ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Using Broadcast Media for Political Reorientation among Students in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State: A Study of Students of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Port Harcourt

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Abstract

In Rivers State, like in Nigeria, politics has been a do or die affair which often is characterized by ballot boxes snatching, thuggery, killings, fighting, and printing of fake ballot papers and result sheets. Most of these anomalies are perpetrated by youths who are often engaged from tertiary institutions. The actions of these youths have caused lots of setbacks in the political landscape as no good story is told about Nigerian political development. This paper therefore seeks to ascertain the roles broadcast communication can play in the political education of students, the measures to employ by the broadcast outfits to enhance participation of students in politics, and if the broadcast media role is affecting students' political interest and participation. To achieve this, the survey research design was adopted and with the aid of a well-structured questionnaire data was gathered for the study. The results showed among other things that the broadcast media plays a great role in politically educating students helping to broaden their scope of knowledge on political issues. The study concludes that the media's role of mobilization must be seen as inevitable and imperative. It thus recommends that to enable the media to properly educate the students on political issues, the media should create more platforms for students to actively participate in their political programmes.

Keywords: Broadcast, Communication, Education, Political Reorientation, Students

Introduction

Background of Study

Political development has affinity with democracy. It is the successful transition of one government to another indicating that there is a movement. In Nigeria, as in Africa, there have been ups and downs in political development. However, in Nigeria for many years spanning up to 15years now, democracy, which is the hallmark of political advancement, has remained with many actions and inactions. This points to the fact that politics and political growth in Nigeria and Africa is not only emerging but evolving.

The evolution of trends in politics and political environment has not gone unnoticed as the media have been awash with a myriad of communication about political development. No wonder, Blumler and Gurevitch (2005, p.110) establish that media have been associated with dissemination and proliferation of the means of communication, thereby putting the media at a vintage position of assuming the position of an age of communication abundance.

Communication abundance as canvassed by the duo of Blumler and Gurevitch (2005) means that the imperativeness of media in showcasing activities of the political sector is unavoidable and germane. Wilson (2005) agrees that:

> There is clearly now strong needs for a re-orientation of current strategies, an approach which will, in real terms, reduce assault on the sensibilities of the majority of the Nigeria media audience. Communicating with the masses would take into account the audience broad areas of need based on participatory philosophy (p.7).

Political programmes such as *INEC Half Hour, People, Politics and Power,* and *Democracy Today* on AIT; *Politics Today* on Channels Television and *View Point* on Rhythm 97.3fm have undoubtedly

enhanced political participation, owing to the fact that the citizenry have been made aware of the evidence of the political landscape in Nigeria. With this participation arising from media explosion of political activities, the landscape is preoccupied with diverse opinions, attitude and the like.

With the 2019 political experience characterized by lots of accusations, counter-accusations, grouping and re-groupings, defections and zoning of groups; the media should wake up to their challenge. In fact, due to the disturbing trends of political misdemeanor among politicians as they pursue their ambitions which are characterized by strife, deaths, attacks for relevance; it is incumbent on the media with their constitutional responsibilities to rise up to the challenge of changing the unpalatable structure in the polity. Thus, to redress this, the media have an essential role of informing, educating and enlightening the society towards embracing the right democratic culture to empower the citizenry with the requisite knowledge to fit into the political system, especially to show interest and, secondly, to play by the rules and, above all, use it to better the lots of the citizenry.

In view of the foregoing, until the media do the needful, the citizens would be starved of knowledge, thereby impeding political education and development in Nigeria. It is in view of this that Blumler and Gurevitch (2005) posit that 'when politicians campaign for support, when the media cover their campaigns, and when voters respond to them, all tend to revert to the more "official" sense of what politics and citizenship are about, a core set of top-of-the agenda choices and issues for determination through established political institutions' (p. 113)

The foregoing presupposes that the media role in this regard is unparalleled. Similarly, Umechukwu (2004) maintains that "what we know of our society depends on how things are represented to us and knowledge in turn informs what we do and what politics we are prepared to accept" (p.8).Umechukwu (p.8) goes ahead to establish that for the citizens to participate in political activities, the people would need to be mobilized and gingered for the achievement of national or societal aims or goals. Osinuga and Ogbonna (2008) support the indispensability of educational mobilization when they stated:"one of the widely acknowledged functions of communication is that the mass media (press) have the potential of diffusing information fast and wide; and, it is in this sense that they are indispensable in mass education programme" (p. 559).

To achieve this, the media practitioners and stakeholders should initiate and lunch vigorous campaigns to re-orientate the political population to lunch them into embracing the norms associated with the political culture, especially playing according to the rule of the game.

It is, therefore, the main thrust of this study to establish the imperatives of the media in educating the citizens on political participation and growth in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Since the return to democracy in Nigeria, in 1999, the landscape has been characterized by pressures. One remarkable pressure is that of flawed elections without remarkable remedies. It is for this reason that Thompson (2008, p.236) expresses inter-alia:"more than 140 multi-party elections were held in the last decade of the twentieth century... some of the elections were flawed."The flaw is occasioned by the struggle for supremacy that has led the political landscape to be likened to a dungeon. A good example of politics being a dungeon is evident in Rivers State where muscles are flexed and energies wantonly dissipated by politicians, evident from what happened in 2019. The media space was littered with a litany of Political programmes such as *Bulls Eye* on Cool 95.5 fm; the *Parliament, Senate, You and your Rep* on NTA, *Focus Nigeria* on AIT, etc. which were used during this period of imbroglio in the polity of Rivers State on hourly basis. Thus, a fresher to the business of politics in Nigeria and especially in Rivers State would imagine that politics is all about

quarrels, abuses, accusations, counter accusations, struggles, arms racketeering, brutality - oblivious of the fact that politics, the world over, is designed for the practitioners to display and share intelligence, discipline and sincerity to enhance development of the citizenry at local, state and federal levels.

Therefore, to put politics in the proper perspective, the media must, as a matter of priority assume the exalted position of ombudsman to inform, enlighten, and educate the populace on the course to charta road map aimed at realizing political principles as it is practised the world over. Instructively, the media have the duties of redressing the political anomalies in Nigeria through education, mobilization, campaign, and enlightenment. To do this, the media must step up their vigorous campaigns to draw or create a road map for political growth, sustainable development, and meaningfulness of the practice to all and sundry.

The crux of this study is therefore to highlight the imperativeness of media contents in the political education of youths and to restore the true essence of politics through media campaign, education, and enlightenment.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the imperativeness of broadcast communication to enhancing political education in students.

However, the specific objectives of the study are:

1. To ascertain the roles broadcast communication can play in the political education of students.
2. To identify the measures to be employed by the broadcast outfits to enhance participation of students in politics.
3. To determine if the broadcast media role is affecting students' political interest and participation.

Research Questions

1. What are the roles broadcast communication play in the political education of students?
2. What are the measures to be employed by broadcast outfits to promote political education among students?
3. How are students' political interest and participation affected by broadcast communication?

Delimitation of the Study

This study is carried out within the scope of political participation among youths through broadcast communication and education. The study concerns itself with the study of tertiary institutions, with particular emphasis on students of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Port Harcourt.

Literature Review

Political education or call it mobilization for enhanced and improved participation is what is required to orientate the populace on the right attitude to involve in political activities. The earlier the orientation, mobilization, and education start, the better, because the more a people are informed the more they will be involved. Through political programmes such as Lagos Television's *Political Trail*, Africa Independent Television's *Kakaaki* and *Democracy Today,* Channels Television's *Sunrise*, Rhythm 93.7 fm *Viewpoint*, Cool 95.9fm *Bulls Eyes,* broadcast communication in no small measure has a great deal of influence in the orientation and reorientation of the populace in several spheres of life.

Oji (2007, p.491) in a study on the influence of broadcast radio in influencing peace and education found out that radio programmes can positively influence the course of peace and education, which translates to development in the Niger Delta. In this study, it was revealed that peace broadcast appears to be of such pioneering effort in deploying communication to address the Niger Delta crisis and the people's goals must, therefore, be complemented by a genuine effort to develop the zone. To this end, the study revealed that 12.3% of the opinion leaders believed the programmes are favourable to the course of peace in the Niger Delta.

The result of the Oji's (2007) study implies that broadcast communication have a high propensity to success in bringing people to knowledge, thereby changing their mindset to think aright.

Political and democratic advancements enhance development. When the activities and stages in political spheres are followed tenaciously and played by the rule, then development is sure to happen. For it to happen, a sure way of advancing its success is the employment of the right communication. Instructively and expediently, therefore, the broadcast communication is a veritable tool for actualizing the prominent goal of using broadcast communication for development. Gundu (2003) carried out a survey research on, "Gender consideration in radio option for development support communication".Part of the outcome of this research finding indicated that radio (broadcast) is undoubtedly a veritable option for development support communication. To further consolidate this study, Gundu (2003) recommended inter alia that government, to achieve adequate report, should be involved in the enlightenment to ensure rapid reach to the populace who needs this education more. Instructively, the youths, who form the major chunk of the productive population, are actually attached to their broadcast sets, especially the radio. Therefore, using the radio for communication will capture the right population, which will be like train-the-trainer programme, thereby reaching more groups.

The imperatives of media in influencing the citizens as well as reorientation can never be over emphasized. A paper titled "The mass media and citizens' orientations towards democracy; The Experience of Six Third-Wave Democracy in Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and Latin America" sought to ascertain among other things whether the media contribute to the emergence of a political culture that is supportive for the consolidation of new democracies that have emerged at various stages of the third wave democratization. In the findings, the study revealed that exposure to newspapers of higher quality as well as to private televisions news goes along with more positive stances towards political parties in Greece.

Therefore, the broadcast communication from various findings is germane in the education, orientation and mobilization of the mass audience in the population and the productive class in the political spheres of life, with the chunk of the population as youths. Whatever the youth garner from the communication from the media education is sure to be translated to education for all, as they have the potentialities of reaching their peer groups, and going far into the society and helping political, development and communication groups in Nigeria and the rest of the world.

Kogah, (2006) sums up this crucial effect of the media when he restates that "in performing all these information-related functions, the broadcast media raise issues and create awareness... the information function appears to be the most important function of the mass media" (pp.77-78). Every day of our lives, we are witnesses to the incredible power of the mass media to provide all sorts of information. The broadcast media function is all embracing and indispensable for the meaningful existence of members of the society (Okunna, 1999, p.108). This is a pointer to the indispensability of the media in educating the population regarding political interest and participation.

Theoretical Framework

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda setting as a term was popularized by McCombs and Shaw 1972 in their research into 1968 election in America. In the findings, they discovered that the frequency of covering an event received from the media have the tendency to affect people's perception of the case in perspective as imperative, no matter what is being said about the event in question. To this end, the duo of McCombs and Shaw were of the contention that the members of the public (audience) will not only learn from the imperativeness attached to a topic but will also learn from the emphasis the media attaches on it. It

presupposes that the reports are given prominence and only what is deemed expedient gets to the public's knowledge. No wonder, Omego and Ochonogor (2012) posit that in the agenda setting theory, "the media determine the issues and their importance to the public. Media scholars believe that by giving a particular topic a prominent treatment in the agenda over a period of time, the mass media would have succeeded in making the audience believe that the issue is indeed important" (p.32). Thus, to make a matter or discourse an everyday issue, the media must importantly give a grave attention to the matter,

The Agenda Setting Theory is crucial and appropriate for this study because the study is on political education via communication in broadcasting; thus, if the media give prominence to political education, it will be popularized thereby lending more attention to political discourse. This makes the matter important and of public knowledge, leading to more awareness and knowledge of the popularized phenomenon. The ultimate result will be more political participation, which is the crux of this study.

Methodology

Research Design

The survey method was used for this study. In the survey, the study used the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. Ohaja (2003, p.89) notes that the questionnaire is used for the educated class of respondents. Thus, the instrument is suitable due to the fact that students are the focus of this study.

Population of the Study

The students of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic form the population of this study. According to the records unit of the institution, the total number of its students for the 2016/2017 academic session is put at 11,150. This serves as the population of this study.

Sample Size/Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study is determined using the Australian calculator; thus, the sample size for this study is 314, http://www.nss.gov.au/nss/home. nsf/pages/Sample+size+calculator, 2018). This sample size was drawn from the entire population using the simple random sampling technique.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Description of the Sample

The researcher distributed 314 copies of the questionnaire but only 298 were validly filled and returned. This showed there was a 95% retrieval of the questionnaire from the respondents. Hence, the data analyzed in this paper was based on the 298 questionnaires retrieved.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section deals with the presentation of the data collected for this study. It is presented in tables and analyzed using frequency and percentages accompanied with brief explanation of the data in the table.

Research Question One: ***What are the roles broadcast communications can play in educating students politically?***

Table 1: Roles broadcast communication plays in educating students politically.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
They help me take informed political decisions.	80	27
They increase my interest in politics.	65	22
They persuade me to vote during elections.	60	20
They broaden my scope of knowledge on political issues.	93	31
Total	298	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

From table 1 above, 80 respondents representing (27%) said broadcast programmes on politics help them take informed political decisions, 65

respondents representing (22%) said they increase their interest in politics, 60 respondents representing (20%) said they persuade them to vote during elections, while 93 respondents representing (31%) said they broaden their scope of knowledge on political issues. This is an indication that for most of the respondents broadcast communication programmes on politics help to broaden their scope of knowledge on political issues.

Research Question Two: ***What are the measures broadcast media can employ to promote political education among students?***

Table 2: Efforts broadcast outfits make to promote political education among students

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Invite students as guests speakers during political programmes	122	41
Make provision for students to call-in to political programmes.	86	29
Create more social media visibility for political programmes.	90	30
Total	298	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

From table 2 above, 122 respondents representing (41%) said broadcast outfits should invite students as guest speakers during political programmes, 86 respondents representing (29%) said they should make provision for students to call-in to political programmes, while 90 respondents representing (30%) said they should create more social media visibility for political programmes, This is an indication that for most of the respondents broadcast outfits should invite students as guests in political programmes as a measure to promote political education among students.

Research Question Three: ***Whether students are affected by the political roles of broadcast communications?***

Table 3: Effects of broadcast communication programmes on political participation of students

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	216	72
No	82	28
Total	298	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

From table 3 above, 216 respondents representing (72%) said that broadcast communication programmes on politics have an effect on them, while 82 respondents representing (28%) said broadcast communication programmes on politics have no effect on them. This shows that broadcast communication programmes on politics have effect on the respondents.

Table 4: Extent of effects of broadcast communication political programmes on students

Response	Frequency	Percentage
To a great extent	44	15
To a moderate extent	131	44
To a low extent	123	41
Total	298	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 4 asked respondents the extent to which communication programmes on politics has effect on them. 44 of them representing (15%) said it affects them to a great extent, 131 representing (44%) said to a moderate extent, while 123 representing (41) said it has no effect on them. This shows that communication programmes on politics have a moderate effect on the respondents.

Discussion of Findings

The study established that students get political information from the media and it found out that among other roles the broadcast media play in politically educating students is that it helps

broaden their scope of knowledge on political issues. This finding is line with the statement of Kogah, (2006, pp.77-78), who opined that "in performing all these information-related functions, the broadcast media raise issues and create awareness… the information function appears to be the most important function of the mass media." In addition, to ascertain the measures broadcast outfits can employ in order to promote political education among students, the study discovered that students should be invited as guests in political programmes on the broadcast media, as this no doubt will help increase their knowledge politically. Finally, in answer to research question three the study revealed that broadcast communication programmes on political issues have an effect on students and according to a majority of the respondents, the programmes have a moderate effect on them. Many of them after listening to the political education programmes from the broadcast media indicated an improvement in their political knowledge and the urge to actively participate in political activities.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The study concludes that the media's role of mobilization must be seen as inevitable. It is the mobilization role of the populace that will bring them in-tune with the political happenings and by implication reorienting them to the tenets of politics and participation in same. To enable the media to properly educate the students on political issues, the following recommendations are hereby made:

The media should create more platforms for students to actively participate in their political programmes.

- In addition, the code of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should be reviewed and updated. Its code should not just outline media ownership, sanctions or information flow; it should add sections that advocate socio-political education and social mobilization.

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