**DEVELOPMENT MEDIA THEORY**

This propounded by Dennis McQuail (1987) canvasses media support for an existing government and its efforts to bring about socio-economic development. It argues that until a nation is well established and its economic development well underway, media must be supportive rather than critical of government, but assist them in implementing their policies. As the name implies, he theory relates to media in third world nations. It favours journalism that seeks out good news, requires that bad news stories are treated with caution, for such stories could be economically damaging to a nation in the delicate throes of growth and change. The media is seen to fulfill particular social and political duties; hence media freedom while desirable should be subordinated to national integration, socio-economic modernization, promotion of literacy and cultural creativity. Development media theory seeks to accentuate the positive, it nurtures the autonomy of the developing nations and gives special emphasis to indigenous cultures. It is both a theory of state support and one of resistance to the norms of competing nations and competing theories of media. As the press performs its responsibilities, according to McQuail, it bears the following tenets in mind:

• Media must accept and carry out positive development tasks that are in line with the policies formulated by the political leadership and freedom of the press should not be at variance with economic priorities of the government and the development needs of the citizenry.

• Media should therefore give priorities to the coverage of those areas that touch on the lives of the people. In other words, content should be development-driven and should centre on socio-economic and political lives of the people.

• In the overall interest of development, the state has the right to intervene in media operations by the use of censorship devices, especially when the activities of the press are not in consonance with the development objectives of the government. Mass media should accord priority to politically, geographically and culturally contiguous developing countries in their coverage as part of the holistic strategy for less developed societies. McQuail and other scholars like him certainly deserve credit for their penetrating insight, especially into what appears to be common line thinking among leaders of developing countries. But certainly, the expression of these principles can do with some fine-tuning, so as to make them more useful and at that same time in terms acceptable to all conscientious journalist, as working guidelines. It has to be remembered that in spite of the normative truism that “the press always takes on the form and coloration of social and political structures within which it operates”. There are certain journalist values and conventions which are cherished by media professionals in most parts of the worlds, and which therefore impinge on their manner of operation and on their self-perception. Some journalist who have been trained in the western industrialized country or the other see themselves as operating with “ libertarian and social responsibility” principles, which were, in any case the main principles inculcated in them even in their nations training institutions, prior to the advent of development journalism.