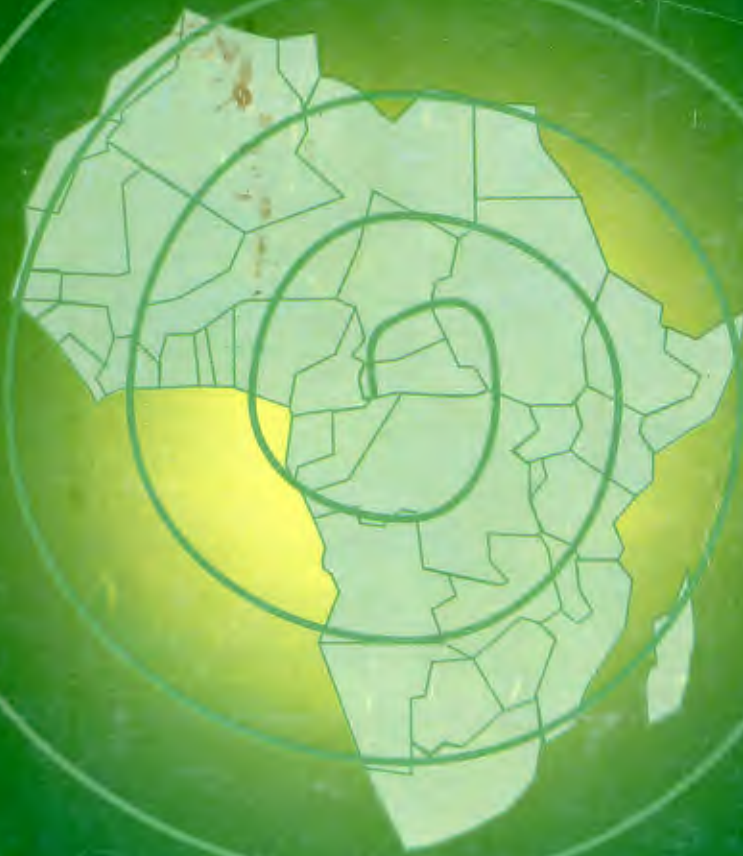


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DEREGULATION OF BROADCASTING IN AFRICA



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BROADCAST DEREGULATION AND SOCIETY THE CHALLENGES OF ACCESS, PARTICIPATION AND UTILIZATION FOR ORDINARY CITIZEN

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It is always best if an electronic media operation can create its own means of ensuring the standard of performance that it has set for itself, so that the impulse to succeed comes from within. Unfortunately, that does not always happen. Financial pressures, shortages of properly trained personnel “blind spots” (failure to perceive one’s shortcomings), and even tolerance for, or deliberate attempts at, the use of the media to increase... tension and promote conflict - all can lead to broadcasts which are not in the best interest of a healthy society.....Commission on Radio/-Television policy, 1992.

Deregulation is generally taken to mean “absence of regulation”. For the media industry, however, there is nothing like absolute freedom. Even for countries like the United States where the constitution specifically forbids anything that could abridge the freedom of the media, the mass media are not completely free. In addition to the universally accepted laws of defamation and privacy there are many other ways in which media freedom could be effectively abridged, the least of which is not through the exercise of financial power by advertisers. Therefore, deregulation should be appropriately seen as “less emphasis on legal restrictions”. It does not absolve media organizations from lawful exercise of restraining powers by interest and pressure groups or from the responsibility of ensuring that they do nothing that could impede the achievement of “a healthy society.”

Models of Operation

There appears to be, broadly speaking, two major models of broadcast operation vis-à-vis the society - the Trusteeship Model which demands service in the interest of the public, and the marketplace model which gives the broadcaster the freedom to determine how to serve the public best. The task of this conference, as we implore in this

paper, is not to choose between these two models, but rather to find a happy balance between them to fashion out a hybrid model which takes into full account the socio-cultural, economic and political situation of Africa, and which will fully incorporate the rural communities and the urban poor into the mainstream of broadcasting endeavours.

Broadcasting, by its very nature, is a public-oriented venture. The public is the very reason for its existence. It is almost a selfless, socially-based business geared towards the satisfaction of the public for the sake (in the interest) of public. Hence Hubert Hoover (1927) said:

Radio (Broadcasting) communication is not to be considered as merely business carried on for private gain, for private advertisement or for the entertainment of the curious. It is a public concern impressed with the public trust to the same extent and upon the basis of the general principles as our other public utilities.

The broadcast license, because of the non market allocation of spectrum space, is regarded as a trust, with the public as the beneficiary, and the broadcasting which was universally acclaimed until 1981, acknowledges that the right of the public to be informed "appropriately: is paramount, and that the broadcast media should be seen as part of this public domain. It was predicated on the principle of "Public Interest, Consciences and Necessity."

But conflict over the meaning of "Public Interest" has been recurrent. Not only do governments, the public and media organizations, each have its own interpretation of the concept, but each meaning is constantly changed depending on contexts and situations. In an attempt to resolve the conflict, Leiserson (1942) suggested that " a satisfactory criterion of the public interest is the preponderant acceptance of administrative action by politically influential groups." Such acceptance, he says is expressed through groups which, when affected by administrative requirements, regulations and decisions, comply without seeking legislative revision, amendments or repeal.

Although Krasnow & Longley (1987) acknowledged the pragmatic nature of this definition, they pointed out that it was very limited. It implies that for a policy to be accepted by politically influential groups, it must be relevant to and must not conflict unacceptably with their expectations and desires. The inevitable question is this: do the expectations and seizures of the politically influential always agree with the expectations and desires of the people?" Whether the answer to the question is obvious or not, is not the point at issue; what is urgently important is finding a way to reconcile both these expectations and desire; and in an age of deregulation, estab-

lishing a way to reconcile both expectations and desires with the expectations and desires of investors who own private broadcast establishments and have a legal and social rights to expect profitable returns. Because of the usual lack of sympathy to the cause of the underprivileged, there has been few, if any, serious attempt at reconciling the expectation and aspiration differences. For most broadcasters, meeting the desires of the elite and influential is fulfilling the demands of Public Interest. Hence the unending debate that has earned the public interest concept the unenviable appellation of "the battle ground for broadcasting's regulatory debate," and has created a lot of dissatisfaction among broadcasting professionals who assert that based on available resources, enough is being done already for the common people through programming. No doubt, the public interest concept provides broadcasters the opportunity to accomplish community goals that cannot be accomplished in any other way, to wit: surveillance of the community, correlation, educational programming, etc. But the correct and more effective execution of public interest demands that broadcasting involves "going beyond programming, and beyond public service announcement, to becoming vital and integral contributors - indeed partners - in community efforts to support and improve the local quality of life." (Powell & Gair, 1988).

There are very few, if any, broadcast organizations that will not claim they perfectly fit into this model of "effective execution of public interest' demands. Each one believes it is sufficiently serving the interest of public. But an examination of their programme type, schedule, content and format often proves otherwise. The idea of being "vital and integral contributors and partners" beyond the environments of the educated and urban elite which the Trusteeship Model specifically demands is treated almost always with near-scorn.

The discomfort of broadcaster with the Trusteeship Model (Public Interest, Convenience and Necessity) and conspicuously reflected in the demand for deregulation or the Marketplace Approach to broadcasting under which the right of the broadcaster to speak and predominates, and the broadcast media are treated as private and commercially-based. This model uses market forces rather than regulatory injunctions to determine where public interest lies in broadcasting.

In praise of the mode, Zaragoza et al (1988) said: It is premised upon the view that to profit, entrepreneurs must provide to consumers goods of value and quality. In doing so, each entrepreneur is led toward maximal fulfillment of societal needs. He is "led by an invisible hand" to promote an end which was not part of his intention but which, in the course of pursuing his own interest, frequently, promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.

Here we go again; Public interest has reared its vague head once more - even under the marketplace approach. Deregulation implies self-regulation which is often portrayed as the best way for broadcasters to carry out their responsibility to society. But under deregulation, to where does the pendulum of self-regulation swing? Is it towards profit-making or towards service to the community.

Usually, deregulation leads to multiplicity of private ownership of radio and television organizations. Invariably and, to a large extent, understandably, these organizations, in order to make some profit from investments, place emphasis on quantity of audiences and concentrate on popular entertainment programmes, and consumer advertising. "In country after country where channel choice has increased, and especially where commercial television has been added to the system, there has been an increase in the amount of viewing of non-informational or pseudo-informational programming." (Brown, et al, 1994). Without doubt, the first programmes to suffer are those which deal with controversial issues. It is true that this could be construed as public service; the exclusion of such programmes is usually defended on the pretext of meeting the demands of utilitarian and correlation principles, but the real truth, of course, is the economic pull to go "where the audience is largest." But even if there is some element of service in excluding such programmes, is that the type of service on which emphasis should be placed in the face of need for in-depth, balanced and serious treatment of socio-cultural and economic problem?

This profit-based modus operandi of broadcasting belies the statement often made by broadcasters that "self-regulation motivates them to seek ways of translating the vague concept of public welfare." An effective and socially beneficial deregulation is one which creates an environment in which broadcasters must find a happy balance among regulatory mandates, social obligations, and financial stability. Will deregulating the media in Africa be able to meet this reasoned condition? Will they see meeting social obligations as a duty they owe not only to the elite and city dwellers but also to the rural and urban poor populations? Will they provide opportunities for access, participation and effective utilization for the most populous segments of African population, that is, the rural and urban poor, or what we euphemistically refer to as "the common man?"

The Trusteeship Model and Broadcasting in Africa.

Before we can meaningfully attempt answers to those question, it is necessary to take a retrospective look at what obtained before deregulation. At the risk of being challenged, we make bold to say that the policy intent in introducing broadcasting to Africa to translate intention into action, not only because of pressure from the elite, but also because of the near-morbid desire of many of us - the educated broadcasting practitioners and intellectuals - to dissociate ourselves from our rural roots.

Under the proclaimed trusteeship model, the relationship between broadcasting and the underprivileged rural and urban poor populations (about three quarters of the continents population) was anything but fair. Broadcasting was (and still is) generally seen as an urban-elite affair. Even though the population of the rural and urban poor was/is three times higher than that of the educated, and urban-elite, the time allotted for broadcasting to (passive access) this overwhelmingly populous segments of the population has been and continues to be infinitesimal. Staff who worked in the native languages section of broadcasting organizations were/are seen as second-class broadcasters. And news from and about rural communities or from urban slums were stringently scrutinized before they were squeezed into the news bulletin, unless of course, such items were about crime and other anti social activities. For most broadcasters, rural development and urban slum improvements were almost non-issues. Such topics did not immediately qualify as programme materials.

Our governments, too seem to have been almost of the same opinion with the urban elite-oriented broadcaster. Even though some attempts were made to reach the underprivileged through broadcasting, in general, as Bourgault (1995) has noted, "there is a near universal second-class status of development vis-à-vis the needs of the states and the interests of the elites." Nigeria, which provided proximal availability, easy accessibility and active participation for some rural communities in the 1960s. A study of the activities and commitment of that mobile rural radio station (Moemeka, 1987) which, unfortunately and to the disappointment of participating rural communities, was put off the air in the mid-1960's, proved that, that station was the best broadcasting has given to the ordinary citizens of this country. But it was dismantled by the government because of lack of funds. However, the sections of the parent broadcasting corporation which served the elite continued in operation.

At the time the Nigerian Television was commissioned, there were only 50,000 television sets in the country. If we assume that about 10 people then had access to each set every night, this would mean that only 500,000 Nigerians were benefiting to different degrees from a national television station built ostensibly to serve 80 million people. Practically every broadcaster knows that the cost of producing a programme remains virtually the same whether it is broadcast to 80 people or to 80 million people. Therefore, the smaller the audience reached and/or affected, the higher would be the per unit cost. The Country did not mind this. But when a suggestion was made for building local radio stations (a one or two-man operated stations of the type that Canada built for her North-west territories) that could serve millions of Nigerians, fund was for broadcasting dried up. The same "chorus" of dried-up funds was responsible for the death of Burkina Faso's Radio Day", and Senegal's Disso". It is very doubtful that the trend was not the same in other African Countries, with the possible exception of Tanzania, where radio broadcasting was used for

political, health and civic education encompassing the total population.

It is tempting to ask: If such relegation to the background, of the cause of the rural and urban poor could be so widely accepted under the public interest-oriented Trusteeship Model, with its legally based injunctions and guidelines, what hopes do we have that the marginalization of these underprivileged segments of our population will ease up under the Marketplace Model which is guided by commercial exigencies? But it is evident, however, that what has been happening against the interest of ordinary citizens, was not because of the existing model, in fact those things happened in spite of the model. They occurred because of the attitude of broadcasters and the elite to the cause of the underprivileged and general lukewarm attitude towards public interest broadcasting principles. If the concept of public interest, which though hard to define, is not without meaning, is adhered to, providing access, creating participation and ensuring effective utilization would not be difficult to achieve. All it takes is commitment to the cause of the people and determination to succeed with emergent citizens. "Despite the fact that the conscience and judgment of a station's management are necessarily personal....the station itself must be operated as if owned by the public....It is as if people of a community should own a station and turn it over to the best man in sight with this injunction: 'Manage the station in our interest'" That statement of U.S. Federal Radio Commission, made in 1950, is as appropriate today as it was then.

Access, Participation and Utilization.

None of the situations symbolized by the three concepts of Access, Participation and Utilization is beyond the capability of any broadcast station, provided the concept of public interest is accepted as a guiding principle. Access means giving people the chance to hear, see and be present. Visual and auditory access will allow the underprivileged to hear programmes from radio and to hear and see programmes on television. Whether this will happen or not depends on transmitter power (the responsibility of the station management) and on set ownership (which the government could subsidize). Physical access is letting people directly experience stations activities, for example, how equipment work; how programmes are produced. This requires physical proximity of stations - a situation for which deregulation is very well-suited. Physical access is a stepping stone to participation which is of four types (Moemeka, 1987): Passive, Vicarious, Radiotional and Active/Physical.

A passive participant is one who benefits from a programme to which he/she did or added nothing; a vicarious participant is one who psychologically transports him/herself to the scene of action and feels as if he/she was there taking part. Although these two types of participation are important. They are not, for purposes of improving the living conditions of the rural and urban poor, as important as active participation which is being physically present and actively taking part, and radio-

tional participation which is being part of those who help in spreading the result of active participation by implementing the demands of its outcome.

Development communications agree that fair access and effective participation in broadcasting mean giving all segments of the community - the elite, the educated, minorities, the elderly, the handi-capped, the farmers, traders, housewives, etc. - the opportunity for expression in their local station. Such access and effective participation can be available in the form of Public Affairs shows, Community Forums, Call-In-Programmes, Public Service Announcement, agriculture reports, educational and health programmes, as well as entertainment and local news. But participation is most effective when the people are given the opportunity to participate in stations activities, and station management and staff also actively participate in community organizations and problem solving, in community development and activities and community education. This is an essential part of what makes a station a community asset. It assures the people, especially rural and urban poor populations, that such a station does not just "exists in", but "lives with" the community.

Also extremely important for purposes of improving the quality of life of the underprivileged is utilization which deals with what is put in the media (programme content), and what the people do with what they get from the media (programme effect). Utilization is particularly important because it goes beyond socio-economic concerns to the cultural and the ethical. It is directly related to making a clear distinction between NEEDS and WANTS - being able to draw an objective and clearly defined line between what the people want and what they need, and placing a markedly higher value on what the people need. This involves giving the people programme contents that would lead to their upliftment, and following up with information and educational programmes that would provide guidelines on how to make the best use of the programme contents

Creating Awareness and Building Understanding

In the Western world, when citizen groups complain about the quality and/or morality of certain media content, broadcasters usually respond with "We are giving the people what they want." In the developing world, complaints from the public about the choice of certain programme contents over others are also dismissed with similar response. There appears therefore to be a universal oversight, on the part of broadcasting professionals, of the fact that when the media repeatedly give people the same or similar content over a period of time, they tend to become used to and to demand such content especially if the programmes have cathartic or aggressive effects and provide some sort of psychological release of tension or yield immediate emotional gratification. Important though such programmes and their effects may be for the individual, they fall into insignificance when compared with the potential

effects of human and physical development programmes that were left out to make place for them. This is why Coase (1970) has pointed out that: No one can say he is giving the public what it wants unless the public knows the whole range of possibilities which television can offer, and from the range choose what it wants to see....”

To give the public what it wants is a misleading phrase; misleading because as commonly as it is used it has the appearance of an appeal to democratic principle, but the appearance is deceptive. It is in fact patronizing and arrogant, in that it claims to know what the public is, but defines it as no more than the mass audience; and in that it claims to know what it wants, but limits its choice to the average experience. Explicit statements of broadcasting's objectives in national programmes promoting socio-economic, political and cultural growth of the nation as a whole (not just of cities, and the educated and urban poor should not merely be implied; they should be made as explicit as possible and should be given as a necessary mandate.

The view of television as an elite medium, and as an embodiment of consumption, leisure and materialism should be reversed; for us in this struggling continent, the television should be an embodiment of the power of adaptation and growth, and of consolidated essential values of the past so that they can form the desired solid base for the future. It is true that the television has made it possible for us to see man walk on the moon, to grieve with the bereaved or afflicted, to rejoice with the successful and those saved from what could have been tragic experience, and to see places that have inspired us to greater heights. But it is also true that the television has contributed in no small measure to numbing our senses and consciences, glorifying morbid curiosity and glamorizing anti-cultural and anti-social behaviours. The television in this continent has, in particular, consistently imported programmes of low artistic and moral quality in the guise of “giving the people what they want”, when what is an obvious necessity is giving the people what they need.

What guidelines can help broadcasters appreciate the value of national Needs over national Wants? A Working Group for the commission on Television Policy, to consider television news coverage of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States and the Commonwealth of Independent States, agreed on four central social values that any television policy for covering ethnic minorities should support. Replacing the concept of ethnic minorities with that of marginalized majority, and broadening the idea of coverage to go beyond news to other broadcast activities, as done below, shows that the recommendations of the working Group, which was set up to formulate options on how television can best contribute to larger social values and goals when covering news in those two ethnically diverse societies, are also appropriate to our case, the working Group recommended that:

- Television policy should encourage the (marginalized majority) to participate fully in the media life of the nation - to enable them express their views to others, to enable them to fulfill the universal human need for individual self-expression, and to enable all members of the larger society to understand the diverse people and experiences that compose their nation.
- The Policy should bolster the freedom and independence of the media. Any recommendations for alterations or additions to the activities of television should be advanced with the assumption that journalistic autonomy must not be violated thereby.
- The policy should serve the society's moral values, which include most pertinently a commitment to inform all citizens, and commitment to democracy and equal treatment of all peoples.
- The policy should, in addition to the above ethical goals, recognize that societies that give respectful and full voice to (marginalization majority), serve the self-interest of all, including those of the (privileged minority) by helping to ensure stability and forestalling the effects of pent-up frustration.

The fact that the Commission saw service to the society as imperative did not blind it to the necessity for the freedom and independence of the media. By implication, it draws attention to the fact often loosely glossed over, that is, that freedom of the media and effective public service are not incompatible. Most media professionals know what is good for society, in spite of the lure, in commercial broadcasting, of financial buoyancy, and the general attitude of many broadcasters to pitch their camp with the urban elite and to favour modernization over development. They know for example (even though they may not admit it openly) that showing the imported movie - Rambo - is not as beneficial to African societies as showing farmers how to increase the output of their farms; or discussing how to inculcate civic and social responsibilities in the younger generation. Acting in freedom should be seen to mean that broadcasting organizations should not give regulatory authorities the opportunity to force the provision of known necessary services on them. Walter Lipman would appear to have provided an appropriate guideline. It is this: that broadcasters should ask themselves what it is that they choose to do if, "they saw clearly, though rationally, acted disinterested and benevolently?" That is what they should be doing without being told. Under the Marketplace approach - deregulation - it is very advisable that broadcasters develop and apply the philosophy of "overall commitment to service the entire community" in a way that does not detract from their own self-interest, but one that also does not enthrone selfishness. Financially viable stations are an asset to the nation because without such economic strength and stability the station would, to the disadvantage of the nation, be out of business. But also an asset of an invaluable nature to society are the recognition and the acceptance of the obligation

to serve community needs in programming. Speaking at the International Radio & Television Society Newsmaker Luncheon in 1986, the president of CBS Broadcast Group, Gene F. Jankowski, warned: As impressive as the financial statistics that describe the business of broadcasting are, they should not obscure the public interest obligation. The first premise and the best business practice for which there is not substitute is to serve the public. Before him, Edward Fritts - the nineteenth president of the National Association of Broadcasters in the U.S. - had pointed out in 1982 that


“while public interest may be a congressional mandate, it is actually a way of life for the broadcaster.” And he added a personal note: “my personal legacy, handed down to me by my father, ingrained in me the notion that to be successful, a station has to be a reflection of the community it serves.”

Serving the Ordinary Citizen.


No broadcasting organization can truly claim to be effectively reflecting the community it “serves”, unless it properly knows that community, and appreciates its problems, aspirations and expectations. Properly knowing it involves

- (a) entering into the unique socio-cultural contexts that obtain in the community as a whole; and
- (b) involving the different categories of citizens actively in its activities.

These two factors are imperative for correctly reflecting the community in programming. This is particularly important with regards to marginalized populations. The first unwritten rule of development communication is “Know Your Audience.” Involving rural and urban poor citizens in broadcast activities, to be meaningful and effective, must be predicated on substantial general and specific knowledge of their environment and socio-cultural contexts. It also needs to be organized and coordinated, either on the basis of location (citizens groups and broadcast personnel discussing and finding solutions to the different problems of the same locality), or on the basis to specific problems (the discussion and solution attempts focusing on each problem affecting, not only one locality, but a group of localities). Either way, the people should be as involved in program activities (selection, planning, production, presentation and evaluation) as broadcast personnel should be involved in community activities (group meeting, social activities, games neighborhood communities, etc.). Such interactive relationship helps build up confidence in broadcasting as a social institution, and increases knowledge and build a sense of self-worth in the people. In addition, as already proven (Moemeka, 1975), “when a people are introduced to the technology, techniques and mechanics of broadcasting, they tend to develop not only media literacy and the propensity to use the media effectively, but also critical awareness of program contents, and how such contents relate to them in particular and society in general.



In the task of improving the quality of life of the rural and urban poor populations, these factors of interaction and knowledge acquisition are extremely important because they act as bulwarks against vacuous recommendations, (often made from luxuriously comfortable air-conditioned offices), and popular resistance from within the marginalized populations. Information is not only knowledge; it is also power. The more there are rural and urban poor that are well-informed, the more there would be those who would understand the potentials of broadcasting and the more those who would demand the utilization of broadcasting facilities to meet their authentic needs.



The concept of Citizens Group for effective use of broadcasting calls to mind McAnany's (1972) Five Strategies of the use of radio broadcasting in development activities, and Waniewicz's (1972) four structures for effective Broadcasting for Adult Education. McAnany identified five strategies - Open Broadcasting, Instructional Radio, Rural Radio Forums, Radio Schools, and Radio & Animation - all of which, with some modifications, are also well-suited for Television Broadcasting if receiving sets could be made available in sufficient number to the people. Waniewicz suggested four operational structures each of which make broadcasting a continuously relevant part of the people's lives.

In a critique of the works of these renown specialists, Moemeka (1981), based on field experience and research, suggested a modification of both the strategies and the structures. He ruled out Open Broadcasting as too unorganized at the reception end to be an effective educational strategy. He also ruled out Instructional Radio as too structured for the soft-hammer blow type of education necessary for rural and urban poor populations. He then combined the remaining three strategies (eliminating their weaknesses and maximizing their strengths) into one, under the name Local Radio strategy. He also adapted Waniewicz's operational Structures into one suitable for local broadcasting (see Appendix). Not only does the modified structure guarantee the full participation of the underprivileged in broadcast activities; it also links national or regional stations with the local, thus ensuring coordination and cooperation in policy planning and implementation, and continuously dynamic interaction with the community.

It is the opinion of this paper that if the Local Radio Strategy based on the modified operation structure, is adopted and aggressively implemented, it could very well serve as an interactive model suitable for positively affecting, through broadcasting, the lives of rural and urban poor populations of Africa. While national and regional (city-based) stations have important roles to play in the development of rural communities and urban-slums, they have one serious handicap - their distance from the potential beneficiaries of their activities. It is true that these potential bene-

ficiaries could hear and watch programs from the distant city-based station. But hearing a radio, or watching a television program is not necessarily understanding and accepting the message contained in the program. The days of the bullet theory are gone. As Moemeka (1981) has pointed out: Three factors are necessary for any broadcast communication to be successful. The first is that the transmitter must be capable of taking the message to the target audience in a clear and audible manner. The second is that the message to the target audience is a clear message and must be in a code and context that is understandable to the audience. These two factors clear reception and indelibility – are imperative for what we may term communication “effectiveness” that is, carrying the message to the audience in such a way that it will understand the context and the meaning. But that is not the end of the story. Hearing a message and understanding it, though very necessary and important prerequisites, do not necessarily ensure effectiveness that is, acceptance of the message and willingness to act according to the demands of the message. This goal is better achieved through the reinforcement of interpersonal channels and peer-group intervention, provided the message content is seen as relevant by the audience. What is being asked for is not too far removed from that which is familiar, and the possibility of beneficial result is not too remote. These conditions will only exist if there is sufficient contact between senders of messages and receivers of the messages. Arguments have of course, been raised against local broadcasting. One such argument says that local broadcasting would accentuate divisive sentiments, and make localities look “inward” rather than see themselves as part of the nation. In this age of aggressive moves towards bringing government nearer to the people, one finds this argument untenable. If states, countries and local governments can be created to help bring government nearer to the people in order to ensure meaningful unity, why is it being suggested that local media cannot play a unifying role? We know that any broadcast medium, local, regional or national, can be a dangerous instrument if badly directed. But that has not stopped the establishment of national/regional broadcast stations. This is because of the conviction that broadcasting has the potential of tremendously and effectively contributing to national and regional developments. Why can't this recognition and faith be extended to broadcasting in the rural and urban poor communities? It cannot be overemphasized that self-identity and self-concept are extremely important in human relations. “If people do not articulate themselves and their place in the nation, it is doubtful that they will be in a position to play a constructive role in nation building. Political, as well as social and economic policies and values must be the consequence of understanding acceptance and not the result of reluctant obedience to imposed regulations (Moemeka, 1981).

Another objection against establishing local media is made on the basis of finance. Without belabouring the point, it is a known fact that it costs many times less to establish a local media ('small' media) than it costs to establish national or

regional media ('big' media). In addition, there is even the more important moral obligation factor appropriately raised by the Scottish Broadcasting Council (1974).

It is our view that the needs of the people living in remote areas are very much greater than those with the multiple facilities of towns and cities available to them. The provision of adequate viewing and listening for such communities should be given high priority coming before other more exciting, but in our opinion, less essential broadcasting developments. Deregulation creates decentralization, not only of media control but also of media infrastructure. But in many instances, in the developing world, deregulation finds expression only in the act of governments giving up their monopoly and control of the broadcast industry; and in dispersal of stations within urban and city settings. Such dispersal hardly ever finds its way into the rural communities. It is true that the "common man" (and of course, "the common woman") can be found both in cities and towns. But more than 90% of them are in the rural communities. Therefore, while urban and city-based broadcasting stations, with careful details to relevance and need, can serve the urban poor, they can, at best provide only passive access to the rural population. But this population has a right to be served as efficiently and effectively as other segments of the nation. It is strongly argued that such a required service can best be provided through local broadcasting.

Deregulation should redirect, if not lessen, the burden of broadcasting on the government. It invariably creates an abundance of broadcast facilities for cities and towns. So the government can conveniently redirect its efforts, vis-à-vis provision of broadcast facilities, to the rural and urban-poor populations. The local stations established should coordinate their activities with the nearest and/or appropriate urban-based stations, whether public or private, for the benefit of the communities which they serve. In their cooperation in, and coordination of, activities both the small-scale and large-scale media should act on the basis of two tenets of the theory-Democratic-Participant Media. (McQuail, 1993):

- (a) that citizens have right to be served by media according to their own (citizens) determination of need, and
- (b) that media should exist primarily for their audiences and not for media organizations, media professionals or the clients of the media.

A Final Thought:

Observers of the broadcasting world would agree that deregulation is, generally speaking, seen as a necessary evil by governments, especially in the developing world. The reasons for this, which we do not want to go into, are obvious, and sometimes justified. Deregulation enhances the democratization of information and knowledge, both of which are badly needed for human and material development in

any nation. What we should be concerned about is not deregulation per se, but how a deregulated media system should function. The goal should be the maintenance of a balance between the preservation of a free competitive broadcast system and the responsible restriction of that freedom inherent in the public interest principles. If the principles of Public Interest (not only elite and educated publics, but also non-elite and non-literate publics) is taken as the categorical imperative for broadcasting, deregulated media systems would be as relevant and advantageous to the underprivileged as it would be to the nation.

It is extremely important to point out here that it would be wrong to presume that what is relevant and advantageous to the urban elite would, with time, trickle-down to the rural and urban poor. The ~~daisy~~ of the trickle-down theory have since gone. The new approach to development, whether urban or rural, human or material emphasized two key concepts - control and participation. The people should take control of their own lives by participating actively in deciding, planning and executing actions directed at improving their socio-cultural, economic and political conditions. The four basic elements of this new approach (Rogeres, 1976) would appear to emphasize the importance of local media:

1. Emphasis on the equality of distribution of information and socio-economic benefits with priority in development plans to rural areas and the urban poor;
2. Popular participation in self-development, planning and execution and decentralization of authority and responsibility;
3. Self-reliance and independence in development, relying on local resources;
4. Integration of traditional and modern system and values.

Specific actions, taking into account the socio-cultural contexts of the rural as well as the urban-poor populations of the nation, need to be taken, if broadcasting is to benefit them. Among such actions, the most important and urgent would appear to be, providing available and accessible broadcast facilities, and creating unambiguous opportunities for popular participation, and for relevance of program contents. As the grand-father of mass communication pointed out more than three decades ago- An efficient use of mass media for economic and social development implies that they should be as local as possible. Their programs should originate no farther than necessary from their audiences; programs should be prepared by persons who understand the culture to which they are speaking and means should be available for the audiences to report back to the media (Wilbur Schramm, 1964).

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