

# **Journalism Education Curricula Models: An Analysis of CTT of Four Programmes in Nigerian Universities**

By

**Muyiwa Popoola**

(popsonbaba@yahoo.com)

234-80-34424452

*Lecturer of Journalism and Mass Communication*

Department of Communication and Media Studies

Ajayi Crowther University, P.M.B. 1066, Oyo

Oyo State, Nigeria.

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This scholarly paper was devoted to studying the Course Themes and Titles (CTT) in journalism education curricula of four Departments of Journalism and Mass Communication, in Nigerian Universities. These universities included the first two universities that pioneered journalism education in Nigeria: University of Nigeria, Nsukka and University of Lagos, while the remaining two are private universities namely, Covenant University and Ajayi Crowther University. The research became imperative, owing to the need for establishing the extent to which the curricula are appropriate for a qualitative and development-enabling journalism education in Nigeria. Content analytical method of Journalism and Mass Communication research was adopted for the study, while the Concepts, Assumptions and Propositions (CAPs) of Development Journalism, were stated and applied as the theoretical framework. Among other findings, it was discovered in the study that the journalism curricula models of the four Universities consist of six major and conspicuous features namely: Conceptual Knowledge Courses, Communication Skill Competence Courses, Professional Skill Courses in Print and Broadcast Journalism, Professional Skill Courses in Public Relations and Advertising, Professional Skill Courses in Publishing and Development Journalism Courses. However, the study revealed that development journalism, as an absolutely important course in Journalism and Mass Communication curriculum, is the least offered in the programmes of all the four universities.*

## INTRODUCTION

Formal journalism and mass communication education programmes at undergraduate level in tropical Africa started with the establishment of the Jackson Institute of Journalism (now Department of Mass Communication) at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1960, the year Nigeria became politically independent from Britain. Then, the Eastern Nigerian Regional Government with substantial grants and logistic assistance from the United States established this university. It was the first university in Nigeria to be fashioned-out entirely on American land-grant-university system. According to Ashby (1964:80), the department started with the normal complete four-year North American-Style journalism programme and the American Agency for International Development (AID) provided funds for the take-off of the university, financed through an ideal-land-grant institution-the Michigan State University. This was the first experiment with the American system of organizing higher education in Black Africa. This scholarly paper was devoted to exploring the course themes and titles of journalism and mass communication education curricula in Nigerian universities. Four universities were studied with a view to identifying the specific features and contents of their journalism curricula and the presumed relevance of such curricula to the existing developmental needs of journalism profession in Nigeria.

Consequently, the objective of the study was to establish the extent to which the various courses offered by these institutions meet the basic requirements for an all-round and sound professional education in journalism, as prescribed by the National Universities Commission (NUC) –the body that regulates university education in Nigeria. Another is to establish the extent to which the curricula respond to the developmental aspirations of Nigeria as a developing nation. The paper therefore posed two major research questions:

1. What are the major features of journalism and mass communication education curricula in Nigeria Universities?
2. How relevant are the curricula models in meeting the training needs of Nigerian journalists in using the mass media as agents of socio-economic development in Nigeria?

The underlying assumption upon which the present article was predicated stemmed from the remarks often made by critics and scholars concerning the presumed lack of relevance of the curricula to the professional advancement of journalism practice and developmental realities and aspirations of the Nigerian nation. Addressing these questions should bring to the fore the actual nature of the curricula in operation in the universities selected for this study.

### **BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The present investigation still assumes that in spite of the prior claims by scholars and critics concerning the presumed prevalence of the American journalism curricula models in Nigerian universities, the possibility of the evolution of a curriculum of relevance in these institutions could still be envisaged.

#### **DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNICATION EDUCATION STUDIES**

According to Bofo (1985:23), the root of the concept of development communication/journalism or communication for development was traced to the activities of Eskine Childers and a group of communication scholars and practitioners working in the late 1960s. It was believed that development communication as a concept, originally stemmed out of agricultural extension. Its application, however, is evident in other activities such as, politics, economy, education, technology, nutrition and health, home management, family planning, social welfare among others. Scholars often approach development communication from different points of view. These differences in approach gave rise to the differing emphasis often given to the constituent elements that make up the entire process. While some scholars emphasize the channels of communication involved in the process, others place emphasis on the message and the interaction of the senders and the receivers of messages. Yet, others still emphasize the intended strategies and goals of the entire process as the most important elements that need to be taken into consideration rather than the actors involved in the process.

For instance, while Rogers (1976:11), sees development communication as “a phenomenon which is purposive, goal-oriented and audience-oriented.” He argues that the concept deals more with the potentials and limitations of the mass media as tools for development. Rogers (1976:48) appears summing up the various definitions of the concept of development communication and concluded that they are all more or less

describing the “application of technology-based communication (particularly radio) for development purposes” and concluded that, “the most accepted view of the concept by most scholars from developing countries is that which emphasizes development as the consciousness of ensuring basic needs, self reliance and participation of the populace in attaining the goals of development” This is, indeed, the view that is adopted in this paper. The two terms, “development communication and “development journalism” are often used in this presentation interchangeably. This approach is adopted because of the way the two concepts appear in most of the mass communication education curricula and journalism programs analyzed in. The two terms are mostly employed in the syllabuses of the schools as ideal substitutes for each other, even though their seeming differences are recognized by the curricula designers.

Development Journalism or Communication as a concept in contemporary mass communication study is rooted in what evolved as the development theory of the media proposed by Hachten (1981:47) in describing the operation of the mass media systems in development countries. While recognizing the four theories of the press as outlined by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956:1), Hachten (1981), however, argued “for the replacement of the four-theory concept with a five-theory consisting of, the Authoritarian, Communist, Western, Revolutionary and Development”. He argues that developmental theory of the press is a natural successor to the revolutionary theory of press, which aims at the overthrow of the existing repressive government in development societies or frees the state from foreign domination (Cooper 1987:24). Under the developmental theory of the press, the media are used to help promote social and economic development and achieve national integration. He, however, argues that developmental theory of the press, like the revolutionary theory, is also a transitional theory, but operative over a long-period of time than the revolutionary model. Hachten (1985:23), therefore, concludes that the ultimate direction of the nations practising this form of press-state relations may be either libertarian – tending or authoritarian -tending as quoted by Cooper (1987: 25).

In the main, as Folarin (1995:31) comments, development theory of the press explains the normative behavior of the press in countries usually classified as “developing” or the emerging nations. These are countries or nations which have undergone direct

colonization or are affected by prosperous nations of the Western, Eastern Europe and North American. Their common characteristics as outlined by Folarin (1995: 31) include:

1. Absence of or inadequate supply of requisite communication infrastructure;
2. Relative limited supply of requisite professional skills;
3. Relative lack of cultural production resources;
4. Relatively limited availability of media-literate audience. And
5. Dependence on the developed world for technology, skills and cultural products including media contents.

Media operation in Nigeria could tacitly be categorized as developmental in nature (Folarin, 1995: 40). It is, therefore, suggested here that communication education programmes in Nigerian universities must recognize this basic theoretical concern and attempt to incorporate specific modules in order for the curricula to respond to the existing developmental realities of the country.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized content analysis method of social inquiry to generate primary data on the four selected universities, namely: University of Nigeria, University of Lagos, Covenant University and Ajayi Crowther University. Course listings in the curricula of the departments of mass communication in these universities were used as samples and purposive sampling was employed to select the four universities. To answer the question requires a detailed content analysis of the undergraduate mass communication and communication related curricula being offered by the four selected universities. This was necessary because such valuable data does not exist in a scientifically organized form. As a method of social inquiry, content analysis has for long been used in mass media research dealing with manifest documentary materials.

## **POPULATION OF STUDY**

The study population consisted of the 72 universities in Nigeria. Of these, only 24 offer journalism and mass communication academic programmes. Among these programmes, 16 institutions offer the curricula in conventional mass communication departments, four in Theatre arts Departments; one offers the curricula in Communication and Language Arts department, two universities in Communication Arts and one in the Performing Arts department. However, none of the four universities offers a four-year degree programme exclusively in any of the areas of

specialization (for example, Broadcasting, Journalism, Relations & Advertising, Book Publishing and Film Production). Instead, all the departments of mass communication in the study offer the curricula at undergraduate levels leading to either the Bachelors of Arts degree or Bachelor of Science degree in mass communication, depending on the configuration of the Faculty or School where the academic programme is domiciled.

### **UNIT OF ANALYSIS**

Wimmer and Dominick (1989: 174) define unit of analysis simply as “the thing that is actually counted”. The main unit of analysis in this study consisted of all course titles and themes listed under the course listing/descriptions of mass communication programmes from the prospectuses of the four universities under study. Cooper (1987: 16) used similar method in his survey, when he analyzed 35 different course listings/descriptions from more than 103 journalism-training organizations in the Third World. Consequently, since data for the study is relatively small in size, only four prospectuses containing just 254 titles of courses were nominally quantified on the basis of their frequency of occurrence in the data.

### **SAMPLING METHOD**

The sampling method employed in this study was the purposive sampling technique. Wimmer and Dominick (1989) described this technique as “the sampling method, which enables the researcher to select subjects on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities and the elimination of those that failed to meet these criteria” The researcher content-analyzed course listings and course themes obtained from the prospectuses of four pioneering universities, out of the 17 known universities offering mass communication curricula.

These universities were purposively selected because of their pioneering background in mass communication education in Nigeria and their accreditation status. Apart from the fact that University of Nigeria, Nsukka and University of Lagos represent the crops of the first generation universities in Nigeria, these two institutions also started mass communication education programmes earlier than any other university in the country. The history of their programmes dates back to the early 1960s. Covenant University and Ajayi Crowther University are private universities that started journalism and mass communication programme before other private universities in Nigeria.

## **CODING SYSTEM AND CONTENT CATEGORIZATION**

To organize the data into a manageable form, a systematic coding strategy coding strategy is required. Coding is the attempt made by a researcher to place unit of analysis into mutually exclusive content categories (Wimmer & Dominick, 1989: 26). The 1954 UNESCO World – Wide survey of journalism programmes used a coding system which sorted all courses in Journalism curricula offered by schools across the globe into one of six mutually exclusive categories (Cooper 1986 :43). These are:

1. Liberal arts background courses such as those dealing with legal, Ethical, historical and other cultural matters;
2. Background courses correlated with journalism, such as history of the press, law of the press, et cetera;
3. Journalism skills course, such as news reporting and editing,
4. Courses dealing with the business aspect of the media, such as advertising, circulation and management,
5. Courses dealing with aspects of the media other than newspaper, such as broadcasting, news agencies et cetera; and,
6. Courses in the graphic arts, such as typography, newspaper mechanics and make-up, printing, engraving, et cetera.

The Oregon Report of 1985, on journalism programmes in the United States sorted the type of courses in ‘an ideal’ United States Journalism curricula into four categories as follows:

1. Skill courses aimed at competencies necessary for professional communicators generally;
  2. Conceptual knowledge courses related to the field of mass communication;
  3. Professional modules aimed at acquaintance with the nuances and requirements of the specific professional fields in mass communication. For example, broadcasting, print, film, et cetera;
  4. Liberal arts courses aimed at broadening the scope of knowledge of the student.
- Cooper’s (1987: 28) study of Basic Training For The Third World Journalist scored courses into four categories by collapsing the Oregon Report four category typology into three and then later added the “All other’ category as the fourth to provide a



much wide scope for the possible inclusion of all course-types with might not be covered in the first three categories. His categorization runs as follows:

1. Professional skills course in mass communication:
2. Conceptual knowledge courses relating to the field of mass communication:
3. Liberal arts courses: and,
4. All other.

By adding the “all other” category as the fourth category, all the remaining UNESCO categories could now be accommodated into this category. For the purpose of this paper, therefore, mass communication education curricula in the four Nigerian universities were sorted into nine-course categories according to content-type based on their themes and titles. A 10<sup>th</sup> category “All other” was added to generate an all-inclusive category that can accommodate other possible course-types presumably not covered by the first nine categories. The fact that this study is concerned with the feature of journalism and mass communication education curricula in Nigerian universities means that curricula should be broken down into its “natural compartments” or sequences. These sequences consist of five identifiable compartments” or sequences. These sequences consist of five identifiable professional modules (electives) aimed at acquaintance with the nuances and requirements of specific professional areas in mass communication (for example, Print, Broadcast, Public Relations, Advertising, Film and Book Publishing) and four core courses which are common to all mass communication students regardless of their area of specialization and sequence. These professional modules are the broadcast sequence, print sequence (newspaper, magazine and photo-journalism sequence. The remaining four areas consist of communication skills competence courses required by all professional communication, special courses in development communication or developmental journalism, and liberal arts courses.

Consequently, by content categorization there appear to be 10 broad themes and categories under which all the curricula in mass communication in Nigerian universities fall. These categories are:

1. Communication skills competence course (**CSC**);
2. Background conceptual knowledge courses in journalism and mass communication (**BCKC**);
3. Professional skill courses in broadcast journalism sequence (**PSBCS**);

4. Professional skill courses in print journalism sequence (**PSCPS**);
5. Professional skill courses in film sequence (**PSCFS**);
6. Professional skill courses in public relations and advertising sequence(**PSCPRA**):
7. Professional skill courses In Publishing sequence (**PSCPS**)
8. Development Journalism courses (**DOC**)
9. Literal arts courses (**LAC**)
10. Others (**OT**)

The 10<sup>th</sup> category is an “all-inclusive,” other” category which is assumed to cover wide spectrum of courses not covered by the nine categories above. The data was manually coded using instrument specifically developed for the study. This categorization was a slight modification of the UNESCO (1954) six categories typology, the Oregon Report four-category typology and the 1987 Cooper’s four categories typology used in his study on basic training for Third World journalists. Simple percentiles using frequency tables were employed in presentation and analysis of the data obtained. This type of statistical analysis is appropriate for content analytical method where no hypothesis testing is required (Wimmer and Domminck, 1989).

## **RESULTS**

The four universities offer a total of 299 course titles or themes in their various departments. University of Nigeria(UNN) offers a total of 71 course titles, while University of Lagos (UNILAG) offers a total of 120 courses titles, Covenant University, (CU) Lagos, offers a total of 55 course titles, while Ajayi Crowther University (ACU) offers 53 courses. Table 02.0 below presents a broad outline of what could be called “a general pattern” in journalism and mass communication education curricula in these universities. Since courses in mass communication fall within the ambit of the social science as prescribed by the NUC, this categorization seems ideal for this analysis.

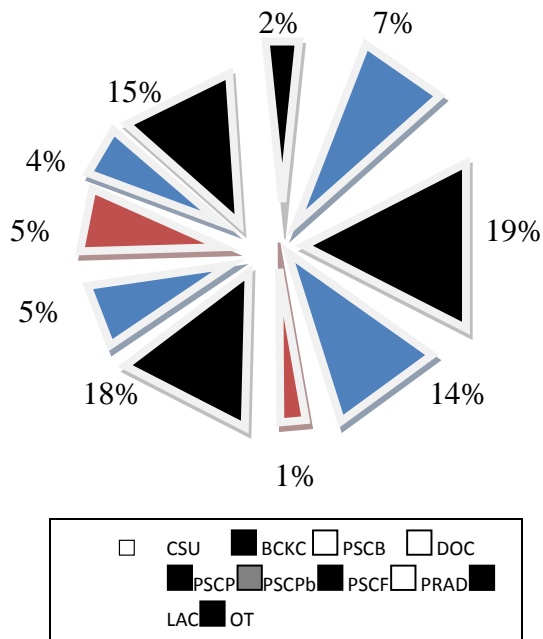
The areas covered almost all the essential aspects of professional journalism and mass communication practice as well as fulfilling the basic requirement for the award of a degree in arts and social sciences. From the table, it could be seen that all the four universities under study offer almost all the curricula in these ten categories with varying degrees of emphasis at different levels. From the data summary (total % column) on the table, it could be seen that Background Conceptual Knowledge Course (BCKC) in mass communication constitutes the largest category of offering in the curricula of the four universities with slightly over 18.39%.

This is closely followed by the professional skills courses in the print journalism sequence, which corresponded to 14.46%, while Professional skills courses in Public Relations and Advertising Sequence (PSCPRAS) constituted 14.38% of the curricula. Figure one is a pie chart providing a pictorial illustration of the table above.

**Table 1.0: The Features of Mass Communication curricula in four Nigerian Universities**

COURSE TITLE/THEME			INSTITUTION			
	Code	UNN	UNILAG	CU	ACU	TOTAL%
Communication competence courses	CSC	7.04	6.67	10.9	1.89	6.68
Background courses in mass communication	BKC	12.68	10.83	27.27	33.96	18.39
Professional skill courses in broadcast journalism	PSCB	14.80	13.33	18.18	11.32	14.46
Development Journalism/Communication Courses	DOC	1.41	0.83	1.82	1.89	1.38
Professional skill courses in Printing	PSCP	15.49	21.67	12.73	18.89	18.06
Professional skill courses in publishing	PSCP B	0	11.67	0	0	4.68
Professional skill courses in Film	PSCF	4.23	5.83	0	5.00	5.35
Professional skill courses in Public Relations & Advertising	PRAD	16.9	20	5.45	7.55	14.38
Liberal Arts Courses	LAC	23.94	3.33	21.82	24.54	15.38
Others	OT	4.23	0.83	1.82	0	1.67
<b>TOTAL(N=299)</b>		<b>N=71</b>	<b>N=120</b>	<b>N=55</b>	<b>N=53</b>	<b>100%</b>

Fig. 1.0.0 Percentage distribution of categories of Course titles themes in journalism and Mass Communication Curricula in Four Nigerian universities.



From the diagram (fig 1.0) above, it could be seen that Communication Skills Competence (CSC) courses represented just 6.68% and Professional Skills Courses in Film (PSCF) sequence with 5.35% are being offered in all the four universities. Looking at the data more closely, however, it could be seen that film sequence is only offered in three of the universities under study, namely University of Lagos (5.83%) and University of Nigeria, Nsukka (4.23%) and Ajayi Crowther University (5.00%). Publishing, like film sequence, also suffers from neglect, in spite of its importance. Also, apparently worrisome are Development Journalism Courses, which offerings accounted for just merely 1.33% of the curricula being run by the universities.

The low level of emphasis on publishing and development journalism courses, which characterizes the curricula in journalism and mass communication, seems disturbing a discovery, when one considers the centrality of the two courses to the realization development-enabling journalism education. Interestingly, however, this investigation does not seem to deny and discountenance the feature of development journalism courses in the curricular of the universities under study. This is because, from the data presented, all the universities that offer the development journalism/communication courses did provide credit hours, within the structure of their programmes, to expose their students to application of journalism and mass communication to development. For instance, from the data obtained, three universities, - University of Nigeria,

Nsukka offers it at 300 level as MC301, Covenant University offers it as MAC 314 also at 300 level, while Ajayi Crowther University, offers it at 400 level as MCM 4101. This implies that these departments have one course each in this Module within their journalism and mass communication programmes. University of Lagos, however, does not seem to have a course title with this nomenclature. Instead, the department recommends a course in Sociology; the Sociology of Third World development (SOC 244) – a 200 level course, - which treats the subject-matter of the curriculum at more or less a general level in the second year. In all these cases, the curriculum is offered in just one semester in the entire four-year programme. This appears grossly inadequate. It was also gathered from the data that courses “other” than the nine broad categories of offerings accounted for 1.67%, which is even higher in percentage than the offerings in development journalism and communication.

Another interesting discovery in this study is on professional skill courses in print sequence (PSCPS), which constituted slightly over 18% of the curricula. This finding is quite exciting, considering the centrality of the print journalism sequence to other segments of journalism and mass communication practice. Film sequence, public relations and advertising sequences are offered at 14.38% and 15.38% respectively in all the universities. University of Lagos and University of Nigeria, Nsukka recorded the highest percentages of public relations and advertising courses at 16.9% and 20.0% respectively.

Publishing, as a sequence in mass communications curricula in Nigerian Universities, constitutes 4.68% of the curricula. However, a closer examination of the data reveals that apart from University of Lagos and Ajayi Crowther University, the other two universities seem not offering this course on their programme. This discovery and that in respect of film, further attest to the discrepancies in terms of curricula diversity among Nigerian Universities. However, this is in spite of the attempt made by NUC to harmonize the programmes through academic programme accreditation. Also, as gathered from the data, Liberal Arts Courses constitute about 15.38%, while courses other than the ones earlier discussed above constituted only 1.67% of the overall curricula.

### **Features of Journalism and Mass Communication Curricula in the four Universities**

From the analysis of the result, it can be inferred that the curricula consist of five major identifiable features.

- Heavy dose of offerings in conceptual knowledge courses in journalism and mass communication. These courses deal with general theoretical framework concerning media studies and communication theories. These are background courses;
- Moderate dose of offerings in communication skills competence courses dealing with the general skills and competencies required by journalists and communicators;
- A relative high dose of professional skills courses in journalism practice. These sets of courses deal with the practical skills usually required by the industry at entry-level position;
- A considerable dose of liberal arts courses in humanities, social science and the natural sciences; and
- Very low level of course themes and titles in development journalism and publishing.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is evident in the findings of this study that except for the few offerings in development journalism and publishing, the curricula models in the four Nigerian universities consist of conceptual knowledge courses in media studies and theories, offerings in practical skills, competence courses in professional skills modules, and broad-base offerings in the liberal arts. To a large degree, this particular model is characteristically patterned on the philosophy that a good journalism programme should contain a blend of theories in mass communication generally, comparable offerings in the liberal arts to provide a wider theoretical knowledge and scope concerning the socio-cultural structure of the society within which the mass media operate. It is also designed to provide a sound grounding in practical skills courses in media practices meant to prepare the student for the necessary practical skills training at entry level. In short, like almost all the curricula models in the universities around the world, this model, too, consists of a combination of journalism skills courses, liberal arts courses, and conceptual knowledge courses relating to mass communication. However, like most of the models in the developing countries, the models from four Nigerian Universities analyzed in this study also contain some courses in development communication/journalism.

The data specifically revealed that, with the exception of the few instances where the theme or title of the curriculum is subsumed, under other course titles in humanities, liberal arts and other social science curricula, development journalism or development communication and publishing as courses in mass communication curricula, in the selected Nigerian universities, are not being offered comprehensively and adequately. Although, this has confirmed previous findings concerning the characteristic features of journalism and mass communication curricula in most developing nations, (Cooper, 1987:34). The very low dosage of offerings in respect of these two indispensable areas of journalism and mass communication scholarship is indisputably inimical to the realization of development through a robust, comprehensive, broad- base journalism and mass communication curriculum.

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