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## Journalism and Mass Communication Training in Nigeria: Some Critical Thoughts

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### Abstract

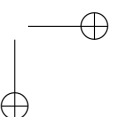
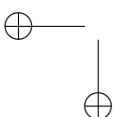
A major feature of any progress-prone human setting is the capacity to reflect on its acts. Reflection entails retrospectively evaluating one's actions with the intent to encourage what works and halt what does not. This paper reflects on vital issues in journalism and mass communication training in Nigeria by highlighting and discussing these issues from the standpoints of where we are and where we could be. Using the Reflective Practice theory as a framework, the author examines issues around such variables as admission

processes, quality of faculty, curricula, programme accreditation, internship and training infrastructure. The paper identifies the absence of synergy between journalism academia and the industry as a major gap in the total process of journalism education in Nigeria. The paper is strewn with relevant recommendations that could bring the Nigerian journalism and Mass communication training to the front row and thus enable it to compete effectively with journalism training institutions in advanced climes.

### Introduction

**I**N almost every profession, the production of trained quality staff is closely linked to the availability of appropriate institutions to train such staff. Unlike several other professions in Nigeria, journalism has been in practice long before there were training institutions to produce journalists. For instance, the first newspaper in Nigeria, *Iwe Irohin* was published in 1859, but formal training of journalists did not begin until 1954 when a two-week vocation course was conducted at the University College, Ibadan, (Adaba, 1989).

Radio had existed since 1932 as a virile medium for the dissemination of information by the colonial government, but formal training for radio journalists did not start until 1956 when a two-year in-service training was floated by



the news department of the then Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, (NBC). The same can be said of television which started in 1959, but the Television College, Jos was established only many years after, in 1980.

In comparison with Europe and America, journalism is a young profession in Africa, but its phenomenal growth has created an increasing demand for trained journalists. Early practitioners in Nigeria had no formal training; they only had basic education, and interest in journalism practice. Added to these was their awareness of the power of the pen and the realization of its potency in the fight against colonialism. In the 1900s, Ernest Sesei Ikoli left his job as a teacher at King's College, Lagos to join the *Lagos Weekly Record*. He was trained on the job by John Payne Jackson, the publisher of the newspaper. Several others equally got in-house tutoring. For example Obafemi Awolowo was trained at the *Daily Times* in the 1930s. Others who could not be trained in-house simply learnt by doing. For instance, after studying in the United States, and with exposure to various statutes on national self-determinism, Nnamdi Azikiwe established and edited the *West African Pilot* in 1937. He thereafter established six other newspapers which were strategically located in important cities in Nigeria (Uche, 1989). The first university mode training for journalists was the Jackson College of Journalism (now department of Mass communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka), named after John Payne Jackson, the publisher of *Lagos Weekly Record*. The College started off with forty seven students and four full time staff in 1960.

The successful pioneering of university mode training of journalists in Nigeria by University of Nigeria Nsukka was followed by the University of Lagos which floated a one-year practical diploma for working journalists in 1967. Candidates for this programme were required to be sponsored by an established media organisation.

Between 1967 and 1980, only these two institutions offered university training in journalism. As at 2000, there were 58 journalism training institutions in Nigeria (Akinfeleye, 2000). These institutions provide manpower for over 78 press titles, over 68 magazine titles, 138 radio stations and 140 television stations, (mediafacts, 2010).

Various interested parties have expressed concern on the need for quality in journalism education. This concern is informed by the strategic roles of journalists in society and governance. As the fourth estate of the realm, journalists are the harbingers of the ideals of the structures and institutions of



democracy. They keep the society and its various parts running through the provision of information needed to make policy decisions. The position of the journalist in society is similar to that of a physician. Without good training and strict professionalism, the client's life is in danger of wrong diagnosis and therapy. An ill-educated journalist could be a problem than an asset to society. As early as 1964, Nnamdi Azikiwe had noted:

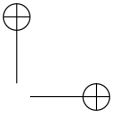
...in order to live up to its highest standards and ethics, there is need in this country for journalists who will take pride in their profession and develop a sense of duty to the public.... An ill-educated journalist is a liability to the press and to the nation, but a professionally-trained journalist, who is armed with a background of sound university education... will transform the practice of journalism into an asset to the credit of our nation. (p.8).

As regards training and practice, the Nigerian mass media have their orientations after the British and American systems, and with globalization, there have been influences from other parts of the world. These influences also come with the responsibility to provide the appropriate settings needed to make Nigerian journalists compete effectively with their counterparts in other climes. The casual observer of Nigeria's journalism and mass communication training would concede to the existence of certain challenges requiring critical thoughts and reflection. This is the focus of this paper.

### **Reflective Practice**

This focus of this paper is theoretically situated in the reflective practice theory. Literature on journalism education and practice reveals pressure to develop more critical educators and practitioners and to address rapid technological change. It also addresses the need for a balance in theory and practice towards ensuring improved performance of journalists and the journalism industry. Literature search on journalism education shows a profound dependence by scholars on reflective practice as a key concept around which theoretical framework on the subject is built. This section therefore examines this concept and its place in journalism education and practice.





### Defining Reflective Practice

A few authors have defined reflective practice. Thompson (2002) states that “reflective practice is an active process of constructing solutions, rather than a passive process of following procedures or guidelines.” (p.235). Schön (1996), in Ferraro, (2000) defined it as “thoughtfully considering one’s own experience in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline.” In the view of Bolton (2007), “reflective practice is a process of learning and developing through examining our own practice, opening our practice to scrutiny by others and studying texts from the wider sphere.” (p.4).

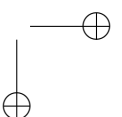
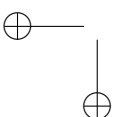
From the standpoint of education, reflective practice is the process of the educator studying his or her own teaching methods and determining what works best for the students. From the angle of the practitioner, Ferguson (2011) speaks of the necessity for practitioners in any environment to consider how best to refresh their practice, to get better at what they do, to benefit from good practice that they may have seen in others or to avoid aspects of their own practice that students or others have told them need correction.

Thompson (2002) states that “a reflective practitioner ...is a worker who is able to use experience, knowledge and theoretical perspectives to guide and inform practice...reflective practice involves cutting the cloth to suit the specific circumstances, rather than looking for ready-made solutions.” (p.235). Another useful definition was offered by Kev Judge who said:

A ‘reflective practitioner’ is someone who, at regular intervals, looks back at the work they do, and the work process, and considers how they can improve. They ‘reflect’ on the work they have done. They are not happy to carry on at the current standard, they want to improve, they do not believe in the saying, ‘if it ain’t broke don’t fix it’. Everyone should be a ‘reflective practitioner’, You need to learn from the experiences, and mistakes of others, you need to look at what you are doing and how others are doing the same thing; can anything be improved? Can anything be done better?

[www.sharpy.dircon.co.uk](http://www.sharpy.dircon.co.uk) viewed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2011.

Reflective practice is common to and practiced by all professions, thus the medical glossary defines it as “the process of improving professional skills by





monitoring your own actions while they are being carried out, and by then later evaluating them by talking or writing about them and asking other professionals to give their assessments of you.” <http://www.medical-glossary.com> viewed on the 23rd June, 2011.

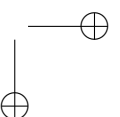
In other words, the reflective practitioner is flexible in his approach to practice. He relies on the gains obtained through experience in previous jobs to improve on the next task by looking into what went wrong and what worked right with the aim to achieve better performance. At the core of reflection is the thought “if you always do what you always did, then you will always get what you always got.” Thus, the reflective practitioner asks “How can I improve my practice?”

The place of reflective practice becomes important to journalism practice when we appreciate the link of theory and practice in journalism. Theory is the basis of practice and practice is the explanation of theory. The interrelationship between both makes it important for journalism teachers and practitioners to work together towards enabling journalism graduates appreciate and imbibe both ends.

Burns (1997), cited in Burns (2004), stresses this point by noting that:

Critical self-reflection is the cognitive bridge between journalism theory and professional practice. It is through critical self-reflection that journalists develop self-reliance, confidence, problem solving, cooperation and adaptability, while simultaneously gaining knowledge. Perhaps more importantly, it develops in students a sense of professional efficiency in their ability to negotiate the dilemmas and complexities that are inherent in their practice. Reflection is also the process by which journalists learn to recognize their own assumptions and understand their place in the wider social context. (p.6).

For the student journalist, reflective practice skills make the student vacate the conventional position of the passive receiver of a body of knowledge that the teacher selects, to an active processor of useful and applicable knowledge. Thus, the student distils and absorbs that knowledge that is useful for problem-solving both on training and professional tasks. Indeed, it is the on-the-job process of problem-solving that characterizes the practitioners. This way, the students are able to engage in the active role of solving the problems that confront them with situations that reflect the real world. Engaging students



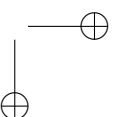
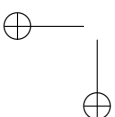


in problem-solving at training prepares them to do it more easily on the job. Burns (2004) speak thus "By emphasizing the process used to complete a task or make a professional decision, students are encouraged to learn in a self-directed way. The thinking skills required by the graduate practitioner are identical, prescribed, practiced and evaluated." (p.7).

Journalism educators must value the opportunities provided by institutional environments to expose students to learning by doing as knowledge and skills obtained through such means provide good foundation for better productive working life. It is pedagogically risky not to allow students to engage in such activities as internship, campus newspapering, reporting and editing, campus radio and television activities. These opportunities provide students with experiential learning settings similar to those they would have in a real life work place.

Historically, the term reflective practice was introduced by Donald Schön in his 1983 book *The Reflective Practitioner*. However, the foundational concepts of reflective practice have been around since the days of John Dewey who first wrote about reflective practice with his investigation of experience, interaction and practice. According to Dewey, (1933), cited at [www.ehlt.flinders.edu.au](http://www.ehlt.flinders.edu.au), we begin to reflect on a complex situation when we face that situation and ask ourselves what needs to be done. Dewey had described the difference between impulsive action, routine action and reflective action. In his view, impulsive action is based on trial and error, routine action rely on conventional ways of doing things, sanctioned by authority. These two methods, he felt were used by practitioners without engaging in much thought about how they were operating. Reflective action, Dewey claimed arose from the works of educators who were active and proactive, who persistently and carefully considered how they practiced and what they were teaching and was often the result of a need to solve a particular problem.

Reflection can be informal or formal. Informal reflection involves self-questioning and develops our awareness of our own assumptions. It is also the basis of other forms of reflection. Formal reflection on the other hand draws on research and theory and equally provides guidance and framework for practice. Whereas informal reflection may be done sometimes unconsciously, formal reflection is deliberate and goal-oriented. It is equally task-based because it aims at resolving a critical issue.

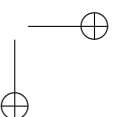
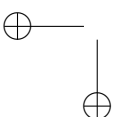


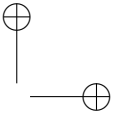


David Schön (1987), cited in Allen and Miller (1997) suggests a strategy for placing what he called “reflective practicum” at the centre of the work of professional schools as a way of creating a bridge between the world of practice and the world of academy. This way, in his view, it is possible to move towards resolving some of the conflicts between the academic and vocational dimensions of the professional schools. Schön believes you can reflect-in-practice or on-practice. Reflection-in-practice occurs when you reflect right and when you are engaged in the activity. This involves you thinking on your feet and responding immediately to a situation. Reflection-on-practice is when you reflect afterwards. It involves thinking about your experience and drawing learning from it for improved results. According to Schön, “when someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case.” (p.59). Schön’s point here is that the process of reflecting-in-practice creates an awareness of better ways to accomplish a unique task rather than following known ways, especially if the known ways have not provided useful solutions.

Ortiz (2006) describes both types of reflections thus; “Reflection-in-action is a heightened awareness of what one is doing at the time of activity. Consider for example, a neurosurgeon thoroughly maneuvering a surgical saw during cranial reconstruction, highly mindful about the action and analyzing results in order to make necessary adaptations during the procedure. By contrast, reflection-on-action is the reflection you do after the event: thinking through, and often discussing the incident with a colleague or supervisor. In this *post hoc* reflection, the learner understands complex experiences, applies theory to them and is able to solve problems and improve practice.

Being able to critically reflect is one of the most valuable skills that one can develop and it is the key to successful work-based learning. It also enables one to use whole of life experiences as the basis for learning. Important to journalism education is the need for formal reflection by stakeholders on better ways to achieve the goals and missions of the field. This is the emphasis of the 8<sup>th</sup> declaration of the World Journalism Education Congress (WJEC) in 2007 which reads thus: “Journalism educators should maintain strong links to media industries. They should critically reflect on industry practices and offer advice to industry based on this reflection.” Though it can be admitted that stakeholders have engaged in formal reflection through conferences and





annual meetings at which critical issues about journalism and mass communication education have been reflected upon, the gains of such meetings have been minimal and have at best only scratched the surface of the problem. To optimize the gains of reflection therefore, there is the need to go beyond formal reflection to reflection on action, a process that allows various parties to journalism education and practice to address the issues dispassionately.

### **Doubts about Reflective Practice**

In spite of its wide acceptance among educators and practitioners, reflective practice has been criticized as not being potent enough to solve all the problems of theory-practice relationship in journalism education. One major criticism is that reflective practice is too individualistic in its conception of learning and that it leaves out the social dimension of learning. The argument is that people do not only learn through the process of introspection as enunciated by reflective practice, but genuinely through conversation and interaction with other people.

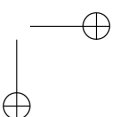
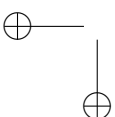
Greenberg (2007) points out another deficiency of the theory. This she said is the absence of a two-way feed-back mechanism. According to her,

Cultural studies born into a world of single disciplines, was seen as radical at birth because of its multidisciplinary nature. However, in its effort to win academic respectability, it has been traditional in giving more kudos to high theory and assuming a one-way flow of ideas from theory to practice. One gets the impression that it is the practitioners who are doing all the work in this marriage: here has been a good deal of effort to show how theory can transform the teaching of practice, but not so much that asks how practice and the perspective of practitioners might influence theory. (p.295).

Again, it has been discovered that such contexts as institutional and interpersonal curricula play a vital role in reflection. Without these supportive contexts, it is difficult to fully harness the potentials of reflective practice.

### **The purposes and prospects of journalism education**

The media are an integral part of the society. They have been so integrated into the society that without them the society is almost lifeless. They play





vital roles in the development of the society as enunciated in the postulates of the development media theory. It must be noted however that the media are mere tools in the hands of their human operators. In essence, the performance of the media in society is directly related to the performance of the individuals behind them in terms of their quality, competence and credibility. By extension, the quality of the individuals is equally related to the quality of the educational system that produces them. Thus, there is a domino effect in the total system such that one affects the other. If the quality of the journalists depends on the quality of the educational programme that produces them, then the programme should be implicated each time the journalists perform below standards. Almost every institutional set up has been known to have one form of mission statement or the other whether implicit or explicit. Mission statements give force and vigour to the vision of an institution. They give faculty and students something to run with and in what direction to run. Without purposes and mission, journalism education is at the risk of extinction.

In 1994, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication set up a joint committee to review the missions and purposes of journalism and mass communication education. Part of the committee's mandate was to "examine the actual and appropriate missions and purposes of journalism and mass communication education, as well as the specific activities which programmes undertake to implement their missions and accomplish their goals." (Christ & Hynes, 1997, p.1). According to these authors, "creation of the committee was a response to several developments, including specific difficulties experienced by some departments in persuading university administrators of the centrality of journalism and mass communication programmes to their universities and the consolidation of various programmes titled "communication" as some universities response to the economic recession of the early 1990s." (ibid.).

Rather than looking at the goals and missions of journalism education of individual institutions, this session takes a look at the omnibus goals and missions of journalism and mass communication education. That is, examining the purposes and missions of JMC from a general perspective. It is from the general goals and missions that specific departments can distil their individual goals and missions.

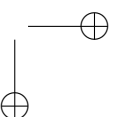
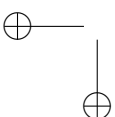


According to the AEJMC Task force 2000, “The goal of journalism and mass communication program is to provide students and the larger society with a deeper understanding of mass communication processes and to improve the practices and performance of mass media professionals.” (ibid., p.2). This goal suggests that the larger society is vital to journalism and mass communication education. It also aims to improve the knowledge of students on its programmes as well as support media professionals to achieve better delivery of communicated messages. The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Task Force on curriculum noted that:

...the purpose of media education is to produce well-rounded graduates who have critical thinking skills as well as practical skills, and who have an understanding of the philosophy of the media and a dedication to the public service role that the media have in our society. (ibid., p.2).

Again, the society and the students come up as vital concerns in journalism and mass communication education, thus suggesting that they deserve adequate consideration in the mission and goals of any journalism and mass communication programme.

The way it works is that the society is the ultimate beneficiary of a well-packaged journalism programme because the society encapsulates everyone including the managers of the programmes as well as the products of the programme i.e. the students. The focus however begins on the students who must be groomed to deliver professionally acceptable practice to society, because it is only when they do this that the safety of every element in society can be guaranteed. Critical thinking skills are vital in journalism education in order to build journalists who can adequately educate the public through incisive analysis and discussion of issues in the public domain. This is one of the key yardsticks that can be used for assessing the training quality and performance of the journalist. Writing on *Reflective Practice in Journalism Education*, Allen & Nod (1997) observed that: “In response to pressures on journalism education to develop more critical practitioners and to address rapid technological change, explicit structured reflection can be harnessed to address learners’ ability to think critically about their professional practice and to deal with issues of technology in a clear and uncluttered manner.” (p.1). The concession to the need for critical thinking and practical skills in journalism training can be attributed to journalism trainers’ and practitioners’ “re-





reflection” on the importance of reflective practice as a vital theory in the field. Indeed, Greenberg, (2007) supports a total replacement of former approaches to programme assessment with reflective practice arguing that “in some cases, practice is offered as an alternative to the old split –instead of assessing how programmes balance theory and practice we are advised to judge how well they teach critical self-reflection.” (p.295).

This perhaps coincides with the thoughts of Vartan Gregorian of the Carnegie Corporation in a 1998 *New York Times* article when he said that “journalists should be the sense makers of the society and educated accordingly” (Cohen, 2001). This emphasizes the close link between a well-educated journalist and the overall wellbeing of the society. This link must however be embedded in the vision and mission of the mass communication and journalism programmes in order for it to be sustained and grounded. According to Galvin (1992), cited in Christ and Hynes (1997), developing goals and mission statements can produce at least four benefits which include:

1. Clarifying organizational purpose
2. Forcing consensus on what is important
3. Creating a framework against which to evaluate resource allocation
4. Reinforcing a commitment to student learning.

Important as all these points are, number two stands out for our attention here. All players in journalism and mass communication education in Nigeria must agree on what is important to journalism and mass communication training programmes. One way to do this is through a clearly defined mission and purpose from which local departments, faculties and students can derive inspiration and direction.

### **Concerns for critical thought**

#### **Accreditation**

The basic logic of the accreditation process is to determine whether an institution possesses the capacity to run a journalism and mass communication programme. An honest assessment of the exercise shows it has become an arrangement of "I rub your back, you rub my back" amongst the various departments and the accreditation teams. Very often, there are instances of





institutions using mercenaries as staff or renting equipment for the period of the exercise. These attitudes weaken the capacity of the institutions to honestly deliver their mandates to their students. One suggestion to upgrade the accreditation process might be to include practitioners on the visiting teams. This is expected to create some level of neutrality and balance as well as provide better hindsight to the exercise.

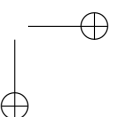
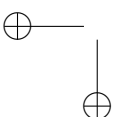
### **Admission**

The quality of enrollees in any academic programme is a strong determinant of the quality of the graduates on such a programme. Two issues are critical to the admission processes in journalism and mass communication training in Nigeria, namely: the quality of admitted students in terms of their orientation and readiness to pursue careers in the media or media-related world. Clearly, this is beyond the various schools and departments since the admission process is done by the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB). However, where a policy shift liberalizes the process, institutions should consider interview-based screenings that enable them admit career-focused candidates with genuine interests in the field of journalism and mass communication. This in itself has its inherent challenges one of which is that "man-know-man", a Nigerian factor could play up thus creating a worse problem.

A second critical point is number. With a practical-oriented course as journalism and mass communication, it is difficult to comprehend how institutions enroll as much as between a hundred and two hundred students in a year. This is more common in some private universities which pursue budget-driven admissions exercises with very little thoughts for their implications on the students and the entire process. Often, faculties of such institutions are not trained in teaching large classes.

### **Quality of Faculty**

One of the major points of criticism of journalism education globally is that schools and departments of journalism and mass communication seem to prefer holders of PhD degrees and researchers to experienced professionals on their faculty. This, clearly is a basic requirement by the National Universities



Commission, (NUC), the regulatory body for universities in Nigeria. Like any other point of criticism of journalism education, the issue of PhD versus professional experience has existed for long and has generated much controversy. For instance, in a study cited by Applegate, David Boroff, in his article *What Ails the Journalism Schools?* argued that the PhD has the effect of freezing out some of the best journalism teachers. Interestingly, the argument to de-emphasize research and PhD has come majorly from professionals and hardly from educators. Commenting on Tebbel's criticism, Applegate observes that "It must be remembered that a university's prestige is measured in one sense by the number of faculty with PhD degrees. Since a university's administration deems research as one of its missions, the quest for faculty with PhDs will not cease. On the contrary, the quest will grow stronger." (p. 95).

Clearly, those who support de-emphasizing PhD have a herculean task on their hands taking into consideration the great emphasis placed on PhD and research for appointment, promotion and accreditation by relevant parties to tertiary education. For instance, to attain the position of a senior lecturer in most Nigerian universities, a faculty must have a PhD degree. Also, to get appointed to any worthwhile position such as head of department or dean of a school or faculty requires a doctorate degree.

Again, the number of PhD holders vis-à-vis non-PhD holders that a department presents is taken seriously among other factors in determining whether or not a programme gets accredited. Emphasis on PhD is also premised on the assumption that faculties are supposed to be adept at research and the process of attaining a PhD degree is expected to groom the teacher in the art of research; and the degree itself ought to be a certification of sort. Thus, a university teacher without a PhD is assumed not to be a certified or chartered researcher.

It is not clear if anyone really doubts the ability of the professionals to do a good job of tutoring in journalism schools. The World Journalism Education Congress (WJEC) actually advises that they should as enunciated in its Declaration No 3 of 2007 thus: "Journalism educators should be a blend of academics and practitioners; it is important that educators have experience working as journalists." The snag it seems is putting the PhD issue in proper perspectives. This would entail the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders in determining the modalities for absorbing the professionals. There must be a means to assess their worth and experience and convert such into something

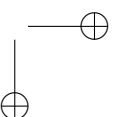
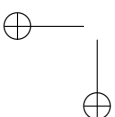


equivalent to a PhD. This mode is not entirely new as it is already a practice in City University in America, where, as reported by Greenberg (2007), a professional could earn a Doctorate in Journalism (DJourn) by submitting his past works and achievements for assessment. According to Greenberg, the programme “allows working journalists to submit their own practice as part of the assessment and contextualize it within a theoretical framework.” (p.294). This format did not entirely begin at City University. Indeed, it was borrowed from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism led by communications scholar Dr. James Carey as a wider process of reflection about the appropriate role of a journalism and mass communication school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In juxtaposition with the Nigerian setting, the above perspectives may seem farfetched, however, they are instructive. The issues are: very often, industry practitioners with decades of experience retire and die with their experiences which could add immense value to the classroom if they are given the chance but with the PhD factor, they could be restrained either by policy or by intimidation. A panacea might be to adopt the City University in America approach noted above or evolve a creative, home-grown approach to the issue. A second issue is the fact that several faculty in our institutions do not possess industry experience needed to even out their theory background. A solution here might be to evolve policies that allow them to do advanced internships of one year or more in relevant organizations. Clearly, this requires synergy between the industry and the institutions. To make this attractive, such faculty must receive remuneration from both their employer and the interning organization for the period of the programme.

### **Curricula**

Curriculum is central to any academic programme. It is the rudder which directs the ship of an academic endeavour. It also determines the competence that would be acquired by students, as well as the respect drawn by stakeholders in an academic programme. A great deal of debate has ensued among various interested parties to journalism education on what should be the complexion and content of the curriculum on journalism and mass communication education. As expected, there is no agreement yet on this and it is doubtful if there will ever be. A reason for this assertion lies in the nature of curricu-





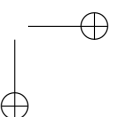
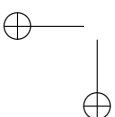
lum itself. A good curriculum must not aim only to prepare students for the challenges of the world of work, but must also reflect the social, cultural and political environments where it operates. Beyond this, it must affect the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of its recipients. Indeed, a good curriculum must be robust in its content while being specific in its goal. There are multifarious views on journalism and mass communication curricula today and this could be said to have their roots in the views of some of the pioneers of journalism education who had tremendous influence on the growth of the field.

### **Training infrastructure**

The absence of appropriate and modern infrastructure has been the bane of the journalism and mass communication training in Nigeria. Taking into account the practical nature of the field, it is clear that without training facilities products of our institutions might end up as misfits in the work place. Very often, several trainees do not get opportunities to see, much less interact with basic equipment until their internships. This leads to the production of graduates with theory knowledge and near zero practical base. An important way out of this problem would be to make the accreditation process more credible by erecting effective checks and balances in the process. For instance beyond the extant ritualistic and ceremonious accreditation procedures, there should be random, impromptu inspection of facilities and faculty of training institutions with the policy to withdraw the accreditations of institutions which do not indeed possess such infrastructure and facilities as were presented during the accreditation exercise. Town-gown collaboration equally comes in here. Since the institutions are training for the industry, the industry could support the training programmes with funds and logistics for providing the needed infrastructure.

### **Internships**

The fundamental motivation for internship in journalism and mass communication education is the creation of a platform for assessing the readiness of the trainee for the world of work. Internship aims to help the student





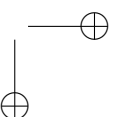
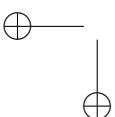
hone relevant skills on practical aspects of their training. According to Ojomo (2007),

a major purpose of internship is to provide a planned transition from the classroom to the job. Movement from the theoretical disposition of the classroom work to the practical work world without internship could a technical and social dissonance with damaging effects on graduates. Internship provides a smooth crossable bridge to the student without work experience. p.50.

A cursory observation by this author shows that the internship exercise has been reduced to a mere academic ritual observed not for its innate benefits but for the sake of it. in its present format, the exercise raises the following questions: How long should an internship last? What is the degree of coordination of the exercise by the department, that is how well are the students supervised by the faculty? Are the interns visited at their internship locations? Do the internships count for grades for the interns? Are the interns achieving the primary goals of the exercise or are they used merely as errand runners? What is the degree of cooperation between the interns' schools and the organizations providing the internships? Generally, the polytechnics seem to score higher than the universities on some of these points. For instance, several of the polytechnics do at least six months internships and in many cases eight or twelve months, whereas the universities do three months for most of the times. A ready recommendation here might be to make the universities run a five-year programme with a one year internship in the fourth year.

### Conclusion

The mass media have come to be known as the fourth estate of the realm. This is in recognition of their role in keeping the government and the society generally focused on their relevant functions in society. The Nigerian media can be commended for their active roles in the periods before and after the nation's independence. However, it is clear that the media could play better and improved roles if the systemic challenges as identified here are address with the seriousness it deserves. For too long, players in the industry have allowed things to drift and this has led to blame-trading and unhealthy polemics. The issues identified are definitely not the only challenges of the industry and the





training institutions neither are the recommendations proffered sure-fire solutions to the problems, but stakeholders in journalism and mass communication training and practice must continue to place the issues in the front burner in order to bring the field to the front row and make the industry take its proper place in national development.

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