ALIGNING JOURNALISM TRAINING TO NATIONAL GOALS AND POLICIESIN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The policy of journalism training in Nigeria was brought and developed by the colonial government with the sole aim of satisfying its administrative interest, which are contrary to the socio- economic and cultural needs of the country. However, in the western developed nations, journalism training was established in line with the developments needs of their societies. Consequently, the existing philosophy of journalism training in Nigeria was designed to provide a professional training expected by the industry based on how it was practice in western developed nations. Therefore this paper reviewed the structure and character of journalism training in Nigeria. It started with the discussion on the concept of Nigeria's national goals and policies, its relationship with journalism training, as well as the challenges associated with the alignment process. The paper concluded that, for developing nations like Nigeria to effectively aligned journalism training with their national goals and policies, there must be a deliberate and concerted effort to redefine journalism philosophy that differs from western oriented approach that was imposed on them through colonialism and neocolonialism.

Introduction
Communication, which journalism is part and parcel of, has die potential for creating a feeling of togetherness, a common pool of ideas and inspiration for individuals, communities and civilizations (MacBride, 1988). In most European countries such as Britain journalism began and "developed organically" over time in response to the needs of society and the particularities of the media sub-industry. Hence, from the onset journalism was driven by a combination of factors which include, though not solely, entrepreneurship; revolution in communication technology; and activism by free speech campaigners and enthusiasts.

Though its history in nearly most societies has clearly not followed an ordered pattern, yet journalism has "never developed in... isolation" of national context (Golding & Elliott, 1979). Journalism as a profession is argued to have a key role in societal and national development. Its emergence as a profession and a 'fourth estate' of the realm is descriptive of its acquired recognition and role as another arm in governance architecture of society that is supposedly independent of both government and market control in the course of discharging its generally agreed role of providing surveillance, education, information and entertainment.

For society to experience balanced and coherent development, all sectors; professional groups and non-governmental bodies need to participate and operate in concert towards achieving identified objectives, which must conform to broader societal interest as stated within the framework of nationally defined goals and policies. In this respect and as part of journalism's

contribution to supporting development in society, synchrony between journalism education and training on the one hand and national goals and policies on the other is both essential and inevitable.

This paper therefore specifically sets out to assess the character and content of journalism training in Nigeria; what Nigeria's national goals and policies are; the relationship between journalism training and national goals and policies; and the challenge(s) faced in the desirous process of 'aligning' journalism training to the national goals and policies. This will expectedly allow for incorporation of local socio-cultural, economic and political needs in the curricula of journalism schools and training to make the knowledge acquired relevant to community and the development process. Option(s) on the possible way out is/are also proffered.

Overview of Journalism Training in Nigeria

The arrival and expansion of European trade along the entire West African coast between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries brought together a large number of people from diverse language groups to create new societies under British influence. English, and shortly a 'trade language' formed from a mixture of different African and European languages known as 'pidgin' and which became a lingua franca along the coastal areas, emerged as two important spoken languages. These two developments gave rise to the need for a new medium of communication in populated and urbanizing trading settlements along the coast such as Freetown and Lagos, hence the introduction and birth of journalism in the form of pamphlets and newspapers as important instrument of missionary, European trading, colonial administration and, from nineteenth century onwards, radical nationalist mobilization (Omu, 1978).

Following the establishment of formal colonialism in Nigeria, journalism practice, both print and broadcast, with the latter being solely under the control of colonial authorities, recruited entrants wholly through on-the job training. Through this recruitment process and legislation, journalism during this period was first and foremost intended to serve and support the British colonization project (Omu, 1978; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Ladele et al, 1979). Even the indigenous press of the colonial and post-colonial era, though 'radical' in tone and approach, was not substantially different in orientation by not generally challenging the foundation and structure of colonialism and considering the role it played in supporting the various pro-western indigenous governments in post-colonial Nigeria (Agbaje, 1992).

Formal system of journalism and mass communication education training in Nigeria and indeed in other African countries has suffered serious neglect in the beginning. "Both colonial rulers in Africa and their succeeding 'African Europeans' regarded media education as an unnecessary undertaking".(Akinfeleye, 2008, p.98).Possibly and partly because of little formal journalism education at university level in Britain itself. No local training of any type was organized until 1954 when a two-week short course was conducted at University of Ibadan for working journalists (Akinfeleye, 2007). Until that time, pioneers in journalism and other communication professions were mainly trained through on the job training and were people from other disciplines who developed interest in journalism. Ali (2005, p. 105) aptly captured the situation thus:

> Journalism training in Nigeria is as old as journalism practice itself. When the 'profession' or practice was introduced into Nigeria, only a few

> practitioners, if any, had formal journalism education. The trend was that they entered into journalism with other qualifications and simply learnt the practice on the job from others who also learnt it from others who also learnt it under similar circumstances (Ali, 2015, p 105).

However, developments m socio-economic and political activities in Nigeria and Africa in general contributed in transforming journalism education system to a higher stage which, as Akinfeleye, (2008, p. 100) observed, increased "the number of journalism training institutions in (both) English and French speaking African countries". Indeed, mass communication is among many other academic programs in Nigeria's higher institutions that were essentially designed to produce quality middle and high level manpower for national development, among other needs.

Journalism Education in Nigeria: Typology, Objectives and Framework

Akinfeleye has observed that "neither the State nor the media industry, the NUJ nor any other group in Nigeria has any special policies on the training of journalists" (Akinfeleye, 2007).There are four different types of journalism education training in Nigeria: the university system; the diploma training; the in service training; and on-the-job training (Akinfeleye, 2008). The university system of journalism and mass communication training was designed to train professional mass communicators for B.Sc/B.A, M.Sc, professional masters and PhD degrees. Presently, there are twenty eight (28) public and thirty (30) private universities offering B. Sc/B.A degrees in mass communication and other media related programmes (JAMB, 2012). Very limited number of these universities offers M.Sc, professional masters & PhD programmes.

The diploma training is designed to provide mid-career communication practitioners. The programme is found in polytechnics, monotechnics and some universities. Presently, there are twenty three (23) public and three (3) private polytechnics, offering OND & HND mass communication programme in Nigeria (JAMB, 2012, NBTE, 2010). "Duration of the diploma programme varies from three to nine months; eighteen months to two years; four years of intensive training in news reporting, editing and sometime ethics and/or communication law" (Akinfeleye,2008,p.l05). The polytechnic diploma programme comprises of Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes in mass communication. The in-service type of journalism and mass communication training is merely a policy of sending some staff of media organizations, communication department and units from various public and private sector organizations to attend formal mass communication academic programmes in universities, polytechnics and other institutions in order to enhance the capacity and skills of staff in the organizations. On the job type of journalism and mass communication training refers to the kind of short term training for staff of media organizations and communication department or unit. It is normally conducted for new or inexperienced staff by the experienced ones for a particular period of time.

Of the four types of journalism training highlighted, university; polytechnic and in-service are formal while on-the-job is not. Also, sometimes, the management of a particular media or communication organization in collaboration with professional bodies may organize special training for their staff.

The Nigerian mass communication education sector is managed by two regulatory bodies established by the federal government. The National Universities Commission (NUC) and

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). The NUC is vested with the responsibility for approving and regulating all university based mass communication academic programmes in Nigeria; while the NBTE is responsible for all polytechnic and monotechnic based mass communication academic programmes. These agencies set out the goals, objectives, and curriculum of the mass communication academic programmes offered by these higher institutions.

According to the National Universities Commission (2007, p.108) the major aim and objectives of B.Sc degree programme in mass communication are itemized in eleven overlapping points as follows:

- To offer an undergraduate professionally oriented programme for the aspiring Nigerian journalists, communicators, broadcasters, public relations and advertising practitioners.
- To train and/or retrain Nigerian journalists, broadcasters, public relations and advertising practitioners for leadership position in mass media organizations in Nigeria and the world.
- To raise and sustain the professional status of journalism in Nigeria.
- To bridge the divergent perspective of news gathering and dissemination.
- To provide the mass communication students with the opportunity to master the art of communicating with the masses that transcends all disciplines, whether in writing or broadcasting for an on-line website at 9.00 p.m. daily newscast, or writing speech for the company chief executive officer (CEO), or writing Advertising or Public Relations copy to sell or promote a product to the masses.
- To instill in the mass communication students the ability to respect deadlines and work under constant pressure.
- To train and encourage Nigerian mass communicators to be effective communicators bybeing able to think quickly,research creatively and write or broadcast concisely to the mass audience.
- To train Nigerian media men and women that would act as the trustees of the public trust and that would be socially responsible to the communities they serve by being accurate, fair, balanced and objective in their reportage of social issues.
- To produce Nigerian mass communicators who will continue to protect the basic principles of the people's right to know as the fourth branch of government or the Fourth Estate of the Realm.
- It is expected that at the end of the degree programme in mass communication the mass communication graduate should be able to differentiate 'Soft News' from 'Hard News'. Truth from falsehood, responsible journalism from irresponsible journalism.
- At the end of the degree programme in mass communication: it is expected that the graduate should be equipped enough to establish his/her own newspaper, magazine, public relations and advertising agencies, or even his/her own radio and/or television stations.

  In broad terms, the National Board for Technical Education's (NBTE) objectives for HND programme in mass communication are not different from those of the universities. The graduates (HND) are expected to;
- Gather, investigate and report news for the print media and electronic media.
- Select, edit, and prepare for publication news items, features, photographic and other graphic materials, and result investigations for print and electronic media.
- Produce, present and direct programmes for the electronic media.

- Plan, prepare and produce materials for public relations and advertising purposes (NBTE, 1986, p.2).

The goals and objectives for B. Sc and HND programmes in mass communication set by NUC and NBTE respectively are in line with the goals of tertiary education as contained in the national policy on education whose objectives for journalism program, among others, were as follows (National Policy on Education, 2004, p.30):

- Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower.
- Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.
- Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.
- Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
- Promote and encourage scholarship and community service.
- Forge and cement national unity.
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The strategies for realizing these goals and objectives in Nigeria as clearly highlighted in the national policy on education are to include teaching; research; virile staff development programmes; and a variety of mode of programmes including full time, part time, block-release, day-release, sandwich, etc. Other strategies include access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund(ITF); Student Industrial Work Scheme (SIWES);maintenance of minimum educational standard through appropriate agencies; inter institutional co-operation; and extra-mural and extension services (The National Policy on Education, 2004,p.31).

These measures are incorporated into the policies and quality control mechanisms for maintaining mass communication education standard by the regulatory agencies and institutions offering mass communication programme in Nigeria.

Nigeria's National Goals and Policies

Nigeria's national goals and policies are not codified in one single document They are scattered in different policy statements and documents across different sectors and levels of government. Yet all the policies broadly take their direction from the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy as specified in chapter two of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic. These objectives and principles define the milestones to be achieved and the role expected of the State in realization of "national ideals". The principles and policies cover all areas of national life, key among which include political, economic, social, educational and cultural. The main tenets of these policies revolve around pursuit of full national integration in every respect, promoting balanced economic development and equal opportunities for all citizens without any form of discrimination, eradication of illiteracy and ensuring equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels; and protection, preservation and promotion of Nigerian cultures. With respect to the mass media agencies, the fundamental objectives and principles place on them the task of upholding responsibility and accountability by Government to the people (Akande, 2000).

In a nut shell, the foregoing fundamental objectives and directive principles broadly define the direction of policies to be formulated in the process of nation building. Consequently, Nigeria's policy direction and goals are anchored on building a peaceful, prosperous and discrimination free Nigeria which will strive at achieving balanced economic development throughout the country. They also seek to protect and promote citizens' rights, provide equal opportunities to all in all areas of national life and use the mass media in ensuring democratic, responsible and accountable governance.

National goals and policies are also sometimes articulated in official reports and documents such as policy statements, national development plans, Vision 2020, medium-term economic policy framework, annual budgetary plans, position papers, etc.

With respect to journalism education in Nigeria, the main goals of journalism training programs, as highlighted in the national policy on education are as follows:

- Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower.
- Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.
- Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.
- Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self- reliant and useful members of the society,
- Promote and encourage scholarship and community service.
- Forge and cement national unity.
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Indeed, a study of Nigeria's of chapter of the constitution dealing with fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy (Akande, 2000), national policy on education (National Policy on Education, 2004) and NUC and NBTE objectives for journalism training (NUC, 2007, NBTE, 1986) will indicate, emphasis on concepts such as 'national development', 'national integration', 'national unity', 'national understanding' and' equal opportunities'. However, although with respect to NUC and NBTE, there are objectives for journalism training focusing on inculcating academic and professional skills, the issue still remains that Nigeria's national goals and policies, including those on journalism education and training, revolve around promoting national cohesion and development. It is also in that context that journalism and all other professions are expected to direct their professional expertise and drive.

Specific policy statements on the intent and essence of journalism education and training can also be found and understood in important documents such as the national policy on mass communication and the various laws establishing and guiding the operations of the various stakeholder agencies having responsibility in various specializations in journalism such as Nigeria Press Council (NPC), National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR). Others include, Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), National Video and Film Censor's Board (NVFCB), Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) etc.

However, effective realization of Nigeria's national goals with the existing generic western oriented journalism education system is difficult if not impossible to achieve by both Nigeria and similar developing nations colonized by western powers. According to Papoutsaki:

> Globalization has enhanced western hegemonic practices in this field. It is considered thus important to find ways to decolonize, de-westernize, de-hegemonize knowledge producing systems by looking at alternative, local options. The main issues as identified within this context are: a) dominance of western values and knowledge on non-western educational systems; b)western influence on journalism/media/communication studies, curricula and practices in non-western and developing countries; c) insufficient locally produced research on journal ism/media/communication curricula and practices and lack of confidence in abilities to deviate from the dominant paradigm (Papoutsaki, 2007, p.2).

Perhaps partly still as a consequence of the influence of the western oriented curricula and training, journalism practitioners in developing countries conceptualize news from western journalistic perspectives and professional outlook (Righter: 1978). Necessarily therefore they focus more on politics, elite political rivalry and contest for political power more for personal advantage rather than societal interest. They also focus much on negative oriented news which fractionalizes society more than it promotes national integration and development Hence, not surprisingly the news media in Nigeria is currently filled with news about defection across the two leading political parties in Nigeria - the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) by political actors; and on conflict between herders and farmers in various parts of the country.

Aligning Journalism Education Training/ Curricula to National Goals/Policies

Journalism as a profession and an academic field of study in developing nations has over time been faced with several agitations and observations from communication scholars and professionals on restructuring the journalism education system used in those countries. The need for the restructuring is necessitated by the industry centered structure of the journalism education system in operation in several non-western countries around the world. The curriculum was designed without taking into consideration the accommodation of changes continuously taking place in the world of human communication needs. According to Mensing (2011, p. 18) the major features of this system of journalism education are;

i. An unexamined focus on turning students into professionals, despite trends toward de-professionalization and contested meanings of the term 'professional'.
ii. Focus on teaching students skills and techniques that reinforce assumptions of one-way communication.
iii. Focus on socializing students for particular types of newsrooms rather than how to engage in critical inquiry.

These are regarded as the obstacles in the journalism education sector that prevent blending theory and practice and prepare student to operate in the ever transforming communication environment (Mensing, 2009). Taking cognizance of this western centric system of journalism education, UNESCO introduced a new model curricula for journalism education for developing

countries and emerging democracies in 2007.Freedman and Shafer (2008) analyses the UNESCO curricula in developing nations and identified several obstacles related to faculty expertise, available technology, students' qualifications, university administrative structures, affordability, level of governmental control over media on its implementation and compatibility with the cultural, religious and historical condition of the developing nations.

Consequently, Serve as (2009) identified three major areas that should be considered as the focus in reconstituting journalism education;

i. The need to focus on service to the public not industry.
ii. The need to address challenges posed by new economic technological, cultural and social realities,
iii. The need to make journalism education diverse, inclusive and local.

Therefore, journalism education is supposed to instill critical thinking and inspire students to intellectual debate and not only inculcate professional skills on the operation and functions of the media in the service of dominant political and social groups (Golding & Elliott, 1979; Freedman & Shafer, 2008).

Challenges for Aligning Journalism Training to Nigeria's National Goals/Policies

Adopted from Western system of journalism training which emphasizes industry centered training, the Nigerian journalism education system is focused on providing manpower for occupations and sub-sectors of the journalism industry (Jibril, 2009). Even as the requirement for journalism practice is still not regularized. Thus, the major limitation of Nigeria's journalism training sector vis-a-vis the attainment of national goals is to do with regulation of entry into journalism and the curriculum itself. For example, of the eleven training objectives for degree programs spelt ON; by NUC were solely practical skills oriented, having to do more with news writing and editing, meeting news deadlines, speech writing, advertising and public relations copy writing. Similarly, the four objectives for diploma in journalism training spelt out by NBTE were all practical skills oriented (NUC, 2007 & NBTE, 1986). Critical social science based training or component, which is fundamental to the application of professional skills in realization of the "national ideals" spelt out in chapter two of the 1999 Constitution, the journalism training objectives relating to "forge(ing) and cement(ing) national unity" and "promote(ing) national and international understanding and interaction" stated in the national policy on education, seems missing in the case of diploma training or under emphasized in the case of degree programs. Indeed, a decade after the presentation of the UNESCO designed curriculum for journalism education for developing countries and emerging democracies, journalism training is still designed more in favor of professional skills than at attaining a balance between inculcating both professional skills and critical social science based study of society.

Akinfeleye (2011 & 2008) also identified six key challenges in the sector of which inadequate teaching staff is one of them. This problem is common to all Nigerian universities, polytechnics and institutions offering mass communication academic programmes, making it nearly impossible to find any institutions having required number of academic and technical staff in terms of staff-students ratio.

> The consequence of this is that lecturers are overloaded with teaching and/or administrative responsibilities to the detriments of scholarship and excellence. It is common at most of the Nigeria mass communication department to find a lecturer teaching between 22 - 26 hours weekly in addition to his/her departmental responsibilities such as supervision of students thesis or project, serving as admissions officer, or time table officer, serving senate committees and many others. The result of these is that lecturers have little or no time to adequately carry out research for their own advancement (Akinfeleye, 2011,p.42).

Large classes are another problem affecting mass communication education sector in Nigeria. Mass communication programme is one of the social courses with large number of students. "It is very common to find one lecturer teaching a writing course of more than 125 students at one time. Often, this has neither a Graduate Assistant nor a public address system" (Akinfeleye, 2011, p.43).

Another problem is lack of adequate relevant textbooks in Nigeria for teaching and learning in mass communication. Current mass communication text books are very expensive, as they are mostly imported from Europe and US. This makes it difficult for the lecturers and students to have all the relevant text of various mass communication courses. Also, most of the books available in the library are outdated.

> At present time, most of the students in journalism and mass communication training institutions have to depend on their lecturers textbook and/ or handouts. This situation is unsatisfactory particularly in such a skilled professional discipline as mass communication (Akinfeleye, 2011, p.43).

There is also the challenge of lack of modern communication equipment. Absence of modern digital multimedia communication equipment such as internet facilities, computers, projectors, smart board and other studio facilities, is militating against teaching modern trend in mass communication. Sometimes international agencies and non-governmental organization like UNESCO, USAID, UNICO use to donate modern communication facilities to some departments of mass communication, however, poor maintenance culture and lack of spare parts in Nigeria make utilizing them very difficult (Akinfeleye, 2011).

Another problem affecting mass communication education is lack of adequate accommodation. There is serious shortage of classrooms, offices and laboratories is all Nigeria's mass communication departments.

> It is common to find two or more lecturers sharing a 9x12 office space. Class-rooms which were originally designed to accommodate 35 students are now being used by more than 120 students usually crowding themselves together for lectures, practicum, tutorials etc. Laboratories originally designed to accommodate 15 to 20 students at time is now being used by between 80 - 160, students find themselves crowded in the laboratory for practical, etc. It is a

> common scene to find students pushing, and/or struggling to carry chairs from one class room to the other (Akinfeleye, 2008, p. 107).

Finally, there is the problem of poor remuneration package for journalism and mass communication educators in Nigeria. Many mass communication educators engage in other extra work or change toother professions in order to meet the end means. Akinfeleye (2011,p.44) noted that "when compared with their counter parts in other professions, poor salaries are often cited as major reasons journalism/communication lecturers often cross over to better paid jobs in the industries, corporations, banks, media houses and/or international agencies".

Conclusion

For developing nations to effectively incorporate their national development goals and policies into the curriculum of journalism training there must be a deliberate and concerted effort to redefine journalism philosophy and practice in accordance with national goals and policies. Such redefinition must also integrate indigenous system of journalism education arid deviate from western oriented approach that was imposed on the nations through colonialism and neo-colonialism. The new journalism education system must align with the new journalism philosophy which should be rooted firmly on national goals and policies. In agreement with Papoutsaki:

> There is a need to move away from generic models. New approaches need to be devised or explored within local contexts and older ones such as development journalism need to be re-examined and given space to grow afresh. Journalism practices, education and research methodologies should be informed of the alternative options, base their foundations on local knowledge systems, need and values. We need to urge young people to learn and practice journalism in such ways that borrow knowledge from their communities and benefits them directly by sharing their findings with them (Papoutsaki, 2007, p. 13).

This action will enable developing nations to initiate a system of journalism education that is rooted on the socio-economic, political and cultural institutions of their indigenous community. In order for journalism to be actively in the forefront in the process of national development, journalism training must "elevate" the role of journalism from that of a watchdog in society to that ofa "watch-tower" (Akinfeleye, 2007). This calls for striking a balance in the content of journalism curricula in terms of inculcating critical social science knowledge on the one hand and practical professional skills on the other in order to produce active "participant-journalists" in the process of achieving national goals and development.

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