSFORMATION AGENDA

The media are likely to encounter some problems that may limit their active participation in the transformation agenda. These problems include:

Editorial interference- Media owners, especially government and politicians do interfere on the editorial content for selfish interests, thereby limiting or even preventing them from objective, fearless and independent editorial.

- Mass poverty, hunger, unemployment, inflation, naira depreciation, among other economic woes, have restricted media information to few privileged members of the society who could afford the prohibit costs of media information today.
- Lack of basic infrastructural facilities, such as, electricity, good asset roads, have restricted media information to state capitals and few urban centers, when over 70 per cent of the population live in the rural areas.
- Economic reforms, such as, commercialization, privatization, liberalization and monetization have reduced the editorial content and other media information to the purchasing power of the news sources, who are now compelled to pay or perish. Payment for news items compromises the editorial quality and content of the media.
- Lack of relevant education and adequate training limit the ability of media men to understand, analyze, interpret and disseminate technical and specialized materials to the public.
- Intimidation and harassment of media men with security agencies by public officers tend to discourage some media men from performing their duties. Many agents of Nigeria's press have been imprisoned, exiled, tortured, or murdered by agents of government (Wikipedia, 2009)
- Existence of some obnoxious and punitive laws tends to limit media information gathering, processing and dissemination in the country. Such laws include:
- ✓ Protection of Public Officers Against Accusation
- ✓ Seditious Publication Act[1958 Criminal Code, 1963 Penal Code Laws of Northern Nigeria]
- ✓ Obscene Publication Act of 1961, and
- ✓ Newspaper [Amendment] Act of 1964, among others.

10. THE WAY FORWARD

The media will partner more actively with the cultural agencies in propagating the Transformation Agenda if the following measures are adopted:

- Provision of electricity, good road network and other infrastructural facilities for easy access of media information in the rural areas.
- Establishment and promotion of community radios, televisions and newspapers in the rural areas for easier dissemination of agenda information in the rural communities.
- Institution of insurance scheme and enhanced welfare package for media men in the country for a sense of security, fearless and contentment among journalists as they discharge their duties. The quest for 'brown envelop' has done great damage to news gathering, processing and dissemination in Nigeria.
- Removal of tariffs on media materials and equipment will lower the cost of news gathering, processing and dissemination of the agenda policies, programmes and projects.
- Full application of the Freedom of Information Act by media men will facilitate information gathering and dissemination in the country.

- Regular workshops, seminars, conferences and other short term professional trainings will improve the knowledge and skills of media men on transformation agenda matters.
- Restructuring of the economy for equitable distribution of resources in the country, so that more people can afford the cost of media information.
- Cultural re-armament aimed at containing the increasing wave of westernization, and subsequent promotion of indigenous dressing code, music, food, dancing, languages and the gamut of the cultural lives of Nigerians.
- High patronage of made in Nigeria products, such as, fabrics, food stuff, shoes, among others, by both government and private organizations and individuals.

11. CONCLUSION

The Transformation Agenda of the Jonathan administration is a bold blueprint designed to prioritize and integrate the economic, socio-cultural and political policies, programmes and projects into a complete hole for national development and transformation of the country. It is designed to alter completely our value orientation, attitude to work economic, social and political relations and enthrone democracy, rule of the law, efficiency, accountability and transparency in governance.

The cultural agencies have the mandate to promote and protect the agenda to the citizens. These responsibilities will be better discharged in partnership with the media. All sections or sub-systems of Nigeria should be recognized and integrated into the scheme, as every part and sector of the country will be mobilized.

However, the input-output functions of the system may be hampered despite the partnership of the cultural agencies and the media except some economic, legal, administrative, political and cultural constraints are addressed. Provision of basic social amenities in the rural areas, economic restructuring and equitable distribution of resources, full application of the Freedom of Information Act, regular training and retraining of the media men, enhanced welfare package and insurance scheme, among other measures will motivate the media men to participate actively in the Transformation Agenda.

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