TECHNICAL USE OF LANGUAGE AND NEW MEDIA TO ATTAIN COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONALISM, SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND NATION-BUILDING

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Abstract

The role of language and new media in attaining collaboration among professionals of different fields and peoples of different ethno-religious backgrounds cannot be over-emphasised. The aim of this study is to prove its assertion that language and new media can be used technically to attain collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building. In proving it, the study relies on evidence from extant literatures, and oral data from 168 participants engaged in focus group discussion. The descriptive survey design and qualitative method along with the allied tools are employed for data analysis. The analysis demonstrates that collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building can be attained when language and new media are used technically and appropriately. The study concludes that while appropriate use of language and new media engenders collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building, the otherwise use causes incoherent professionalism, social disintegration, national underdevelopment and issues of intergroup relations. It calls for collaboration and interdisciplinary partnership among professionals of the different fields of human endeavors. Also, it charges all and sundry to use language and new media appropriately at all times.

Keywords: Technical use, Language, New media, Collaborative professionalism, Social integration, Nation-building

Introduction

As issues of professionalism, social integration and nation-building persist, it is imperative to find solutions to them. One way tangible and sustainable way of doing so is resorting to meaningful collaboration. That is why this study avers that to attain collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building, language and new media should be used technically to pursue the realization of this purpose. Scholars confirm that language plays a crucial role in addressing 21st century challenges confronting different spheres. They include Anyanwu (2023), Nkereuwem and Robert (2023), Osuagwu and Chimakonam (2018), and Emeka-Nwobia (2015), among others. These mentioned studies prove language to be a viable means of solving different problems in society.

Similarly, Beyerlein et al. (2003) are of the view that global, economic and business problems can be solved more effectively when skills, values and processes for effective collaboration are put in place and sustained. It should be noted that the global problems they point at include those in educational, political, social and other spheres. As Evans (2015) rightly observes, "we urgently need education that confronts the challenges of our time" (p. 71). The observation reflects this discourse in that problem-solving education has to be devised and deployed sustainably as a mechanism for tackling the challenges of the contemporary times.

In view of the foregoing, this study seeks to make an exposition of its viewpoint that it is possible to use language technically to attain collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building. It adds that the use of language in that regard can be extended to the use of new media technically to attain the same goals. These views shall be given scholarly justification from a range of literatures before arriving at the logical conclusion.

Related Literatures

Collaboration, as Msanjila and Afsarmanesh (2008) notes, requires the participating individuals to engage mutually with trust and focus the engagement on achieving common goals. This statement implies that unity of purpose, co-operation, unison, and joint efforts are required for building collaborative professionalism, social integration and national development. Nation-building includes cultivating the spirit of national integration, nationalism, being resilient, patriotic and determined to perform citizens' duties without compulsion. The point made by Hofstede (2007) that 'culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another' (p. 33) suggests that collaborative culture can be developed and sustained among professionals of different fields. Individuals and groups can also develop sustained collaborative culture, which helps to build social integration, thereby fostering nation-building.

Similarly, Widodo (2019) considers culture as a mechanism for building collaboration, integrity, ethical principles and practices, and so on. Macfarlane (2005) considers the practice of university education without collaboration as being one that allows for academic disengagement among intellectuals along with their learners. McNay (2005) considers the lack of collaboration as a division that paves way for failure among the academics. For Evans (2004), the situation amounts to killing critical thinking and when thinking is killed, institutions of learning are bound to die. Friedman (2010) is of the view that since our world has become irreversibly interconnected, there is need to build intra and enter collaboration among universities as well as other institutions of learning. Agreeing with Friedman (2010) and the like others, this study proposes the technical use of language and new media to attain collaboration among professionals, individuals, groups and nations, towards attaining social integration and nation-building.

No issue can be best addressed alone by an individual person, group, nation or institution. Dean (2010) notes that "our world needs more, not less collaboration; it needs more synergy and less polarity" (p. 1). Bennis and Biederman (1997) have emphasized that no matter how grounded, talented or self-sufficient an individual might be, the solutions to world's complexities, collective existence, welfare, and so cannot be addressed sufficiently by the individual. Thus, collaborative professionalism is imperative. As Clinton (2010) notes, global issues of political instability, economic inequality, and ecological un-sustainability all require collaboration for lasting solutions. We need to collaborate and get rid of polarization. Collaboration entails sharing resources, information, risks, responsibilities, etc. for even progress, unity of purpose, finding better remedies to problems and so on. It is said that two good heads are better than one. Thus, the need for collaborative professionalism and social integration, which impact of nation-building, cannot be overemphasized.

Weiss and Hughes (2005) have highlighted the benefit of intra and inter collaboration among organizations, individuals and nations alike, as they note that collaboration fosters efficiency through harmonized expertise, perspectives, and backgrounds. The reason is that these differentials enhance each other's capabilities to form something new. Effective collaboration synthesizes differences among participants in

ways that deliver a competitive advantage to the organization (Weiss & Hughes, 2005). Weiss and Hughes (2005) point out that collaboration allows organizations to leverage employees' talents, to co-ordinate knowledge, and respond more quickly to global issues, while at the same time taking advantage of available opportunities. Jones and George (1998) gathered that organizational capabilities, which accrue in the course of internal (i.e. intra) collaboration, augment value and competitive advantage of several other organizations involved in the engagement.

Evans (2015) agrees that there is need to build intra and inter collaboration among tertiary institutions, because that is a viable way of attaining sustainable education in this era that is characterized by multiple challenges. For Evans (2015), interdisciplinary and pragmatic measures and systems of teaching and learning are needed for the attainment of sustainable tertiary education. According to Evans (2015), faculty collaboration and commitment should be developed by faculty groups in order to succeed in building sustainable education through transdisciplinary sustainability praxis. To realize this envisaged goal, institutional priorities, structures, and processes have to be redesigned and repositioned. For the present study, language and new media are among the measures for attaining what Evans (2015) talks about, since they can be used technically to attain collaboration, social integration and nation-building.

Collaborative professionalism is what some scholar consider as transdisciplinarity, which they say should be applied to education and social reforms (Meyer, 2007; Dolling & Hark, 2000). Transdisciplinarity, according to Piaget (1970), is a principle for unity of knowledge across different fields, with the intent of harmonizing ethics, morality, creativity and cultures nations. Crow (2007) has expressed the urgency of the need for academic leaders to commit their institutions to conscious collectivism in order to attain evolutionary transformation in both the education sector and the society at large. Kelly (2009) is of the view that sustainability requires creative, ethical and moral imagination of situations and critical matters of society and thereby experiment with practical ideas. Building collaboration would help in solving pressing problems and to "build a world where everyone can do the same" (Kelly, 2009, p. 45).

Furthermore, collaboration has changed leadership and relationship patterns from the traditional rigid pattern to a flexible seamless one having a lot of offers in stock, including capabilities, skills, experiences, knowledge, competencies, leadership styles, professionalism, decorum, discipline, etc. (Dean, 2010; Gratton & Erickson, 2007; Nohria et al., 2003; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2002; Goleman et al., 2002). The risk of not involving collaborative leadership is echoed by Ibarra and Hunter (2007), who observe that leaders who do not develop their collaborative skills through networks face the danger of derailing and are bound to face difficulty in tackling complex issues that require collaborative experience, skills, techniques, approaches, etc.

Loose, incompetent and ineffective leadership is a serious constraint to collaboration (Evans, 2011; Mudroch, 1992). Horton (1990) is of the view that keeping any persons confined to particular areas (of specialty) is enslaving, and amounts to depriving them of what they can do. Etim-Robert (2016) agrees to that, as she notes that not redesigning jobs to be what women can do means denying them of the tasks they can take up, merely on the basis of gender profiling. That is why jobs such as mechanic, building, carpentering/furniture, commercial driving, manufacturing, etc. were (and are still being) considered the exclusive preserved of men, while cooking, plaiting, etc. are considered those women alone (Etim-Robert, 2016). As Crow (2010) notes, "institutional differentiation, as opposed to standardization, is capable of increasing the relevance of institutions and programs to diverse constituents and making the higher education system as a whole more robust" (pp. 36-7).

Conversely, Crow (2010) notes, "the lack of innovation in our colleges and universities results in an insufficient differentiation between distinct categories of institutions as well as a stultifying homogeneity among institutions of the same type" (p. 36). According to Mulkey (2012), not tackling these issues is a pointer to unresolved crisis. The failure to face the hard situations spells grave consequences. Bearing the implications in mind, Mulkey (2012) observes that many tertiary institutions will fold later on as a result of their unwillingness or inability to tackle the problems facing them. Scholars agree that since the contemporary society is faced with multiple issues, techniques for tackling them should also be multifaceted and interdisciplinary (Evans, 2012; Kahn, 2010; Everett, 2008; McLaren, 2007). Hyun (2011) implicitly accepts that building intra and inter collaboration would help address the complexities of higher education, including reviewing, repositioning and diversifying its curriculum and rooting the system it in multiple values and fields.

Using Language Technically

On using language technically to attain collaborative professionalism, the 168 participants made the points, which are synthesized and highlighted, hereafter. Using language technically for professionalism involves using language appropriately based on context, observing and maintaining the formalities involved. Thus, one has to be concise, clear, unambiguous and professional in their use of language. Some words, phrases, clauses and images, which would cause confusion, have to be avoided. One also has to be mindful of non-verbal communication cues. For instance, when responding to a client or a customer, watch your tongue, voice, mood and attitude so as not to send wrong signals to them and get them disengaged from doing business with you. Using language technically and rightly can allow for positive, peaceful, satisfactory and attractive work environment. Where the foregoing obtains, employees are bound to co-operate and work together peacefully. Using language technically to attain collaborative professionalism also entails putting up an open feedback system for constructive criticisms and impactful opinions and suggestions. Thus, beyond being able to read and write the language(s) of the workplace environment, one needs to use the language appropriately and technically. Technically in this sense means using language and new media to achieve a specific purpose that many other persons would be unable to do, because they fail to or are incapable of using language and new media technically.

More so, by being mindful of what to say and how to use language (words, phrases, clauses, images, non-verbal cues and even sounds) while communicating with others, individuals and groups can build social integration. This is in view of the reality that our thoughts, expressions, actions, decisions, beliefs, views, perspectives, attitude, etc. are all shaped by language. In social relations, no one would tolerate hurtful words or expressions. Thus, as each individual takes cognisance of this reality and avoids using derogatory and hurtful language, social integration obtains. Technical use of language can allow for an inclusive and amicable environment, which promotes social integration. Social integration can be attained by using language technically if the user takes cognisance of cultural and social differences. Since different cultures have different patterns of interaction, relations and communication, using language in such direction would mean using language technically to attain social integration. Blending up and learning from the different members of a social group means a lot, because it impacts positively on social integration.

Also, to use language technically to attain social integration, one has to be a good listener. It means that individuals must learn to be good listeners if they aim at attaining social integration and nation-building. Building trust, learning the intricacies of social relations, and communicating effectively are also parts of what using language technically to attain social integration entails. Empathy is an attribute of technical use

of language to attain social integration. Mannered communication breads smooth interpersonal and intergroup relations. The otherwise produces negative results such as sour relations and conflict-ridden communication. There can be no social integration in settings where sour relations and conflict-ridden communication obtain. Furthermore, language can be used technically to attain nation-building. This entails using language in ways that promote national unity, integration, tolerance, group cohesiveness, smooth relations and effective communication.

Language is a tool for expressing ideas, values, and beliefs to others or among people of different backgrounds and for fostering national unity, nation-building, national integration and development. By promoting a common language or the use of every indigenous language, nation-building is made possible through the use of language technically. Doing so requires collaboration among individuals and groups. The media have unreserved space in doing so. Linguistic inclusivity is another way of building a nation using language technically. Linguistic diversity should be given inclusivity rather than exclusivity. The idea of popular languages submerging the others, such that in counting languages the so-called popular ones alone are counted and accorded relevance, should be got rid of (Nwode et al., 2024). All languages are important and equal. No language or culture is superior or inferior to the others.

In addition, clear and effective communication is another way of using language technically to attain nation-building. To attain nation-building, there should be no linguistic discrimination. People of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds should be carried along in national discourses. Also, nation-building can be attained through promoting and discussing values and linguistic embodiments of different languages in a nation without prejudices and/or any primordial sentiments.

Using New Media Technically

On using new media to attain collaborative professionalism, the 168 participants made the points highlighted hereafter. There are new words applicable to different fields on new media. It is important to identify and master them. Google Keyword Planner or SEMrush can be used to search for such words. Using some keywords that promote the visibility of different professionals would help in the attainment of collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building. The new media can be used to post and spread the practices of collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building. Independent or unified professional groups on new media can use search engine optimization (SEO) to attain collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building. Keywords, meta tags, hashtags, and alt text can be used in content for dissemination on new media to create avenues for collaboration, integrative social interactions and transactions and significant nation-building.

Meaningful engagement with new media audience, using new media language in mannered and impressive ways, would also help ensure collaboration, social integration and nation-building. Conversation and interaction on new media, targeted at attaining the aforementioned, would be result-oriented. These involve questioning, conducting polls, hosting virtual questions and answers, interactive sessions, etc., which all require effectively leveraging the power of language to attain success in new media circle. Essentially, new media can serve as viable means of collaboration among professionals, with which they communicate effectively. Of course, collaboration and real-time communication constitute one of the benefits of new media, especially social media. Besides, professionals of different fields can attain collaboration through the use of platforms such as Slack, Microsoft Teams, and Google Workspace, which allow for effective

interaction and communication between and among teams across any distance, and the sharing of documents, information, knowledge, etc.

Also, project management tools, such as Trello and Asana, make it possible for teams to set deadlines, track tasks, and monitor and evaluate projects. Professionals of different fields can benefit from the use of these tools by collaborating with experts or professionals in Information Sciences or Artificial Intelligence. Video conferencing tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams can also be deployed for collaborative professionalism, social integration and integration among groups. Carrying out activities using these tools create avenues for collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building.

Additional to using the aforementioned tools, social media are phases of new media that can be deployed rightly to attain such purposes. Popular social media include Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Twitter (X), Instagram, Telegram, WeChat, YouTube, Vimeo, and TikTok, to mention but a few. Finally, new media can be used technically to attain social integration and nation-building through wide seamless dissemination of information, creation of inclusiveness, fostering unity, and promoting collaboration, cohesiveness, smooth interpersonal and intergroup relations, political participation, political stability, public accountability, new world orders, improved efficiency, performance, service delivery and productivity.

Conclusion

The study has shown that using language technically and judiciously can lead to the attainment of collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building. While appropriate use of language and new media engenders collaborative professionalism, social integration and nation-building, the otherwise use causes incoherent professionalism, social disintegration, national underdevelopment and issues of intergroup relations. The study calls for collaboration and interdisciplinary partnership among professionals of the different fields of human endeavors on one hand, and individuals and groups on the other. Also, it charges all and sundry to use language and new media appropriately at all times.

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