

Chapter 25

Radio Programmes for Youth Empowerment and National Development

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ABSTRACT

Radio as a mass medium remains the most accessible, affordable, and flexible medium of mass communication in developing countries. Radio can persuade and effectively influence large audiences, thereby contributing substantially to nation building. Over the years, radio programmes have largely focused on entertainment, religious, and political matters. There is also a paucity of programmes on youth empowerment and national development. This chapter examined the availability of youth programmes on radio through assessment of selected programme formats to ascertain the shortfalls (if any) of these programmes in mobilising youths for youth empowerment and national development. The study has as its theoretical springboard development media theory and agenda setting theory. The chapter adopted survey method to assess programme formats of radio stations in Abeokuta, Ogun State and discovered the inadequacy of programmes on youth empowerment. It recommended strategies on how to improve and use the media for youth empowerment and national development.

INTRODUCTION

The media industry has experienced a continuous technological advancement in the 20th and 21st centuries, radio as a mass medium remains the most accessible, affordable and flexible medium of mass communication in developing countries. Radio can persuade and effectively influence large audience, thereby contributing substantially to the building of a national consensus. It is an effective tool for youth mobilization and behavioural change within a society.

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Radio is now everywhere and has recently passed its 100th anniversary in providing information (Weisenhorn, Meyer, McGoff, & Rooney, 2021). It is accessible to the taxi driver in Lagos, the itinerant fisherman in waterside and the roving nomad behind his cattle; it can be made to cater to the needs of specialised, small targeted audience of artisans, fishermen, farmers, the rural poor, the urban destitute, the elderly, lactating mothers, children and youths especially (Soola, 2003; Ojebode, 2003). It remains the cheapest to buy and these days phones have inbuilt radio in them, everyone within a community can afford one. Its cost-effective characteristic makes it more accessible and an effective tool for community mobilization. Historically, it is used for information dissemination in rural communities (Weisenhorn *et al.*, 2021).

Radio's usefulness to bring the desired changes and development to communities depends largely on the type of programme packaged. Most radio programmes however are not designed to bridge the knowledge gap between the elite and masses, thereby relegating the role of the media to inform, educate and enlighten the masses.

Furthermore, radio programmes have largely focused on entertainment, religious and political matters, there is also paucity of programmes on youth empowerment and national development. This chapter examined the availability of youth programmes on radio through assessment of radio programmes to ascertain the shortfalls of programmes in addressing (idle) youths within a society to become self-reliant for youth empowerment and national development.

RADIO IN NIGERIA

Radio in Nigeria has come a long way and gone through a lot of changes, in trying to keep pace with the intricacies of an ever-changing society. The actual beginning of broadcasting in Nigeria was in 1932, when as part of an experiment by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Lagos was chosen, as one of the centres around the world, to receive and retransmit British empire service signals from Daventry, England. Then the Lagos station began to experiment with rediffusion service, under the supervision of engineers and technicians at the Posts and Telegraphs Department, who were also mandated to design a system for distributing the signals, to major population centres across the country. This relay system of the BBC, was replicated in mainly English-speaking countries across the globe and succeeded in taking BBC news and programmes to many parts of the world (Onabajo, 2000).

Although at inception, BBC programmes dominated the Nigerian airwaves, efforts were also made to produce programmes that the local population could relate to. These were programmes and news in three main Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba), as well as dialects. However, the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) which started in 1952 became the target of criticism, based on the dominance of BBC programs in its broadcast, and for what critics described as lacking the Nigerian orientation.

In May 1960, a radio station known as Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS), according to Chief Awolowo, the then Premier of the Western Region, was to serve as teachers, entertainers and stimuli to all and to transform Nigeria into a modern and prosperous nation. The East and North soon copied the initiative of the West, with the establishment of the Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Service and the Broadcasting Company of Northern Nigeria in 1960 and 1962 respectively.

The Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON) started in 1973 as a child of necessity. It was then aimed at bringing together the radio and television stations in the country, to pool resources for effective coverage of national and international events.

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