

**PROLIFERATION OF JOURNALISM SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION  
FOR QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM**

**BY**

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# **PROLIFERATION OF JOURNALISM SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM.**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper looks at the issue of proliferation of journalism institutions in Nigeria and its implications for quality and professionalism. It evaluates the challenges of staffing, equipment, accreditation and findings.

The paper traces the history of journalism, and journalism training, as well as the typologies of trainings and certifications available in the various journalism institutions in the country.

Four schools served as case studies, ranging from universities, polytechnics, and professional institutions were understudied in this paper.

The paper argues that proliferation of schools of journalism is a contributory factor to the observable poor quality in journalism practice. This is hinged on the problem identified; poor staffing, inadequate, funding and accreditation issues.

The paper suggests that people who have adequate training in media, journalism and communication should be on the faculty of journalism schools. Similarly, people who have field experience in journalism should be involved in journalism education either in full or part time capacity.

Also, a closer relationship should be foisted between journalism schools and journalists to create for some form of synergy or town-gown relationship.

Efforts should be made to improve equipment, staff quality and quantity as well as funding. This researcher suggests development of journalism training curriculum relevant to Nigeria and other developing nations.

In conclusion, bodies such as the National Universities Commission, (NUC) National Board for Technical Education, (NBTE). Nigeria Institute for Public Relations (NIPR), etc should ensure closer monitoring of journalism institutions in Nigeria. This would ensure the delivery of quality journalism education.

## **HISTORY OF JOURNALISM IN NIGERIA**

Journalism or the press is a hundred years older than Nigeria as an independent country. This is so, as the first newspaper in Nigeria, “Iwe Irohin” was published in Abeokuta, Ogun State in 1859, while Nigeria achieved political independence in 1960 (Momoh, 2004) .

According to Oloyede (1985) cited in Iyagbaye (2000:34) following this in 1963, Robert Campbell published what was viewed as the first real newspaper. *The Anglo Africa*. Also the first magazine to be published in Nigeria was the Nigeria edition of the Readers Digest which was called Read, published in 1887. Magazines started when the missionaries saw the need to support messages from the pulpit with written words. such magazines include. *In leisure Hour* in 1917 by Church Missionary Society (CMS) *African Church Gleamer (1917) African Hope (1919).*

*The Nigerian Catholic Herald (1924).*

## **HISTORY OF BROADCASTING**

Maduka (2009) Informs that . The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) commenced radio broadcasting in the United Kingdom in 1927 and within Five years it had begun to broadcast into Africa.

In 1932, a relay service was launched in Nigeria. The Service known as Radio Distribution Services (RDS) started in Lagos and extended to Ibadan in 1939. 14 years after Britain commenced her first television service, chief Obafemi Awolowo, then premier of Western Region of Nigeria, established a television service.

In 1951, the RDS transformed as the Nigeria Broadcasting service, later incorporated as the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation in 1957. This arrangement was a monopoly, until 1959 when the broadcasting law that allowed the establishment of regional broadcasting houses was passed.

Owing to years of military rule in Nigeria private broadcast media did not take off until 1992 when the then military government implemented constitutional provision that allows private organization or individuals to own broadcast outfits.

Presently, Nigeria has about one hundred and thirteen radio stations and hundred of televisions stations including federal and state government and those owned by private groups.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF JOURNALISM**

Nigeria's journalism profession is a vastly expanding frontier. The import of understanding the growth of the mass media in Nigeria is to appreciate the need for robust journalism education in the country. The need for manpower to handle the various sections in the increasing number of media organization continue to rise.

Perhaps a response to the increasing number of media outfit is the number of institutions that offer journalism courses in Nigeria.

### **OUTSET OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.**

When journalism in Nigeria started, it had a foreign staff content, it was mostly run by missionaries.

However, Okunna (1987) informs that the University of Nigeria, Nsukka pioneered journalism in 1961 at the Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree level. The Department of mass communication, University of Lagos started in 1967 as a UNESCO backed institute of mass communication. The Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) in Enugu State was premier mass communication Department at the Polytechnic level as it commenced lectures in 1978.

Aside, University and Polytechnic level journalism education, records showed varying typologies of training had existed in Nigeria.

Akinfeleye (2007) includes the Daily Times Training School established in 1965 formerly referred to as Times Journalism Institute (TJI).

The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) training school commenced in 1959 primarily to provide on- the- job training for journalists and other broadcasting staff.

The Nigeria Institute of journalism (NIJ) started in 1971, while the international institute of journalism (IIJ) run by the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) was opened in 1995. These two, offer diplomas and post graduate diplomas in mass communication.

According to a Nigerian journalism educator, Professor Ralph Akinfeleye in the pre independence period for instance some semblance of journalism training have been witnessed in Nigeria. In 1954, a two week journalism programme was packaged for working journalists by the University College of Ibadan.

The Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) also organized a two-year on the job training, for broadcasters in Nigeria. Also of mention was the United States Information Services (U.S.I.S). Sponsored training organized by the international federation of journalism (IFJ) in 1960.

The brochure for entrance examinations into Nigerian Universities and Polytechnics has a list of 66 Journalism or communication schools. These schools offer certifications ranging from Diploma to PhD's

This is made up of twenty three Polytechnics and Monotechnics and Forty three Universities.

Aside this , the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NIJ) has established the international institute of journalism (IJJ) in 1995. There is the Nigeria Television Institute in Jos among others.

There are many tertiary institution including universities and polytechnics who run journalism courses without the required accreditation from appropriate bodies. Yearly thousand of students pass through these low standard institutions and are foisted on the larger society.

### **INCREASING NEED FOR JOURNALISM EDUCATION**

The decades of the 90's up to the present have thrown up more request for journalists and journalism education. The Provision of the work force to man the high number t of media organizations gave rise to the number of journalism schools in Nigeria.

The quest for journalism education has resulted in different types of journalism training. The Universities, number 43 offer degree, masters, and Ph.D and the polytechnics and monotechnics offer diploma, while the on-the- job training programme offers some in house certification and promotion privileges.

At the onset of journalism in Nigeria, up to the eighties the country's media were rated high in content, quality, ethics. Journalists were referred to as the forum Estate of the realm for their powerful influence. Many viewed the media for good quality language for balances reportage and news timeliness.

However, the decades (1990-2010) which witnessed proliferation of journalism schools, ironically has occasioned. Some uninspiring performances.

## **RESULT OF PROLIFERATION OF JOURNALISM SCHOOLS**

STAFFING-One major challenge of the proliferation of journalism institutions in Nigeria is that of staffing. In most Institutions, the number of staff is usually inadequate and most are unqualified to teach journalism.

Some lecturers are what we refer to in local parlance as “From class to class”. What this means is that such lectures do not have any practical experience

People who do not have a background degree in journalism, communication or mass communication are rampant in many such schools.

Such lecturers get on the faculty, based on some reasons like ownership, political or ethnic persuasion, with little regards to expertise.

According to the coordinator, international institute of journalism, Ibadan, Oyo State branch, Alhaji Bolaji Kareem, it would be demanding for a professor who does not have some field knowledge to teach news paper production or broadcast presentation.

Having a degree in journalism is just a key requirement for inclusion in the list of journalism lecturers. There is need for professional experience, where practical know-how is gained. This is important to bridge the dichotomy between what is taught and what is experienced. Ogundimu et al (2001) note the need to rely on local journalists, not only for hands-on-training but for content development in journalism training.

## **PROBLEM OF ACCREDITATION AND MONITORING**

In terms of accreditation most schools set up shop first before making efforts to get license to run such programmes. For instance, the International Institute of Journalism (IIJ) which is affiliated to the University of Maiduguri issues, National Diploma and Higher National Certificate in contrast to the University of Maiduguri that issues Bachelors, Masters and Ph.Ds.

The consequence is that many students find it difficult to secure employment after graduation from these unaccredited schools. Those who benefit are those that were already working in some establishment, only desiring certificates to submit in their offices for promotion.

As journalism institutions continue to witness an upsurge, many undiscerning students register in these institutions, only to discover after graduating that they are worthless certificates.

A pointer to the problem of accreditation was the publication of a letter by the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) denying ever permitting the establishment of the International Institute of Journalism (IIJ) Osogbo campus.

This letter led to the closure of the (IIJ) Osogbo campus, with the attendant loss of admission by unsuspecting students. Similarly some unwanted have been shot due to non accreditation.

## **VARIATIONS IN CURRICULUM**

A veteran journalist, Mr Akin Oyefeso who had worked in Sketch Newspaper, Dailytimes and Tribune argues that Nigeria cannot boast of many core journalism institutions. He argues that the inclusion of Public Relations, Advertising, Marketing Communication and other applied communication studies have aided in marking down the quality of journalism training.



Two major trends are noticeable in journalism schools in Nigeria, some tailored like journalism institutions in the former Eastern block, with strong emphasis on news writing, reporting, news editing, page planning, broadcast presentation and production.

Others tilt towards the American style, which covers Public Relations, and Advertising. The absence of clear direction for journalism education led to the UNESCO model curriculum published in 2002. UNESCO opined that changes in political, social, economic, technological as well as changes in education and communication system demanded new techniques to the challenges facing communication education in Africa.

The UNESCO model includes courses like Public Relations, Media Planning, Advertising, (Boafo and Kwame 2002 cited Skyerdal 2007).

Again questions arise as to whether a model for communication training means the same for journalism training?

A study of the course content of such schools like the NIJ, UNILAG, University of Ibadan, Bowen University, Dorben Polytechnic shows that all include P.R, Advertising among others.

The implication of this type of content is that many would be journalists do not garner basic journalism education needed. This is even worsened when the institutions do not have specialists in the field of journalism.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF EQUIPMENTS**

Journalism institutions in Nigeria face a major problem of lack of equipment many institutions cannot boast of computers, cameras, tape recorders, consoles, acoustically treated studios. Sometimes when they do, the equipment are non-functional.

Many institutions only hire equipment to present to the accreditation bodies, afterwards the studios are left empty. Some institution like the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria get some support in form of equipment and staff training from foreign donors. Also private institutions like Bowen University, Covenant University, Lead City University etc. spend portion of their schools fees to develop the studios in their journalism departments. A student who desires to join the world of work in the journalism Field must have some basic hands-on-experience in the use of studio equipment.

Coupled with the lack of technical equipment, there is a dearth of books and journals in the field of journalism in most institutions.

Many schools are not able to afford the cost of subscribing to foreign journals and books.

However, many journalism educators have taken the challenge of non-availability of books to write material fit for use by local students.

### **POOR REMUNERATIONS**

Journalism educators are poorly paid in Nigeria. This is more prominent in privately owned institutions where the lecturers are at the mercy of their employers.

Some lecturers earn as little as twenty thousand naira (\$150) per month. A wage that is not enough to cater for a single lecturer, talk less of catering for a lecturer with children and other dependants. This consequently opens another challenges of proliferation, that of money for mark saga: A situation where students bribe lecturers for marks.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONALISM AND QUALITY**

How can one place Nigerian journalism on the platform of professionalism? Can it be viewed as professional in the mould of law, medicine and Accountancy that have well structured professional bodies?

Macmillan English Dictionary defines a profession to be a job that requires special skills and qualification to do. Professionalism is also viewed as the qualities and skills that someone with a professional job is expected to have.

The Nigerian Union of Journalists can be rated as a truly professional body in the dictionary form of the term. However, it is striving towards the right direction by having its codes of ethics, constitution. Lately it has made it compulsory for its member to have professional qualification in journalism and communication.

The proliferation of journalism institutions though a step in providing the manpower to drive the journalism industry might become problematic if un-censored.

What is the benchmark for professionalism in journalism? For instance Zimbabwe has raised the stake to a first degree for its journalists. In Nigeria most professional group have certifying examination for their members. It is important journalists in Nigeria go through some form of academic qualification. Such as mass communication, media arts, communication arts communication and language arts and other communication and journalism related courses. Those who have such should be made to register for some kind of professional membership or examination. Also practicing journalists who do not possess any academic certification in the field should be advised to pursue post graduate programme in journalism. All journalism educator should pursue professional membership with the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ). The road to this seeming ideal can be tarred with closer collaboration among journalism

educators, journalists and agencies saddled with controlling the activities of journalism institutions and journalists.

## **IMPLICATION FOR QUALITY**

Journalism in Nigeria is witnessing a resurgence, after the military rule that led to the premature death or closure of many media establishments.

However, present realities show a noticeable increase in media establishments. This has translated into more journalism schools.

One problem is that many of such schools do not have accreditation. Others lack qualified lecturers and equipment. Also the curriculum of some schools are not reflective of journalism institutions.

Many journalists are not knowledgeable about media law and ethics falling into cases of defamation. They also do not know how to handle official secrets, privilege, disclosure of information, and privacy.

Aside structural deficiencies, many journalists who work in radio and television organizations make mistakes in tenses, verb agreement and sequential arrangement of ideas.

## **CASE STUDIES OF JOURNALISM SCHOOLS. CASE 1**

### **INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM**

The International Institute of Journalism (IIJ) was established in 1995 by the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) in 1995. The Institution is an affiliate of the University of Maiduguri.

The Institution has campuses in most of the NUJ state councils In Oyo state the IIIJ started with about eight lecturers and presently has 200 students. The Institution is headed by a first degree holder in mass communication from the University of Lagos. The Institution and awards diploma such as National Diploma and Higher Diploma.

Some of the lecturers do not have degrees in journalism or communication related courses. Two have degree in social works and only lay claim to journalism education by virtue of practice.

The course content includes aspects of journalism, Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing. The institution is not well structured as students do not have options of selecting electives compulsory or required courses. Funding is the school fees paid by students, The Ibadan (IIIJ) campus does not have any practical studio for students to have hands-on-experience students have to depend on a semester long industrial Attachment (Internship).

The Institute though affiliated to the University of Maiduguri, is facing the challenge of accreditation. This is so, as it is not listed among schools with approval in the Brochure of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board JAMB (Board in charge of organizing entrance examinations to our tertiary institution).

## **CASE II-AJAYI CROWTHER UNIVERSITY, OYO STATE**

Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo state was established in 2006. It consist of three faculties which are the Natural Sciences, Social and Management Sciences and Humanities.

The Communication and Media Studies department falls under the social and management sciences. The department has six, regular lecturers. Five have masters degree, only one has a doctoral degree. There are also four associate lecturers who come from other universities around.

The student population is about 200. Courses include book publishing, statistics, print journalism, Advertising, Radio and Television Production. There is little in the way of language use in the courses.

The students have the opportunity of using a broadcast studio with a television and radio arm. The graphic studio is still undergoing construction.

There is also provision of three months internship for students to be observed in media houses.

Here the journalism content is lean, as the students take more courses in statistics, Book Publishing, Advertising and Public Relations. The Journalism content has to be increased in order for the students to have a rich background in journalisms funding is derived from the Nigeria Anglican Communion and From School Fees paid by students.

### **CASE III: DORBEN POLYTECHNIC, ABUJA**

The Dorben Polytechnic, Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria Started in 1995. Formerly referred to as Abuja Polytechnic, then Abuja school of Accountancy and Computer studies (ASACS).

The mass Communication Department of the Institution commenced admissions in year 2000, running at ordinary diploma (O.D) it however secured approval to begin a National Diploma accredited by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

The department has a teaching staff comprising five lecturers. Three have Higher National Diplomas (HND) one is a retired journalist, while the last is a Masters student in mass communication at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

The staff strength teaches courses in broadcasting, public relations, print and broadcast journalism. However, most of the journalism educators in the institution do not possess the practical journalism experience to be on the faculty of mass communication.

Presently, the student population is about two hundred, including regular and part time students. The institution does not have functional studios. The room prepared acoustically the serve as the broadcast studio does not have the required equipment. Funding is by the private proprietor of the school, pulled from school fees paid by students.

#### **CASE IV- COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN.**

The communication and language arts departments, University of Ibadan was established as a reading centre in 1976 before becoming a full fledge department. Initially started as a department of language arts, offering courses in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

In the 1987 session, the name was changed to department of communication and language arts, offering, broadcast presentation and production. It also offers courses in Public Relations, advertising , marketing, communication among other.

Teaching staff is made up of 15 lecturers. Two professors, one reader, two senior lecturer, some lecturers I and II and two assistant lecturers.

The department presently has about 200 undergraduate students and 150 post graduate, in the masters, M Phil and PhD levels.

Only three of the lectures have had any form of real time journalism experience to teach journalism courses. The implication is that some courses in the department's handbook are unavailable due to the absence of a professional in that field. Links to media: Include inclusion of working professionals in curricula development and one month work experience internship in media organization.

### **WAYFORWARD FOR JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

As journalism has become liberalized in Nigeria and in some parts of Africa there is the need for more institutions that offer journalism education.

However, some issues must be addressed. These includes:

**TRAINING AND RETRAINING OF JOURNALISM EDUCATORS**-Those to be on the faculty of journalism institutions must have a background in journalism or communication related field. This is to allow them have the basic knowledge to teach journalism.

Those in the teaching staff who do not have qualifications in journalism should be advised to register for post graduate diploma or degree in journalism or mass communication.

There should be regular and sustained exchange of ideas between the academic and professional journalists. What in local parlance in Nigeria is referred to as the Town and Gown meeting.

Journalism teachers and researchers must draw from the professional journalists knowledge and vis versa.



This writer suggests the implementation of a teacher work experience scheme (Tewes). The purpose is to avail journalism educators the opportunity to be abreast of realities in the field of journalism.

### **REACCREDITATION AND SCREENING OF EXISTING JOURNALISM INSTITUTION.**

There is also a need for regular reaccreditation of journalism institutions. This is to ensure that the knowledge imparted in the students are up to standard. More still to monitor members of the faculty, to see if they are the right mix for journalism educators.

Using the UNESCO model which has been adopted by many Nigerian schools, such mix should include mass media courses. Advertising and Public Relation.

In some cases where schools have a good blend of courses, they do not have the manpower to teach many courses. This leads to a situation where many courses are not available.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM RELEVANT TO AFRICAN SOCIETY**

For Journalism education to become more relevant to the African society journalists must be trained in a way to report issues vital to the growth of our social reality.

More course content like Development Journalism, Indigenous Communication and Peace Education, including rural reporting, law and ethics should be included in the curriculum.

One reason responsible for unethical practices of some journalists is their lack of training. Many do not know about defamation, official secret act, privilege, disclosure of information, privacy and coverage minors.

It is also important that language use should be improved upon in the curriculum of journalism institutions. This is so, because of the poor use of English language by reporters and other media practitioners. More courses to teach grammar, syntax and phonetic should be introduced.

### **IMPROVED EQUIPMENT AND REMUNERATION**

Journalism should not be taught in abstraction. Students should be made to feel the presence of the newsroom, broadcast studio and other aspects of journalism.

The cost implication of setting up the various studios required by the boards in charge of issuing licenses run into thousands of dollars. Most institutions find it difficult to generate such huge amount.

This researcher suggests closer cooperation between journalism schools and media organizations in equipping journalism schools. Many media organizations have older models of equipment like consoles, monitors, reel to reel machines, cameras that could be given or sold at affordable prices to journalism schools.

Local institution should look towards foreign institutions for support in form of infrastructure, books and finding.

An unexplored way is for government in Africa to encourage importers of studio equipment to support journalism institutions. This can be rewarded in form of tax rebate. With this type of arrangement, journalism education can have up to date equipment to train their students.

In conclusion journalism education in Africa is required as the highest quality possible. As such efforts should be made to make it a reality. This is so because mass communication has become a social institution with influence on other segments of the society.

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