

CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: THE THEATRE AND MEDIA PARADIGM

Nelson Torti Obasi
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

The bane of most political leaders in the developing nations including Nigeria is lack of political will to render good governance to the people. Instead, most of them have been pre-occupied with corruption, propaganda, tribalism, favouritism, marginalisation, lopsided appointments and recruitments to public offices, and embezzlement among others. It is against this background that the study seeks to x-ray these maladies and recommends that Theatre and the media as two inseparable, indispensable and critical concepts in communicating socio-economic, socio-political, socio-cultural, and even socio-religious issues in the contemporary society will act as catalysts to stem the tide. The fusion of the duo will propel and engineer the arduous tasks of mirroring, reviewing, analysing, reconstructing the political, economic, social, intellectual, emotional, instinctive, traditional, and moral values in the society. The reason being that, they possess both communicative and didactic qualities that influence people's consciousness and attitudes. Like sociology, theatre and the media are social phenomena that deal with the social problems in the society as well as offering solutions to them. This demonstrates that theatre and the media are agents of social change and watch dogs against human vices and immorality. They are, indeed, media for behavioural change in the society. It is, therefore, against the backdrop of their transformational and behavioural attributes that this study seeks to investigate. The study also revealed that lack of good governance had unequivocally led to injustices, abuse of human rights, widening of the gulf between the leaders and the led, rich and the poor, the metropolises and the peripherals as well as inducing the much taunted hate speeches that is daring the Nigerian nation at present.

Introduction

According to a popular axiom “the only thing that is constant is change.” However, change can be subjective depending on which side one looks at it. There could be positive and negative changes. While all changes and individuals are unique, decades of research, according to Wikipedia, shows

that there are actions we can take to influence people in their individual transitions (1). Change management provides a structural approach for supporting the individuals in an organisation to move from their current states to their own future states.

To be specific, change management is the discipline that guides how to prepare, equip and support individuals to successfully adopt change in order to drive organisational success and outcomes (Wikipedia: A Free Dictionary 2016). Three levels of change management have been adduced by scholars which include: Individual change management, Organisational/Initiative change management, and Enterprise change management capability. Individual change management deals with the understanding of how people experience change and what they need to change successfully. Organisational/Initiative change management provides people with the steps and actions to take at the project level to support the hundreds or thousands of individuals who are impacted by a project. While Enterprise management capability is an organisational core competency that provides competitive differentiation and the ability to effectively adapt to the ever-changing world. For the purpose of the study, the Individual Change Management has been adopted because of its direct relevance in bringing good governance that brings positive effects to the society. Any change management that is retrogressive rather than progressive is an aberration and is unacceptable.

Prior to and after the long fought independence in Nigeria, the theatre and other media of communication has been at the fore-front of fighting for and ensuring change management for the good of the people. The nationalists in particular and other writers in general during these trial periods of colonialism used all the apparatuses of the media to fight colonialism and imperialism headlong in order to free the Nigerian society from the shackles of colonialism and bring freedom – change management. Even after independence through successive military and civilian regimes up to date, the media has not relented in maintaining such vantage position by propelling and ensuring positive change in the administration of the country; a course of action that will bring political utilitarianism.

Successive governments since independence have promised one change or the other but to no avail. They have always adduced one reason or the other for taking over power from their predecessor such as injustice, corruption, financial impropriety, embezzlement, high-handedness, nepotism, ethnicity, mal-administration, among others. These notwithstanding, the accusers have always become the accused as each successive government has not only repeated the same acts but had tripled them. And for the sake of

personal agenda of these administrations to occupy the office at all cost and by all means, the promised change has never been felt by the masses. Even the present APC government's much taunted campaign slogan "Change" is yet to be fulfilled after almost two years in office. What we receive instead is one denial or the other of what has been promised as well as shifting every action or inaction to the past administration instead of tackling the social, economic, and political problems of the moment. Every well-meaning Nigerians, especially those out of government will testify to the fact that, virtually everything in the country have been "buhari-d" or changed beyond any mathematical equation in the name of change. From the foreign exchange rate, pump price of fuel, transportation, consumer/capital goods to other services have all gone beyond the affordability of ordinary Nigerians today. Under this milieu, the salaried citizens are the worst hit while businesses are having a field day as they sell at any dreamed prices under the worst economic recession ever experienced in the country. In addition, opposition voices and some perceived enemies are daily emasculated, mesmerized, dribbled, cajoled, haunted, harassed, sometimes locked without the due process of law court using the apparatus of the state.

It is based on the foregoing that, this study therefore seeks to investigate the effects of change management in Nigeria through the instrumentality of both the theatre and the media. Theatre and the media are two inseparable, indispensable and vital means of communicating socio-economic, socio-political, socio-cultural and even socio-religious issues in the contemporary society. The fusion of both the theatre and the media since the evolution of human civilization is unequivocally and from all indication like a marriage without divorce. Their tasks of mirroring, reviewing, analyzing and reconstructing the political, economic, social, intellectual, emotional, instinctive, traditional and moral values in the society is to say the least commonplace. They possess both communicative and didactic qualities as well as being efficacious in influencing people's consciousness and attitudes.

Like sociology, theatre and the media are social phenomena that deal with the multifarious social, economic and political problems and offering solutions to them. This demonstrates the fact that, both mediums are agent of social change and watchdogs against human vices and immorality bedeviling our society today. Change becomes exigent and indispensable when those trusted with the management of our collective will or resources misappropriate them for their selfish and beneficial gains in the name of change.

The Concept of Change and Development

Change drives development and vice versa. In this vein, Okwudiba Nnoli sees development as “a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with their physical, biological and inter-human environment transforming them for their own betterment and that of humanity at large” (36). This shows that the driving force behind every development, nay, change is the human resources. Development is not a piecemeal process but that which calls for a frontal attack and complete transformation of all aspects of life ranging from social, economic, educational, political, and otherwise (Koroma, 17). Development brings change from the rural areas to the national level. To Prince Tony Momoh, former Nigerian Minister of Information and Culture, national development is human and material development through a concerted and collective attempt by all the multifarious fields, education, health, science and technology, religious, politics and government, business community, mass media organisations – all consciously pooling their resources toward one common goal. National development therefore, means the systematic realisation of the full potentialities not only of the individual members within the nation but also of the nation state as a whole.

Development may also be seen as the total or the outcome of efforts made by the people to improve upon their conditions of living. Against this background, development is perceived as being in tandem with growth, advancement, and progress. Writing on *Communication and Development*, Ezekiel S. Asemah explains that, “a society is said to be moving towards development when there is more freedom, more social justice and there are opportunities for the people to participate in taking decisions that affect them” (314). He argues that a climate for development must be created in the environment through education, motivation and mobilisation and when this happens; the people for whom a particular development activity is intended should have the opportunity for discussing all aspects of the issue.

Development enables people to improve the quality of life and beautify their living conditions through positive change, spiritual, material and infrastructural transformation by mobilising their resources on continuous basis. According to Jerry Gana, true development must mean the development of man – the unfolding and realisation of the creative potentials, enabling him to prove his material conditions of living through the use of resources available to him. Development is a process by which man’s personality is enhanced; and it is the moving force behind the socio-economic transformation of any society. Orewere says that, “development is a package

of benefits given to a people by the government” (qtd. in Asemah 315). Above this, development is concerned with the increase in the production of materials, goods and services for the purpose of economic, inequality reduction and eradication of absolute poverty.

Development is also seen as a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and the society interact with their physical, biological, and inter-human environments, transforming them for their own benefits and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process (Nnoli 1981). According to the United Nations Organisation, development implies:

- The realisation of potentials of the human person in harmony with the community seen as the central purpose of development;
- The human person should be regarded as the subject and not the object of the development process;
- The human person must be able to participate fully in shaping his own reality.

Change begets development and it is the people that should wield it through collective and revolutionary actions. To this end, Augusto Boal in realizing the validity of such approach states that, “all truly revolutionary theatrical groups should transfer to the people the means of production in the theatre so that the people themselves may utilize them. Theatre is a weapon and it is the people who should wield it (122). However, Boal contends that theatre is not revolutionary in itself, but it is a rehearsal for the revolution.

Theatre speak to the people in their own language and idioms and deals with issues that most affect their life. It is a participatory theatre which everyone that aspires for must actively take part.

The concept of Marxism also comes into play here because of its strong advocate for change in a society hamstrung by oppressive tendencies by the oppressors. Championed by Marx’s closest associate Frederick Engels and supported by the works of Lenin and Trotsky, Marxism deals with social change or revolutionary aesthetics. This is why Karl Marx himself has said, and which Marxists are fond of repeating that, “the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, and the point is, however, to change it” (2). Marxism is a philosophy aimed at expunging all traces of exploitative and oppressive tendencies of the government against the governed – to bring positive change. This is the astute stand of both theatre and the media.

The Efficacy of Theatre and Mass Media as Agents of Change

As mass communication and mass transformation mediums, theatre and the media aim primarily at raising the consciences, the consciousness of the people and awakening in them the desire for change, for development and for community action that can bring about an egalitarian society where equal opportunities exist for all the citizenry (Nwamuo 41). Theatre and the media are both apparatuses of communication. Communication is one of the bedrock of development while development brings about change. Without communication there would probably have been no fundamental changes in human endeavours.

The important roles of information and communication, according to Udomisor in directing the affairs of man were first designed, perfected and used by colonialists in their respective domains to direct, condition, assimilate and control the attitudes and behaviours of their subjects to remain loyal, faithful, obedient and sympathetic to the administration (107). On the other hand, the freedom fighters or nationalists during the same period used communication as an effective tool to fight for independence and freedom and eventually wrestled power from the imperial powers.

As agents of change, the media collect, collate, store, process and disseminate news, data, plays, pictures, facts and messages, opinions and comments required in order to understand and react knowledgeably to personal, environment, national, and international conditions or situations that will translate to positive change(s).

Reminiscing on the informational and attitudinal change of the media towards national development and transformation, David S. M. Koroma submits that, “news output from the media including other sources such as the theatre is an attempt at national development; since news dissemination is meant to instil or create awareness among the masses and arouse them to positive action” (27). The implication of this is that, the media by providing information helps in public attitude formation and/or attitudinal change.

Writing on *The Role of Communication in Aid of Development*, Egbon sees development as “a blue-print for change that is modelled for individuals, institutions, national and international progress” (44). Development equates itself with growth, modernisation, change, democracy, productivity, industrialization and a host of other western historical and revolutionary changes which the citizens expect rightly from their government. Egbon adds that communication whether in developed or developing nations is certainly crucial to man’s effort to gain a greater quality of life because it affects his

productivity, his personal expression, social needs as well as his aspiration (52).

The three fundamental tasks of communication by the media are to: perform the role of the watchman; function as a decision-maker; and perform the teacher function. Based on this, Wilbur Schramm argues that, change will not take place smoothly or very efficiently unless people want to change. It is generally the increasing flow of information that furnishes the climate for nation-ness itself. By making one part of the country aware of other parts, their people, arts, customs and politics, by permitting the national leaders to talk to the people, and the people to the leaders and to each other.... A modern communication wisely used, can help wield together isolated communities, desperate sub-cultures, self-centred individuals and groups and separate development into truly national development (49). It is all these diverse interests that bring about positive change in our society. In like manner, Shalwitz writing on the *Impact of Theatre*, posits that:

It educates people about various social issues, and bring light to the various social inequities; it gives people a creative outlet when they would otherwise not have access to one; and it is able to build connections with each other, bridging the gap between people that come from all works of life. (1)

The overwhelming influence of the arts (theatre and the media) in the society as weapons for economic, social, religious and political change cannot be over-emphasized. The arts occupy an enviable position in the society. It has been and is still a catalyst for social change. As artists, Hegel, Marx, Engels, Aristotle, Shakespeare, even locally in Nigeria with people like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Hebert Macaulay, Chinua Achebe, Hubert Ogunde, Wole Soyinka, among others have at various times wielded their intellectual influence through the power of the pen to salvage their societies from the shackles of exploitative, despotic, tyrannical and oppressive successive authoritarian regimes. Thus, Lenin advocates and advances that, “literature by itself should not be an enterprise that would bring material benefits to the people. Rather artists should join other progressives in fighting the cause of the masses. That the politically conscious artists should chart the course of revolutionary struggles (53). This implies that literature should not be commoditized but used exclusively to fight societal ills pervading the society such as injustice, corruption, embezzlement of public funds, exploitation,

oppression, kidnapping, oil bunkering, extra-judicial killings, mal-administration, among others.

According to Okoli, “great writers work for progress; a social crusader who has transformed into a pathfinder, a leader, a revolutionary who have aroused men from their apathy and servile sentence, to deliver them from the spell of enslaving traditions, religions, dogmatism, and political dictatorship (72). The writer is a light bearer for the people who pull the revolutionary change that leaves society better, stronger, wiser, and more progressive. Like the Prometheus, Okoli demonstrates that, “the writer is prepared to hand fire to men” (72). Literature has proved to be a great catalyser of unhappy social situations, and a weapon for cultural change culminating in a revolution or change. Literature to Bertolt Brecht “has to be committed; has to be militant and outspoken. To be effective too, literature should employ whatever is useful through modernist or formalist approach.

To achieve social justice and good governance, writers are needed – writers with a sense of obligation or a strong attachment to a course. Chinua Achebe supporting this view submits that, “commitment means attachment to particular social aims and the use of his writing to advance social aims” (72). This, of course, implies a belief that literature or arts can and should be used as force for social change and a writer has a responsibility to do so.

Writers mirror the society and help men and women to think and act in a particular direction. In a bid to conjure up in the mind the militant attributes of the pen and brings into focus the importance of the writer and, indeed, literature in the planting and realization of revolutions, Balzac comparing himself to Napoleon Bonaparte, had claimed that, “he would accomplish with the pen, what Napoleon started with the sword (Literature and Social Change, 73). In the words of Emmanuel Obiechina, “the writer should take the position against the oppression of the people in all forms of brutalities and of unwarrantable violence against the masses. Should be vocal against national hypocrisy, against those who pretend to love the country but are busily stealing the public goods and converting the country’s numerous resources to their private use. Such a writer should also be dedicated to the promotion of a healthy, virile and life-sustaining culture – using his medium to fight decadence, falsification of values, degradation of cultural institutions and the emasculation of peoples’ way of life” (6).

The pen and indeed, the poet have the capability of shaping the destiny of his society. It is in his capacity as a militant against social evils and injustices against tyranny and oppression, against religious fanaticism and political despotism that the writer most often transforms his pen into a flaking

sword of crusade. Expressing the indefatigable nature of the writer and the force behind the pen, Okoli explains that, “the heroic symbol of power and rugged will, the pen, in its ambivalence, is capable of spreading knowledge and enlightenment or sowing discord and panic” (74). He demonstrates that the pen can translate social sensibilities and aspirations and harness them into actions of revolt, liberation or subjugation; reconstruction or destruction. The pen and indeed, literature, is essentially the writer, maker of literature, manipulator of the pen, of words and ideas, of theories and ideologies. One, who gives pleasure, arouses sentiments, evoke dreams or inspire odium and anarchy (74).

Conclusion

It has been revealed through this study that theatre and the media since human civilization has been used as weapons to fight injustices of various dimensions and colorations in the society, especially in the Third World countries to which Nigeria is one of them. Through the media’s indefatigable influences in exploring and reviewing the actions and inactions of those in authority – legally or illegally, Karl Marx’s postulations have become manifested and at best fulfilled in many societies, through revolutionary changes. In these nations, the down-trodden who had been starved and exploited for too long has gained nothing from the general enrichment of the establishment. The much taunted “change” in Nigeria today, for instance, can be adduced rightly or wrongly from the current increases in the cost of living, epileptic power or zero power supply, deteriorating federal roads, retrogressing value of the naira over other foreign currencies, indeterminable foreign exchange, over-pricing of goods and services even in the face of diminishing qualities, among others. Perhaps, this is the change we have been promised, even when the government itself has affirmed that the economy is technically in recession, if not already recessed.

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