

Broadcast Media and Political Education : The Impact of Radio and Television Drama Programmes on the 2011 Elections..

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Abstract

It has often been stated that the critical and functional role of broadcasting is the advancement and promotion of democracy. Some scholars have argued that the oxygen of democracy is broadcasting. Many have also commented that indeed the only valuable role for broadcasting away from the functionality of entertainment and education is the enhancement of democracy. That is why broadcasting and broadcast regulation is all about the enhancement of the democratic ethos..

This paper examines the role of broadcasting and in this particular case radio and television drama as a means of promoting democracy, and curbing the problems of bad governments, political ignorance, poor voter education and post election violence in Nigeria. It notes that television and especially television drama has always played a role in promoting democracy. During the 2011 elections, the Nigerian broadcast media played a role in the democratic process, but how much of that contribution came from radio and television drama and with what effect?.

It is the finding of the paper that there appears to be no programmed and orchestrated effort to use television drama to strengthen political education, save for the efforts of a few Non Government Agencies. The paper submits that radio and Television drama can indeed be a most effective tool for advancing democracy in Nigeria if properly explored and exploited.

INTRODUCTION

According to Wikkipaedia(2011:1)"political drama" can be described as Theatre play film or TV program that has a political component, whether reflecting the author's political opinion, or describing a politician or series of political events. Some famous English dramatist who have written political dramas include Aaron Sorkin, Robert Penn Warren Sergei Eisenstein , Bertolt Brecht , Jean Paul Sartre Caryl Churchill and Federico García Lorca and in Nigeria we have people like Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi and others .

In England some Television series that can be classified as political drama include "Yes Minister " , its sequel "Yes, Prime Minister " , "The West Wing (TV series)|The West Wing " , "Jack and Bobby" , "The Bold Ones: etc. There have also been notable films that have been labeled as political dramas such as "Thirteen Days (film) Thirteen Days " .

Drama for Development

The role of drama (Radio and Television) is a long and well established arrear of study in popular culture. In many countries of the world, there is an increasing import of the role of drama and how it can stimulate development. In rural Afghanistan to urban Nigeria BBC World Service audiences have been tuning-in to mass mediated drama with 'instructive' messages for many years. Each 'drama for development' reflects the interweaving of development goals, donor objectives, processes of cross-cultural translation, creative dialogue and debate between local and expatriate dramatists and, not least, the responses and interpretations of dramatic narratives by audiences. It is from such a perspective, organisations such as the BBC World Service Trust, the BBC World Service's charitable arm, can be seen to be actively engaged in crafting complex development concepts and issues into local frames by applying specific cultural, social and political filters to render these concepts and narratives intelligible. The BBC World Service Trust drama for instance is informed by formative and ongoing audience research and evaluation that feeds into production in ways that enable audiences to play an active role in the evolving serial narratives that influence political thought and thinking.

Perhaps a classical example of Television drama with political influence is *Yes Minister*. *Yes Minister* is a satirical British sitcom written by

