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# **LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF THE CAREER PROSPECTS IN MASS COMMUNICATION AMONG AUCHI POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS**

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## **Abstract**

*The study sets out to examine Auchi Polytechnic Mass Communication students' level of awareness of the career prospects in mass communication. With a sample size of 180 out of a population of 300 and the utilization of mainly close-ended questionnaire, the analysis of data gathered revealed among others that, although most mass communication undergraduates claimed that they are aware of the career prospects, this awareness is lamentable because it is restricted to only print and broadcast journalism. It was also found out that most students who chose mass communication as a course of study did so because they thought they could do better in it than other courses that*

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*may involve calculation. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should review the curriculum of mass communication HND programme to include other relevant options instead of only Print and Broadcast options; among others.*

Education has been variously described by specialists and Teachers as the best legacy one can bequeath to one's children. This old cliché is as true today as it was decades ago especially in a developing country with very poor economic base. Education therefore becomes the only way a child can be equipped for the future. If one is educated, one can then develop his or her own career along the lines of his training. Education according to Onyido (2011:23) "makes an enormous difference in one's chances of gaining well-paid jobs." This will then enhance one's chances of developing a career, raising a healthy family and be equipped for the challenges of life.

Similarly, education and other basic skills are necessary for ones basic empowerment and without these skills acquired through education, one cannot obtain better paid job or employment through which one can develop a career United Nations International Forum for Educational Mangers (200) UNIFEM Biennial Report.

Education, according to Onyido (2011:23), is one of the most important investments of any country." Education makes an enormous difference between one who acquires it, and one who does not which is why the old Greek proverb; "...if you think education is expensive, try ignorance" is very popular and relevant today.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (6<sup>th</sup> ed.), "education is a process of training and instruction especially of children and young people in schools, colleges etc. which is designed to give knowledge and skills." It is a process of teaching somebody about something or how to do something. This means that education can be formal and non-formal. Formal education takes place in schools while non-formal takes place outside the classroom. Here lies the basis of this discussion.

If education is really aimed at teaching somebody about how to do something, then it means that every school graduate ought to have the potential to develop a skill with which to live through life, face life challenges and enhance his/her economic wellbeing via the development of a career. This is because as Onyido (2005:24) put it, education is a process through which an individual is made a functional member of his society. Ocho (2005:14), believed that education is a process through which the young

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acquires knowledge and realizes his/her potentials and uses them for self actualization and to become useful to others.

According to Onyido (2011:24), “Education is a means of preserving, transmitting and improving the culture of the society”. In every society, education connotes the acquisition of something good or something worthwhile.

In recognition of this, the United Nations General Assembly in 1949 adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 26 of that declaration stipulates that:

- i. Everyone has a right to education. This shall be free at least in the elementary and primary levels.
- ii. Elementary education shall be compulsory, while technical and professional education shall be made generally available.
- iii. High education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- iv. Parents have prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (Onyido 2011:25)

From the above, one can safely assume that after training, a child who is educated can pattern a career into which he wants to develop or realize his potentials. It is from there that the human person can function and actively participate in the development of the Nation.

According to Obodoegbulam, Egesimba and Dimkpa (2009:5) “Youths are the life blood of any nation. They are the life wire of any nation. They are the productive force of any society.” The challenge to every society is to update itself to keep pace with development trends all over the world. This can happen according to (Kur 2011:6) only through the acquisition of knowledge. Developing a career is an important aspect in ones professional practice. Here we agree with the view of (Paralko 1976:6) as cited in Kur 2011 that career, used in its simplistic term, denotes a full time performance of a particular kind of work for pay and in which one gets an incentive in terms of growth in status. Freidson 1986 cited by (Kur 2011:4) believed that “what is important for every individual in an occupation is to act like a professional.” This is the only way growth in status can be guaranteed.

In the development of a career, it is generally believed that the quality of education received by an individual plays a vital role. This is why (Amize 2007:7) believes that the development of a successful career is hinged on the kind, type and level of training an individual has received to prepare him for the challenges of contributing to National development through his/her chosen career.

From the foregoing, education should not just be to secure a white collar job, although it is a part of it, but one that can, according to (Kur, 2011:7) “help the individual to develop a professional career in his/her chosen field.”

### **Conceptual Framework**

In Nigeria Tertiary Institutions, many graduates are certificated year-in-year-out and all go into the labour market searching for jobs. Mass communication is one of such disciplines where students are produced every year. Many graduates go into the labour market with the notion of practicing journalism in the mass media – newspaper or magazine house, Radio or Television. Surely many do not look beyond these.

The concept of mass communication has variously been defined by different communication scholars at different points in time. What seems to be interesting in all these definitions is the fact that mass communication deals with a heterogeneous audience through the aid of machine assisted devices.

For instance, Dominick (2002:13) referred to mass communication as “the process by which a complex organization with the aid of one or more machines produces and transmits public messages that are directed at large, heterogeneous, and scattered audiences”. To Baran (2002:6), mass communication is the process of creating shared meaning between the mass media and their audiences”. Mass communication can be defined as a device by which a group of people working together transmits information to a large heterogeneous and anonymous audience simultaneously” (Sambe, 2005:28).

The International Contemporary Dictionary of Mass Communication and Media Studies (2008, p.109) as compiled by Esimokha used seven characteristics to describe mass communication as enunciated by McQuail (1969) viz:

1. They normally require complex formal organizations.
2. They are directed towards large audiences.
3. They are public, the content is open to all and the distribution is relatively unstructured and informal.
4. Audiences are heterogeneous, that is the receiving audience are different in age, sex, language, social status, religion and so on.
5. The mass media can establish simultaneous contact with very large number of people at a distance from the source, and widely separated from one another. For example, NTA Network News at 9 is received everywhere in the country at the same time. While this is true for the electronic media, it does not apply to the print media that is newspapers and magazines.
6. The relationship between the organization and the audience is formal.
7. The audience of mass communication is collectively unique to modern society. It is an aggregate of individuals united by a common interest and

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open to activation towards common ends, yet the individuals involved are unknown to each other. They are only loosely organized or lacking organization.

A cursory look at the various definitions above shows that mass communication is synonymous with the mass media. As a result of this, many prospective students and indeed old ones probably “narrowcast” the concept as a course of study to be either broadcast journalism or print journalism. This erroneous belief may make them to be oblivious of the career prospects in the discipline (mass communication).

Elucidating further on this, Nwosu (2005) asserted that:

*Many prospective and first year (sometimes even beyond) first year students get into the mass communication department without really knowing the rich and many career prospects they are opening for themselves. At best, many of them are attracted to mass communication because of media glamour, especially television, film and radio broadcasting. Some others just want to become heroic journalists like the late Mr. Dele Giwa, co-founder of Newswatch magazine, the late Mr. Agwu Okprika of the “Killing Biafra” fame, Mr. Ray Ekpu of the Newswatch and other well known dead and living journalists that include Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first president of Nigeria (p.5*

It is therefore to correct this misperception of mass communication, (if it does exist), by the so-called experts and prospective/ new entrant mass communication students that this study is carried out, using the mass communication students of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, as a case in point.

Looking at the career prospects in mass communication, Nwosu (2005) stated that it is indeed “one course, many professions”. According to him, the many faces of mass communication include: Marketing Occupations, Marketing Communications, Advertising, Public Relations, Print Media Careers, Broadcast Media Careers, Media Independents, Book Publishing and Job Printing. Others include: Photojournalism/Photography, Films, Cinema and Home Videos, Development Communication and Advocacy, among others. In fact, we can go on and on because the career opportunities for the mass communication graduate are indeed almost innumerable.

But the pertinent questions begging for answers are: How many mass communication undergraduates and graduates alike know the career prospects in their

discipline? How many for instance, know that they cannot complain of unemployment where others are complaining? Was their choice of the discipline by design or by chance? These and more are what the study seeks to unravel.

### **A Historical Perspective of Auchi Polytechnic**

What is today known as the Auchi Polytechnic was established in 1964 as the Mid-West Technical College and was a gift of the British Government. It became the Mid-Western State Polytechnic in 1973. Located in the hilly town of Auchi, the Administrative headquarter of Etsako West Local Government Area. The polytechnic was converted from a technical college to its current status by edict No. 12 of April, 1973. It started off as a multi-campus institution with headquarters in Benin City. The departments of Company and Administration and Accountancy were moved from Auchi to join the Government Commercial Academy, Benin City. These formed the nucleus of the School of Business Studies in the Benin Campus of the polytechnic. The first Board of Governors was inaugurated in January, 1974 with Mr. Rex Akpofure as its first Chairman.

In 1975, the Headquarter of the polytechnic was moved back to Auchi. In 1976 a restructuring of the polytechnic took place and a new board was constituted with Prof. A.M.A. Imevbore as Chairman. Dr. P.O. Igharo became the principal.

In May, 1993 at the end of his state visit to Edo State, the then President, Ibrahim Babangida announced the Federal Government takeover of the polytechnic. Between August and November, 1993, the necessary instruments for the Federal Government takeover of the institution were put in place. By 1<sup>st</sup> January 1994, the Federal Government assumed full responsibility for the management of the institution.

The Auchi Polytechnic currently has seven schools – Arts and Design, Environmental, Applied Sciences and Technology, Engineering, Business Studies, Information and Communication Technology and the School of Evening Studies. The polytechnic also has a comprehensive Health Centre, a Secondary School, Primary School and a modern size Sports Complex. The School also boasts of students' hostel, staff quarters and a modern Auditorium. The motto of the Institution is Hand and Brain for Development.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is hinged on the Perception Theory of mass communication. This theory is based on the assumption that mass communication wants audiences to pay attention to the messages, learn the contents of the messages and make appropriate decisions and make changes in attitudes, beliefs or produce appropriate behavioural

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responses. Thus Folarin (1998) believed that people seek information that cater for their own interests, conform to their beliefs and boosts their own ego.

Here the views of Berelson and Steiner (1964) as cited in Anaeto, Olufemi and Osifeso (2008:66) that perception is “the complex process by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into meaningful and coherent picture of the world.” Arising from this, Benneth, Hoffman and Prakash (1989) as cited in Anaeto Olufemi and Osifeso 2008:66, believed that “perception is notably active. It involves learning, updating perspectives and interacting with the observed”. From these observations, it is thus clear that certain psychological factors like the physical aspects of the stimuli, introduce subjectivity into the perception process. Here, issues like selectivity comes to decision making in the way people perceive a message. Such selective influences may, according to (Anaeto, et al) include wants, needs, attitudes, and other psychological factors. Here the assumption is that selective perception plays an important role in communication of any sort. It means that people can react to the same message in very different ways. This is where this theory has a relevance to this study. Why do mass communication students choose the discipline as their course of study? Is their perception of the course as a result of the way they see those in the field or out of conviction. Another aspect of the study which also influences the way people perceive issues is the uses and gratification theory. In line with Folarin’s view, the theory believes that people tend to selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain the media message on the basis of his or her own needs, beliefs, etc. thus, influencing the effect process of the media messages. This effect process of the students of mass communication ties up with the way they perceive the course and what influences them in their choice.

### **Objectives**

The justification for this study is to ascertain the level of awareness among mass communication students about the career prospects available to them in their discipline.

Specifically, the study aims to find out:

- i. If mass communication undergraduates are aware of the career opportunities available to them upon graduation.
- ii. Whether prospective students are aware of what mass communication is all about before choosing it as a course of study.
- iii. Why students prefer mass communication to other courses.
- iv. Whether mass communication undergraduates consider print and broadcast journalism as the only viable options available to them.
- v. If those studying mass communication found themselves there by choice or by accident.

### **Research Questions**

- i. Are mass communication undergraduates aware of the career prospects in mass communication?
- ii. Is students' choice of mass communication as a field of study based on their awareness?
- iii. Why do mass communication students prefer the course to others?
- iv. Do mass communication students consider print journalism and broadcast journalism as the only viable options?
- v. Are those studying mass communication doing so out of choice or by convenience?

### **Methodology**

The research method used for this study was survey with questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The survey method was preferred to others because it is about the major method through which opinions of respondents on an issue are sought. "Besides making allowance for drawing scientific representative sample from the entire population, survey facilitates comfortable generalizations on the entire population based on the outcome of the studied sample (Nwodu, 2008:11).

Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi in Edo State constituted the area of study while the population of the study was the students of the Mass Communication Department totaling 300 (ND 1 = 90, ND 2 = 90, HND 1 = 60 and HND 2 = 60). The students of mass communication were selected as the study population because of the peculiarity of study.

To draw a representative sample, 180 samples were selected from the population using both stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The department of mass communication was stratified into ND 1, ND 2, HND 1 and HND 2, and in order to give all elements equal chance of being selected, 50, 50, 40 and 40 samples were chosen from ND 1, ND 2, HND 1 and HND 2 respectively, using the simple random sampling without replacement. The procedure adopted for the random sampling was by first giving unique numbers to all the students in each level. These were written on pieces of papers, folded and dropped into four tins (with each of the tins containing listing from each level of study). The contents were shuffled and samples randomly picked without replacement from each of the tins.

To ensure reliability of the instrument (questionnaire), the researchers first did a pilot study on each of the samples representing each level, to ascertain the level of consistency in their responses. This is in line with Asika (1991:72) ascertain that a



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researcher who designs a measuring instrument should be concerned about how consistent the results he obtains with the instrument are. He will want to ensure that the instruments are. He will want to ensure that the instrument gives similar, close or the same result if the study to which the instrument gives similar, close or the same result if the study to which the instrument is applied is replicated. This consistency was therefore achieved probably because the questionnaire was structured in a simple manner that it tackled the research problem and questions effectively. Thus, efforts were made to free the test instrument of all forms of ambiguity that are likely to confuse the respondents and by extension, confound the outcome of the study. In order to effectively control the study and further enhance the validity of the expected results, the researchers met the respondents in their various classes. The respondents were persuaded to fill out the questionnaire at the point of administration as a way of forestalling low return rate.

**Data Analysis and Results**

**Table 1: Awareness of Career Prospects**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Response</b>
Yes	120	66.7%
No	45	25%
Can't Say	15	8.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100%</b>

As can be seen from the table above, out of the 180 respondents, 120, representing 66.7% say that they are aware of the career prospects in Mass Communication. On the other hand, 45, representing 25% say they are not aware while only 15 respondents representing 8.3% say they can't say, meaning they are neither for yes nor No.

**Table 2: Basis for Choice of Mass Communication**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Response</b>
Yes	103	57.2%
No	77	42.8%
Can't Say	----	-----
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

From table two above, it is evident that 103, representing 57.2% say their awareness of the career prospects in Mass Communication influenced their choice of the course,

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while 77, representing 42.8% say it was not their awareness that influenced their choice. “Can’t Say” had 0%.

**Table 3: Choice of Mass Communication Better than Other Discipline**

<i>Response Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<b>Percentage of Response</b>
Yes	124	68.9%
No	56	31.1%
Can’t Say	----	-----
<b>Total</b>	180	100

Analysis of table 3 above shows that majority of the respondents – 124, representing 68.9% say yes while 56 of them, representing 31.1% say no. “Can’t Say” had no response.

**Table 4: Print and Broadcast Journalism Only Viable Options**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Response</b>
Yes	78	54.4%
No	69	32.3%
Can’t Say	13	7.2%
<b>Total</b>	180	100

As can be seen from the table above, more than half of the respondents, representing 54.4% believe that Print Journalism and Broadcast Journalism are the only viable options available to them. 69 of the respondents, representing 38.3% thought otherwise, while an infinitesimal number, 13, representing 7.2% say they cannot say whether they are the only viable options.

**Table 5: Awareness of Function outside Journalism**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Response</b>
Yes	96	42.8%
No	77	53.3%
Can’t Say	07	3.9%
<b>Total</b>	180	100

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The result in Table 5 above is illuminating. 77 respondents, representing 42.8% know that they can function outside being a journalist, while 96, representing 53.3% do not know that they can function in other areas as mass communication graduates outside being a journalist. On the other hand, only 7, representing 3.9% are neither here nor there.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study provide a significant insight into the level of awareness of the career prospects that students of mass communication have on the course.

As to research question one that sought to know whether mass communication undergraduates are aware of the career prospects in the course, the statistical evidence in table one above shows that they are aware. This is represented by 60% of the respondents saying “yes” as to the remaining 40% who thought otherwise.

The data gathered in respect of research question two, show that students’ choice of mass communication is as a result of their awareness of the career prospects in the discipline. This can be seen in table two above where 103 out of the 180 respondents, representing 57, 2% answers in the affirmative while 77 of them, representing 42.8% answer no. If the data gathered and analyzed here are anything to go by, one may be right to conclude that the reason why students opt for mass communication as a field of study, is a result of their awareness of the career prospects in the course,

Research question three sought to find out why mass communication students prefer the course to others. Again, the results obtained from this question are illuminating. 70% (68.9%) of the respondents say that they prefer mass communication because they believe they can do better in it than other disciplines. Only 31.1% of the respondents thought otherwise.

However, respondents’ response to research question four that sought to find out whether print and broadcast journalism are the only viable options in mass communication show that majority of them are in agreement. With reference to table four above, 54.4% of the respondents agree with this, 32.3% answer “No” while the remaining 7.2% say they “cannot say” whether print and broadcast journalism are the only viable options. The finding here may be deceptive because print and broadcast journalism are not the only viable options in mass communication. There are, other disciplines like Public Relations, Advertising, Photo Journalism, Book Publishing,

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Cinematography, among others. Care should therefore be taken when interpreting these data.

It is probably true that the erroneous belief above, affected respondents' response to research question five where they were asked whether they know that they can function outside being a journalist. With reference to table five above, 53.3% (which is the majority) say they are oblivious of the fact that they can function outside being a journalist, 42.8% say they know while the remaining 3.9% say they "can't say"

### **Summary of Findings**

From the foregoing, the followings are the summarized results of this study:

- i. Most mass communication undergraduates claimed that they are aware of the career prospects in mass communication. This is as shown in table 1 above.
- ii. Majority of those who chose mass communication as a course of study did so as a result of their awareness of the career prospects in the course. Table 2 vividly showed this, where 57.2% of the respondents affirmed to this.
- iii. Another finding which contradicts number two above is that most mass communication students chose the course because they thought they could do better in it than other courses. This is contradictory because the same students, who said they chose the course as a result of their awareness of the career prospects, are the same people who said they choose it because they were comfortable with it than other courses.
- iv. Most mass communication undergraduates erroneously believe that print and broadcast journalism are the only viable career options available to them.
- v. Also, most students are oblivious of the fact that they function in other areas, outside being a journalist.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study are illuminating in the sense that they go to confirm the belief that most mass communication undergraduates though claimed to be aware of the career prospects in the course, this awareness is limited to either be a broadcast journalist or a print journalist. Some equally chose the course not because of the career prospects, but they erroneously see it as a dumping ground for those who dread mathematics/ calculation courses. This is very wrong because, mass communication is "one course but many professions". However, these findings may be limited to the polytechnic where students in the HND level are "forced" to either major in Broadcast Option or Print Option.

### **Recommendations**

1. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in Nigeria should review the curriculum of mass communication HND programme to include Public Relations Option, Marketing Communication option, Photography option, Cinematography option and Book Publishing option, instead of restricting it to only Print or Broadcast option.
2. More Public Relations and Advertising courses should be taught in the polytechnics to reflect the standard of the National Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON)
3. At the point of entry, an orientation should be organized for students where they are taught what the course is all about and the unlimited career prospect in it.
4. Counseling Units should be instituted in all secondary schools, where students' progress in various subjects can be monitored and advised on the courses suitable for them in higher institutions.
5. Any student who sees any discipline as a dumping ground, and not because he/she is convinced of what prospects, should be advised to discontinue with the programme and seek admission in relevant field.

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