Assessing Nigeria's National Communication Policies on Radio and Television from 1932 to 2019

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Abstract

This paper traces the evolution and development of National Communication Policies from three administrative phases; colonial (1932-1959), civilian (1960-1966 & 1999-to-date) and military (1966-1979 & 1983-1999) eras. It argues that while some of the policies were formulated in line with the fundamental human rights and directive principles of state policy as contained in chapter II of the Nigeria's Constitution, substantial number of policies have partisan political inclination right from the colonial, military and civilian governments. Secondary data was relied on. The study recommended that Nigeria must further democratize the process of producing National Communication Policy to involve more stakeholders. It is also recommended that each state of the federation should have one representative who is a competent media practitioner from each of their senatorial districts as ad hoc member; this is in addition to the widely known members of the National Information Council.Whenever there is going to be a review of the national communication policy in Nigeria, the council and ad hoc members will make the review. However, the review should be made every five years or whenever the need arises.

Key words: *Communication policy, media, regulation and broadcasting*

Introduction

National Communication Policy is gradually gaining attention of communication scholars and researchers in Nigeria. Communication

policy was first defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a "set of principles and norms established to guide the behavior of communication systems" (UNESCO, 1972 p. 8). This definition entails that communication policies set out some values, norms and regulations that control the media and communication industry with a view to specifying the duties of journalists, entrenching professionalism, protecting the rights of media professionals, ensuring journalistic ethics, setting advertising standards, encouraging for self-regulation and media-public relationships, among other things. In other word, national communication policy provides structure from which communication systems and emerging technologies can be blended and utilized in a more coordinated way for the benefit of the entire society (Michael, &Kayode, 2014; Pate, & Gwadabe, 2017).

Communication policy encompasses policies and guidelines on the type of media ownership, inter-relationship between media and government, defined framework for achieving national goals, protection of national sovereignty and promoting national ideologies from social, cultural, economic and political perspectives as well as form of communication infrastructure to be adopted (Michael, & Kayode, 2014). Generally, communication policies are contextually shaped based on society's communication approach and media system. The policies are prepared in accordance with country's development goals and needs and it may be unwritten (latent) or written in a single document (UNESCO, 1979), or what Michael andKayode (2014) called implicit or explicit communication policies. This paper, therefore, reviewed the available secondary data on national communication policies in Nigeria, its evolution andimpacts, among other things.

Evolution of National Communication Policy

Most of the developing countries are believed to have evolved communication policies only when UNESCO raised concern on communication and development policies (Pate, & Gwadabe, 2017)

as a result of which it commissioned a research with objectives of finding out those who control the media, whose interest it serves, kind of resources it uses and the nature of output (products) it provides etc (UNESCO, 1980; Michael, & Kayode, 2014).

In Nigeria, communication policy is made centrally and always strives to achieve some goals like securing privileges for public service broadcasting, ensuring autonomy and accountability of media, initiating control measures and more importantly open market for competition (Fourie, 2006). Most of the policies are in line with the international organizations' suggestions (for example, United Nations agencies, such as UNESCO and ITU), regional organizations (for example, ECOWAS) and constitutional provisions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, particularly chapter II, which set out the fundamental objectives and directive principles of our state policy (Idachaba, 2015). This viewpoint is supported by Opubor, Akingbulu, & Ojebode (2010, pp. 61-62) who state that communication policies are largely made by governments and that the scenario is same even at the developed nations where media is commercially-oriented, and where decision and "policy makers are drawn from varied backgrounds and given substantial elbowroom to make policy recommendations, the final document as well as its tilt and biases often reflect the ideological preferences of the group in power".

The broad objectives of Nigeria's national communication policy, as enunciated by Idachaba (2015, p. 5-6), include identifying critical and central organs, mechanisms, or institutions of our society that are involved in the development of Nigeria's communication system, both internally and externally. Other objectives are meant to provide guidelines for the mobilizations and development of those institutionalized mechanisms to achieve national objectives and aspirations; to mobilize all structures in society in a chain system relationship for the propagation of national goals and objectives; to evolve a rational and systematic backing of all communication media and resources for the achievement of national goals; to

establish operational boundary for the media industry to promote and consolidate the national interest.

The objectives set out to promote and consolidate the national interest; to ensure better management of communication resources to facilitate development and nation building; to harness our immeasurable cultural wealth to develop an authentic Nigerian culture, to cultivate a deep sense of patriotism in our people and to propagate world-wide distinctive national identity. Lastly, the objectives set to further at home and abroad those cardinal principles upon which our nation and constitutions are founded and which protect and enhance Nigeria's national interests and security in the international system; to encourage creativity and promote indigenously rooted innovation for the collective good rather than for individual self-expression.

First document on national communication policy emerged in 1990 as a by-product of a one-week seminar organized by the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture in February, 1987 in Lagos. In attendance were highly resourceful intellectuals, media practitioners and administrators drawn from communication and media industry as well as the academia amounting to over 250 (Pate, & Gwadabe, 2017). After extensive deliberations, a report was submitted to the National Council on Information and Culture in March, 1987. Subsequently, National Council of Ministers, National Council of State and the Armed Forces Ruling Council adopted, with amendments on April 10, 1990, the policy documents which was called 'the 1990 Mass Communication Policy' (Idachaba, 2015). Even though, policy making involves participation of relevant stakeholders, it is largely attested that general public participation in the process is lacking, despite the fact that the first national communication policy was produced by over 250 stakeholders (Michael, & Kayode, 2014). The 1990 national communication policy covered print media, electronic media, film industry, culture and cultural institutions, integration of traditional and modern

media, external communication structures and cultural attaché corps (Pate, & Gwadabe, 2017).

As a result of emerging technologies, mass communication was rapidly manifesting its dynamism, hence, the need for review of the 1990 national mass communication policy. In 2004, therefore, there was a production of reviewed policy which added government communication, ICT, legal and human rights, advertising and public relations (Idachaba, 2015). However, in 2014, there was another policy thrust which has successfully scaled-through to become what is popularly referred to as 'National Information Policy'. Significant changes introduced in 2014 include splitting the Ministry of Information and Communication to be two independent ministries (Ministry of Information and Ministry of Communication), National Council on Information was to be re-named: National Information Council, to be chaired by the Minister of Information and drawn representatives from the Senate, House of Reps., State Houses of Assemblies, professional media-related bodies and associations, traditional rulers, women groups, mass communication training institutions, inter-religious councils, etc. (Idachaba, 2015).

Another important policy was made in 2011 to further the Nigeria's democracy, makeaccess to information easier and strengthenfreedom of expression. This policy was the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), signed into law on May 28, 2011 (FOI Act, 2011). This step has repealed the popular 'Official Secret Act, 1962', which made it criminal for a public servant to disclose official information on government affairs without authorization (Malemi, 1999). The Act promotes openness and transparency in conducting government businesses by making public information and records available to all who requested for it, protecting public servants who disclose official information without authorization from adverse consequences. The principal Act, especially section 12, made it clear about certain information that can be denied for any applicant, like issues of national security, issues that can affect

the overriding public interest, international affairs and privacy of individuals (Idachaba, 2015).

In order to comprehensively analyze communication policies, attempt was made to classify the policies into three eras of administration Nigeria had witnessed. Nigeria witnessed at least three form of administration/political eras and each with its distinct objectives; colonial (1861-1960), military (more than two decades) and civilian which intermittently suffered military interventions (Nigeria's democracy is three decades old cumulatively). Several media systems and policies defined each of the three dispensations as Opubor et al., (2010, p. 63) put it that "different political and economic contexts produce different media policies". Whereas civilian governments' media policy objectives tilted towards entrenching the core values of democracy including freedom of expression and equal opportunities and participation (Opubor, 2010), military government, on the other hand, suppresses such freedom in most cases (refer to decree no. 34 for example). However, it can be argued that it was military government that opened up the Nigeria's spectrum through deregulation which gave rise to broadcast media stations to the tune of over 600 in Nigeria as at 2014 (Jibril, 2006; NBC, 2014; Rabilu&Abdullahi, 2019).

Communication Policy under Colonial Government

Tracing the historical antecedents of Nigeria's communication policies, one has to refer back to the colonial period which according to Matumaini (2010) is the genesis of African communication policies. Media policies (especially on broadcasting) during colonial period required for the approval of the colonial office in London for almost all the British West African Colonies to operate broadcast apparatus; this is in addition to technical assistance by the BBC (Malam, & Rabilu, 2016). Broadcasting began in Nigeria in 1932 with what was called radio re-diffusion system (RDS) by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) which singlehandedly served both as a broadcaster and at the same time

regulator (Opubor et al., 2010; Malam, & Rabilu, 2016). The introduction of RDS according to Yusuf (2016, p. 9) was not as a result of satisfying the "information need of the people but by such motive as a powerful propaganda machinery for the British and the wider world".

The RDS system of broadcasting continued until 1951 when the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) was established. According to Akinfeleye (2017), a historic policy was made in 1954 when a motion was moved and supported at the Federal House of Representatives transforming NBS into a BBC-model organization. By 1956, new broadcasting organization known as Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) came into being as an independent operator. Part of the policies under which NBC was expected to operate includes a "Board of Governors and three regional boards. The governors were to be responsible for the corporation's policies and activities, and were required to report on its stewardship to Parliament through a designated Minister" (Opubor et al., 2010, p. 64).

Another significant change occurred in 1954 when Action Group succeeded in getting issues of broadcasting placed under concurrent powers. By implication, it was now "within the competence of the central and regional governments" (Opubor et al, 2010 p. 64). This gave chance for the establishment of WNTV-WNBS in 1959 in Ibadan, Western region; ENBS-ENTV in 1960 in Eastern region and Northern region followed in 1962 by establishing RKTV (Yusuf, 2016; Ihechu, & Okugo, 2013; Ogunsanwo, 2001; Sambe, 2015).

Communication Policies under Civilian and Military Governments

In 1960, Nigeria got independence, and an elected government was ushered in with a serious thirst to have control over NBC. To fulfill its desire of having a mouthpiece to further its goals and promote its policies positively, the central government had in 1961 sought the approval of the parliament to directly control NBC. Adding more

light on this, Opubor et al. (2010) said the Central government did not only get parliament's approval but got the nod to place NBC under ministerial supervision of the Information Minister who in turn givesdirectives to the corporation which was initially planned to have full autonomy. It is quite necessary to make it clear that the first republic was responsible for truncating the designed policy for NBC's independence five years after the first policy was introduced. However, the Central government established its own television station in April 1962 called the Nigeria Television Service (NTS) in Lagos, though, according to Yusuf (2016), the station was established in partnership with NBC international of America.

The Nigeria's first civilian government was truncated in January 1966 and six months later a counter coup was staged which saw Yakubu Gowon as the Head of State. First, the administration had in 1967 integrated the central government-owned Nigerian Television Service (NTS) into the structure of NBC and addressed it as NBC-TV. Equally, the administration came with a plan to expand NBC as a result of creation of 12 states and later 7 additional states were added to make the list 19 replacing the old regional system. Government had in 1969 initiated what it called "Radio Development Project", which entails the establishment of NBC stations in 1976 in all the 19 states of the federation (as 7 more states were created). But, in 1975, the Murtala Muhammad led-administration upturned the merger between NBC and NTS.

There was another new policy which "pulled NBC-TV out of the NBC structure and elevated it into a full-fledged parastatal called the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA)" (Opubor et al., 2010, p. 66). NTA was empowered to supervise and regulate all television stations in Nigeria under the new policy. State governments were only left to operate radio stations as TV was made an exclusive preserve of the federal government. Television stations already established by some state governments like the WNTV were subsumed by the NTA, after 17 years of broadcasting being it first TV station in Nigeria. A decree was promulgated (NTA Decree 24

of 1977), which took effect in a draconian way as the administration back-date the commencement of its application to April 1976 (Iredia, 2017). By this NTA became the single source of television broadcasting in Nigeria and was mandated to ensure the establishment of TV stations in states where none was in existence.

At the same time, the administration came up with another powerful policy on radio broadcasting whereby NBC was restructured and got it name changed to Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) through decree no. 8 of 1978 which structured FRCN into four zonal stations: Kaduna, Enugu, Ibadan and Lagos. The government also made Short Wave an exclusive preserve to itself, while states were to transmit only on medium wave. A policy was also made directing FRCN to immediately hand over all its infrastructures (stations) in the 19 states of the federation to the respective state governments (Egbon, 2006).

Akinfeleye (2017) said that preparatory to handing-over to the civilian government, the military amended the 1963 Constitution and inserted some provisions in the 1979 Constitution which altered communication policy especially in relation to opening up the broadcasting space to both public and private individuals and repealed the earlier decree monopolizing television broadcasting exclusively to the federal government. It was provided in Section 36 of the 1979 Constitution that "without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1) of this section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions. Provided that no person other than the Government of the Federation, or a State or any other person or body authorized by the President shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever" (FRN Constitution, 1979). This was entirely different from the provision of section 25 of the 1963 Constitution, which simply provided that "every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference" (FRN

Constitution, 1963). But, the provision was never practically used until in 1992. There was minimal growth of broadcast industry during this period until after deregulation.

Opubor et al. (2010) add that in 1979 another civilian government came in but this time with a presidential system of government, deviating from the old order of parliamentary system. The party politics and political interest of the ruling class to have media for campaign and propaganda, like in the first republic, played out here. To achieve that, an 'executive bill' was sent to the National Assembly urging it to amend the 1978 FRCN Decree made by the military governments a year to its election. The bill required for the splitting of the existing four zonal offices of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria into making each state of the federation that has FRCN station to be controlled centrally. But, the bill did not see the light of the day because of opposition by northern lawmakers and governors who did notwant FRCN Kaduna dismantled (Opubor et al., 2010).

> Despite this, the federal government went ahead to establish and operate radio stations, first in the states controlled by the opposition parties and later in other states where the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was in power. Apart from this, during its short spate of existence, the civilian government did not make a policy that developed or controlled the media. It also failed to utilize the provisions of the Constitution which allowed commercial broadcasting (Opubor et al., 2010, p. 69).

Opubor et al. (2010) continued that Shehu Shagari's civilian administration was toppled by the military in 1983 and they held unto power until 1999, except for the three months Chief Ernest Shonekan spent as Interim President. There were many decrees and policies formulated in order to strengthen or weaken media operations.FRCN decree of 1978 was the first to be affected in 1988 as it was made a commercial entity in which it was expected to "generate revenue through commercial advertisement and sponsored programmes, participation in the commercial music industry, staging concerts and popular drama in theatres and charging fees for the use

of its choirs" (Opubor et al., 2010, p. 69).The commercialization effort was largely as a result of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced by the IBB administration (Galadanci, 2000; Olofin, 2000).

The military government under General Ibrahim Babangida had convened a National Communication policy seminar in Lagos in 1987 to look at various concerns affecting the industry with the view to addressing them. So many of the issues were raised earlier at the UNESCO which resulted in 'many voices, one world', showing that the imbalances in information flow and access were not at the international level alone (UNESCO, 1980), but even within the multicultural nations like Nigeria (Pate, 2017). Report of the seminar identified 97,000 communities in Nigeria and advised for the establishment of community viewing centers in each of the communities, purposely to cultivate television viewing/consumption culture in the rural areas. Adoption and usage of indigenous languages by broadcast media was strategically furthered as a result of the policy (Yusuf, 2016).

According to Idachaba (2015), there was a national mass communication policy of 1990 which addressed issues about broadcast media. Among the policy objectives were for the broadcast media to serve as a vehicle for mobilization of rural populace for national development, providequality and efficient broadcasting service to all people of the country, disseminate information to enhance the welfare of the people in all aspects of life, serve as a regular platform for communication between the government and the people, and to effectively cover the entire nation as well as givepriority to broadcasting in indigenous languages for direct relevance to local communities (Akinfeleye, 2017; Idachaba, 2015; Opubor, et al., 2010).

This is in line with the UNESCO's call for nations to address the threat posed on national culture(language inclusive) by foreign direct cultural transmission of alien values and norms through the

mass media to particularly third world (Yusuf, 2016). UNESCO through its Director-General accused media of reflecting "the thinking, the ideas, the values, in short, the vision of the world of those who use them. When they serve as the channel for transmitting to a given region value systems or ways of life which are foreign to the people of that region, they cannot be prevented in the end from wiping out the specific values of those people, thus becoming, even if unintentionally, instruments of cultural alienation" (Yusuf, 2010, p. 10).

Also, in 1991 FRCN decree was amended and stripped off its power to broadcast externally. It was also streamlined into ministerial supervision rather than boards alone. The reason was simple: because Voice of Nigeria was about to take off as the Nigeria's external broadcasting platform (Akinfeleye, 2017; Opubor et al., 2010).

Interestingly, the 1990 communication policy retained policy on media ownership using the model of public-private, even though it was clearly stated that "the time is however not yet ripe for private ownership of the (broadcast) media" (Opubor et al., 2010, p 71). Despite the 'not-ripe notion', public broadcast stations increased in 1991 because of the creation of additional nine states with each of the new states establishing a broadcast station (Jibril, 2006). To implement the policies, the document allowed for the "establishment of a regulatory body, a redress of the imbalance in information flow so that impulses shall also commence from rural areas and communities, the carrying out of audience measurement activities in all the local community areas in the country to determine at all times the impact and the effectiveness of the subject area and the establishment of viewing and listening centers in all local communities" (Akinfeleye, 2017, pp. 124-125).

For external radio broadcasting services to reach the heterogeneous and scattered audience globally, government promulgated decree no. 15 of 1991 establishing *Voice of Nigeria*. It is expected to promote

Nigeria's viewpoint to any part of the world, a function carried out earlier by an arm of the FRCN. It was banned from accepting or airing commercial advertisements, including sponsored announcements, except those duly approved for United Nations' agencies like WHO, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, ITU, etc.

Voice of Nigeria (VON) was also mandated to broadcast news and other programmes in English, French, Fulfulde, Hausa, Swahili and other languages that it may deem fit from time to time.

Establishing an external radio service might be linked to the perceived power of media as suggested by the classical social theory of communication reinforcing the passiveness of message receivers whose disposition is so low to resist powerful and persuasive external media content (Yusuf, 2016).

Also, another milestone was recorded in 1992 by enacting decree no. 38 of 1992 establishing the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) as a regulatory body empowered to receive, process and consider applications for the establishment, ownership or operation of radio and television stations. It is also to serve as a consultant and adviser to the Federal Government on the implementation of the National Mass Communication Policy with particular reference to broadcasting (NB Code, 2016). NBC generally regulates the broadcast industry by setting standards and applying sanctions. NBC like other media agencies such as FRCN and VON was statutorily placed under ministerial control and supervision (Malam, & Rabilu, 2016).

1983 to 1999 was a historic policy period in Nigeria especially for broadcasting. Opubor et al., (2010, p. 75) summarized it:

> The second military dispensation was important for the significant changes it brought to broadcasting. It moved broadcasting from the one-tier government broadcasting to a two-tier-government and commercial-broadcasting system. This is in addition to separating the external broadcasting, Voice of Nigeria, from FRCN. It was also during this period that the National Broadcast Commission came to be the Nigerian equivalent of America's Federal Communications Commission. Government withdrawal

from complete funding of governmentowned broadcasting took place during this period. Governmentstations now had to search for funds by commercializing. This, it should be observed, has had devastating influence on the stations' commitment to public service and development Government withdrawal from complete funding did not mean any release of the political control of the stations because the governmentstill maintained a tight rein on the stations.

Communication Policies in the Fourth Republic

In 1999 military government handed over to an elected civilian government after twenty-six yearintervention. Today, Nigeria has20 years of uninterrupted democracy and a lot has been recorded. Firstly, there was a review of the 1990 National Mass Communication Policy in 2004 by 24-member Committee under the chairmanship of the former information Minister, Chief Ayo Ogunlade (Akinfeleye, 2017; Opubor et al., 2010). It submitted its report in November 2004. The committee came up with several policies that will guide the general conduct and operation of the media industry.

In the area of broadcasting, it was recommended that the statutory Licensing/Regulatory Authority shall be an independent, non-sectional body with well-defined sources of funding, and that the regulatory body should be a product of convergence of broadcasting, telecommunication and other new media technologies. It has also recommended that the media shall be made accessible and affordable to all Nigerians; conditions shall enhance national capacity for producing highquality indigenous broadcast programs; efforts should be made to encourage an environment conducive to growth, profit and service delivery; and promotion and the development of public and private broadcasting as well as the development of community broadcasting shall be promoted. Others were that the broadcast regulatory agency shall de-commercialized news,and ensure that terrestrial stations allocate at least 20% of their programmes to rural activities while community stations allocate

80% to their immediate communities. It added that private broadcasters shall be commercially-driven, while public service broadcasters shall not be involved in commercial broadcasting but fully funded from sources like license fees, grants and other industry charges (Akinfeleye, 2017; Opubor et al., 2010).

Secondly, in 2006, the Federal Government commissioned a 17-member Committee under the headship of Professor Alfred Opubor to come up with a holistic National Community Radio Policy as a third tier of broadcasting in Nigeria (NB Code, 2012). The committee submitted its report in December 2006 with recommendations such as popularizing community radio idea through advocacy and sensitization by the relevant stakeholders; its license should be free with fixed processing duration not beyond three months; accountability, transparency and responsiveness should be the watchwords for managing community stations; NBC should dedicate at least 15% FM frequency solely for community radio. Other recommendations are:

> For planning purposes, a nominal transmission power requirement of 100 watts Effective Radiated Power (ERP) may be assumed; However, higher ERP levels should be permissible where the terrain and purposed coverage area justifies this. Community radio shall be registered as legal "not-for-profit" entities with ownership primarily (at least 60 per cent) drawn from people and organizations in the locality to be served. Community radio stations shall be permitted to raise funds through advertising, sponsorship, and other diverse sources. No single source should account for more than 50 per cent. Institutionalize a public-private-community stakeholder structure to propose a research agenda and supervise the provisions of this policy (Opubor et al., 2010, p. 77-78).

The policy has since started yielding result as 17 community radio stations were licensed across Nigeria in April 2017 alone (Akinfeleye, 2017) and more community stations are on the pipeline, signaling additional liberalization of radio broadcasting.

Thirdly, in line with the global trend of digitization: transition from analogue to digital broadcasting, the federal government set up December, 2007 as the tentative Nigeria'stransition start-off date in order to meet the 2015 global deadline for the transition and 2012 was set as the country's transition deadline. Despite setting 2007 as the starting point of the transition, government had not acted until in the late 2008, when it inaugurated a 27-member Presidential Advisory Committee (PAC) to advise government on how to go about the digitization programme under the chairmanship of Mr. Isaac Wakombo. In June 2009, the Committee submitted its report with several recommendations (Opubor et al., 2010).

It was proposed in the report to introduce a new broadcast model that will restructure the licensing framework in the broadcast industry, suggesting two categories of licenses: Broadcasting Content License (content provider) and Broadcasting Signal Distribution License (signal distributor). Two signal carriers: Pinnacle Communications Ltd, which is a private signal carrier, and Integrated Television Services (ITS), a public signal carrier carved out of the existing NTA structure in collaboration with Star Company of China, were licensed by government in 2014. Equally, NBC licensed thirteen (13) indigenous companies to locally assemble and manufacture Set Top Boxes in Nigeria which serve just like a decoder that enable the conversion of analogue signal to digital. In order to protect the boxes from hacking, piracy and ensure conditional access, NBC engaged the middleware operator Inview Nigeria Limitedin 2016 (Pate & Wilson, 2017).

Pate and Wilson (2017) add that, on 30th of April 2016, a pilot scheme of transition to digital broadcasting was launched in Jos; Abuja followed on 22nd of December 2016 and Ilorin in 2017.Policy on quick realization of the project through financial support, service efficiency and national security was made. Issues of spectrum dividend and management resulting from the transition in a manner that Nigeria and Nigerians will benefit greatly, adoption of Set-Top-Box towards democratizing accessibility and makingit affordable to

all Nigerians, and content industriesare currently being developed to meet Nigeria's content requirement.

Fourthly, in 2009, Nigerian government aspired to make the country one of the world largest 20 economies by the year 2020; in what the then government called Vision 20:20:20. To fulfill its aspiration, government set up a National Technical Working Committee on media and communication in April 2009, chaired by Dr. Tom Adaba. The committee submitted its report in July 2009 with various recommendations which Opubor et al. (2010, p. 79) summarized as "instituting comprehensive policy and legal reforms, establishing community media in all communities in Nigeria, increasing media consumption habit among Nigerians, promoting more specialized media and communication training, providing state-of-the-art equipment in all media organizations and promoting open and accountable leadership at all levels".

Fifthly, on November 9, 2017, UNILAG for the second time became first Nigerian university to get operational license for campus television broadcasting. The university had in 2002 become the first institution to have been granted license to operate campus FM as an instructional facility and today, there are over 30 of such radio stations in Nigeria (Akinfeleye, 2017). However, Bayero University, Kano was equally issued television broadcast license in August, 2019.

Lastly, in what appears to be the largest single approval, President Muhammadu Buhari has approved over 100 additional broadcast licenses, including additional television network in the last quarter of 2018 as announced by the DG NBC, Malam IshaqModibboKawu (Malam &Rabilu, 2019).

Finally, Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, had inaugurated a seven-member NBC reform implementation committee on Thursday October 10, 2019 under the chairmanship of Prof. Armstrong Idachaba, Director, Broadcast Monitoring, NBC, with Sir. Goffery Ohuabunwa, J.K. Ehicheoya,

Hajia Binta Adamu Bello, Mr. Ibrahim Jimoh, Hon. Agbo Kingsley Ndubuisi, and Mr. Joe Mutah as members. The committee is expected to advise government on how to implement the recommendations given by an earlier committee set up by the Minister on Wednesday, April 10th 2019 to review the activities of NBC during the 2019 general elections (*Daily Trust Newspaper,* April 15, 2019, p. 12). Twenty-six recommendations were offered and all got the approval of President Muhammadu Buhari.

The recommendations, if implemented, could strengthen the NBC's regulatory role by making it more effective. They include: independence of the NBC from political interference and power to issue or withdraw broadcast license;upward review of fines from N500, 000 to N5, 000,000 for breaches relating to hate or inciting speechesand indecency; amendment of the NBC Act to enable NBC license Web broadcasting both TV and radio stations, including foreign broadcasters beaming signals into Nigeria; and equipping the regulatory agency with state-of the-art equipment, enhancingwelfare and providingsufficient manpower (Lai Mohammed in *Daily Trust Newspaper,* October 11, 2019, p. 3).

Conclusion

As our policies are deeply tilted towards commercialization of the media and its content, including news, thereby packaging content as a commodity for sale to audience, and at the same time, audiences are viewed by media organizations as consumers ready for sale to advertisers, our policies must strive to place public consideration over market consideration in policy formulation and implementation.

Eventhough, the policies try to ensure pluralism of media outfits and diversity in content, it fails to address the issue of accessibility to expensive electronic gadget, for example television sets which are very expensive and unaffordable to particularly rural dwellers, and poorand less-privileged persons who lack the financial means. Therefore, access to media must be democratized for all to

participate and minimize the existing digital divide especially on television. Although, the ongoing digital switch on in Nigeria is said to have acknowledged the existing digital divide and aims at addressing it through free distribution of Set Top Boxes (STBs) to consumers.

It is recommended that, if government is willing to minimize hate speeches and its promotion, private national stations' ownership structure and board of Directors must reflect Nigeria's diversity and multicultural character, instead of the current model of domination by people from one part of the country or an imbalanced representation in defiance to federal character.

The paper acknowledges that a substantial numberof policies have partisan political inclination right from the colonial, military and civilian governments; therefore, there is need to further democratize the process of producing National Communication Policy to involve more stakeholders. For example, it could be said that each state of the federation could have one representative who is a competent media practitioner from each of their senatorial districts as ad hoc members in addition to the widely known members of the National Information Council, whenever there is going to be a review of the national communication policy in Nigeria.

The issue of community broadcast is very essential to the stability of the country because it gives access to rural communities to not only freely express themselves, but help in developing their communities. Access to media should never be an exclusive preserve of the urban people. The current trend of 'media location' in Nigeria suggests an imbalance with most of the over 600 broadcast stations situated at urban centers (*see for example*Rabilu&Abdullahi, 2019). In view of this, policy makers should review the present community broadcast license processes to make it more flexible, just like what is obtained in some African countries such as Kenya and Tanzania with high number of community stations (*see for example* Ukah, 2011).

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