

# PREVAILING ISSUES/ CHALLENGES IN MASS COMMUNICATION EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN THIRD WORLD SOCIETIES: NIGERIA IN PERSPECTIVE

---

*Gbaden Jacob Chiakaan, Ph.D*  
*Department of Mass Communication,*  
*Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia,*  
*Nasarawa State.*

*William Musa Madaki*  
*Department of Mass Communication,*  
*Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia,*  
*Nasarawa State.*

And

*Larai Mbezizi Jakonda*  
*Department of Mass Communication,*  
*Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia,*  
*Nasarawa State.*

## **Abstract**

*The aim of mass communication education in Nigerian tertiary institutions is to produce qualitative personnel who can function competently and professionally in the field of providing all round information to the masses. Information is very important. It is often said that information is power. This is very true because a society with people who are adequately informed and educated about things around them can never be left behind in any form of development. The activities carried out by the field of mass communication have unavoidably and unarguably made functional education in mass communication possible. Incidentally, in Third World countries with Nigeria inclusive, education is seriously bedeviled with so many issues and challenges. This, no doubt, impacts negatively on the quality of information Nigerians are exposed to generally about their society and the outside world. This paper has, therefore, identified and discussed some of the prevailing problems including ignorance on the part of managements about what mass communication is, lack of commitment by regulatory bodies, employment of deceptive strategies to gain accreditation, lack of modern facilities, over admission of students and others as such problems affecting*

*effective mass communication education in Nigeria. It has recommended that a more aggressive campaign be embarked upon by professional bodies and scholars involved in the control and teaching of mass communication education to provide deeper understanding of what mass communication as a course entails in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Mass Communication, Education, Challenges, Entertainment and Nigeria.

Mass Communication is an aspect of communication which deals with information dissemination to the public. It is a form of communication that is unique because it is inclined to the masses. Communicating with members of the public about things that happen in their society and in the whole world is very important. Information, it is said, is power. This implies that one with information is one with power. In line with this, Thomas Jefferson, one of the American presidents in the 70s as quoted by Chiakaan and Tseguy (2008:115) declares his preference to information thus:

*... if it were left for me to decide whether we should have a government without the mass media or the mass media without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to choose the latter.*

Interpretatively, with quality information, you can organise, mobilize and run your society well, with quality information, one can be successful in business, education, politics, religion and other endeavours.

The globalization which is so much talked about and celebrated in the world today is a product of information. Idebi (2010:96) posits that globalization “is a cosmic drive towards a universal system with instantaneous communication of knowledge and culture.” Chiakaan (2013:105) agrees with Idebi (2010) and goes further to explain why the world is considered a global village thus:

*... People in a typical village set up share things commonly, an infectious disease that can occur in a village set up, if not quickly managed, can sweep the entire village away in a short time. This explains why the world is being considered a global village. It is a global village because it does not take time for people in Nigeria to know that North Korea is offensively testing prohibited nuclear weapons against South Korea, it does not take time for them to know that President Donald Trump has introduced new travelling policy for those wishing to travel to America etc.*

The indispensability of information and communication to the survival, development and sustainable development of any society especially a developing society like Nigeria can, therefore, not be over stressed.

Nigerians need adequate and qualitative information about things that happen around them and in the whole world. This becomes even more imperative taking into cognisance the fact that people who are ill-informed can, at best, take decisions that can not only cost them but also their society. A well informed people, it is said, are a good asset to their society. Apparently corroborating the power of information to transform lives in Third world countries, Harry Truman, as attributed by Melkote (1991) in Soola (2003:9) declares:

For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skills to relieve the suffering of people in the developing world, then signaling the beginning of the modernisation or dominant paradigm of development and development communication

Fundamentally, because of the perceived important role information can play to better lives in any society, it has become expedient for institutions of higher learning, particularly in developing societies to introduce and teach it. This is the background to the study of mass communication and the birth of development theory of mass communication.

The aim of teaching mass communication, in this regard, is to produce highly trained personnel who can go out and manned the information industry, providing adequately, qualitatively and professionally oriented information services to the people (Okoro, Obayi and Onyebuchi (2013:227). Incidentally, to have a functional mass communication education in the Nigerian tertiary institutions leading to competent and efficient production of man power in the information industry, is a dream that is yet to be fully realised. This is consequent upon some prevailing issues/challenges leading to half baked production of mass communication and mass media operators in Nigeria and other Third world societies; societies that are highly in need of information to bring about effective development. This paper, therefore, discusses such issues/challenges thwarting mass communication education in tertiary institutions in Third world countries especially Nigeria. The paper is hereby presented under the following sub-topics:

- i. Mass Communication Education and Tertiary Institutions Perspective:
- ii. Mass communication and Development in Third World Countries.  
Prevailing issues/Challenges in Mass Communication Education in Nigeria
- iii. Conclusion
- iv. Recommendations

### **Mass Communication Education and Tertiary Institutions in Perspective**

Mass communication is a popular course in Nigerian tertiary institutions. As a concept, Sandman et al (1976) in Okunna (1999:22) define it as “the process of transmitting information, ideas and attitudes to many people, usually through a machine.” Dominick (1999:6) posits that mass communication is “the process by which a complex organisation; with the aid of one or more machines, produces and

transmits public messages that are directed at large, heterogeneous and scattered audiences.” This definition is important to this discourse; it posits that mass mediated messages are not produced by every organisation; they are produced by organisations that are complex. The complexity of organisations producing mass communication messages implies that such organisations are well organised into structures or departments with division of labour a major characteristic.

Another thing worth taking note of in Dominick’s (1999) definition is the fact that there are machines which are involved in the production of messages meant for public consumptions. These machines are handled by people who must be well trained in operating them effectively so that the messages can be produced and disseminated. Fundamentally is the fact that practising mass communication in the area of journalism, advertising, public relations, communication for development or in any capacity involves many people who must be well trained in this regard. This is what calls for effective education in mass communication particularly in a developing society like Nigeria.

The concept of education even though not new to us, needs clarification; it implies, according to the Module on General Methods in Education (2006:1) “the process of teaching, training and learning in schools and colleges for the development of knowledge and skills so as to prepare individuals to live happily with themselves and others in the society where they live.” Chiakaan and Bulus (2015:141) note that this definition is inclined to teaching, training and learning exercises in a formal school set up like primary or secondary or tertiary which is also what makes it to be adopted in this paper.

Tertiary institutions are the same thing with higher institutions where formal education is offered to people in society. They are post-secondary institutions such as universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of education which offer higher training to people than lower or post-primary institutions like teacher’s colleges, commercial colleges and secondary schools. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:4) National Policy on Education has spelt out the aims of establishing higher institutions including professional education as:

- i. To provide, develop and inculcate proper-orientation for the survival of the individuals and the society.
- ii. To develop the intellectual capacities to understand and appreciate environment.
- iii. To provide both physical and intellectual help which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community; and
- iv. To provide an overview of the local and external environments.

All these goals, as can be observed, are tied to the development of the Nigerian society. In line with this discussion, Osunbiyi (2004:193) asserts that:

The development of any nation will, to a large extent, depend on the quality of education (particularly at tertiary level) that citizens are exposed to. Political and

economic powers of most advanced worlds are indisputably derived from technological and scientific evolution brought about by their higher education. It is imperative, therefore, that every country that aspires to attain political, economic and social greatness, should attempt to invest enormously on education, most especially, tertiary education which is capable of producing appropriate manpower need that can propel growth and development in all spheres of human endeavours for any society.

Osunbiyi's (2004) submission is quite true, the quality of higher education in countries that are called advanced or developed today is, no doubt, fundamentally what has placed them in the position they are today in the world politically, socially and economically. Development in Nigeria and other Third world societies is seriously thwarted by the nature of higher education in existence.

### **Relationship between Mass Communication Education and National Development in Nigeria**

Development is what every nation, particularly the Third world nations are struggling to achieve. The fight against under development has become very imperative due to numerous drawbacks associated with it such as hunger, poverty, corruption, high birth rate, high death rate, low Gross Domestic Product (GDP), low per capita income, crises, tribalism, high illiteracy, unstable democracy, unstable educational system, poor health system and high unemployment (Madaki and Kudu, 2016:17-18). Communication is believed to be one powerful weapon that must be deployed in the quest for the development of Nigeria and other periphery nations. This is the background to mass communication for national development. Moemeka (1994:12) states that development is the utilisation of the processes of communication to the development process. Acknowledging Rosario-Braid (1978), Moemeka (1994:13) further says:

Development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country (economic growth, modernisation, industrisation) and the mass of its people (self actualization, fulfillment of human potentials, greater social justice etc) through the identification and utilisation of appropriate expertise in the development process that will assist in increasing participation of intended beneficiaries at the grassroots level.

People need information in order to achieve their personal goals and also to enable them help their society achieve its goals. This implies that a relationship, infact, a natural one exists between information and development. This belief was, according to Daniels (1951) in Ugande (2007:26) what prompted President Harry Truman of the United States of America, in extension of his Marshall plan to the less developed societies under the point four programme, declared:

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a threat both to them and to more prosperous

areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of people.

The belief in the power of information to transform lives, particularly in developing nations, as noted in the foregoing discourse, was what gave birth to the modernisation or westernisation theory of development communication. But if information is indispensable to development, it implies that the two are inseparable; it further implies that education, in this regard, is very important and can never be toyed with.

### **Prevailing Issues/Challenges in Mass Communication Education in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

Mass communication and journalism education began in Nigeria in 1961. This was the year the University of Nigeria, Nsukka commenced mass communication by introducing journalism, awarding Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree (Okunna, 1987). In 1967, the University of Lagos established the Department of Mass Communication. Among the Polytechnics, the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu was said to be the first to commence mass communication education in 1987. Today, it is on record that, apart from other institutions owned by professional bodies and organisations, there are numerous universities and polytechnics offering mass communication related courses, awarding diploma, higher diploma and degrees accordingly. Confirming this view, Okoro, Obayi and Onyebuchi (2013:227) have revealed that over 53 public and private polytechnics, 41 public and private universities engage in journalism and mass communication education. Their data, obtained from the net (<http://nbte.gov.ng/insto2.html>) was exclusive of those institutions whose programmes are yet to be accredited by either the National Universities Commission or the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

In spite of the increasing number of institutions offering mass communication, Akinfeleye (2009) sadly notes that all is not well with them. Akinfeleye's view is uncontested as there are prevailing issues/challenges negatively affecting the ability of the institutions to offer qualitative and functional knowledge in this regard. But if the institutions offering mass communication education are facing serious challenges, it means the information and communication sector generally is in jeopardy at the detriment of a country like Nigeria; a country yearning for development. Some of such issues/ challenges affecting the institutions include:

**Poor knowledge about mass communication:** This appears to be one of the fundamental problems. Many people involved in the management of tertiary institutions appear to have little or no knowledge about what the profession really is. To some, mass communication is nothing more than journalism. But if mass communication is journalism, it means it is an art course. Acknowledging this

problem, Okoro et al (2013:228) state that one big dilemma in mass communication and journalism education in the country is that it is partly domiciled in the Arts and partly domiciled in social sciences which is what is contrary to what operates in a well developed curriculum for the training of professionals in areas like law, medicine, engineering etc.

Lack of proper knowledge about what mass communication is has really brought confusion about which faculty the course should be placed in. Those who view it as art, place it in the Faculty of Arts. In his contribution to this issue, Nwosu (2005:3) affirms thus:

There is also the peculiar (negatively or positively?) of such departments like the Department of Communication and Language Arts at the University of Ibadan and the University of Uyo which also teach mass communication and are located (understably?) in those universities Faculties of Arts. In the Mass Communication department in Nigerian Polytechnics, the story of location is virtually the same or very close to the above described trends or patterns in the Nigerian university system.

The implication of this situation is that the institutions offering mass communication do not impart harmonious knowledge to their products. The National Universities Commission (NUC) recommended placement of mass communication in the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2005. This explains why in some schools, mass communication is domiciled in the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences. In some, it is under the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology. This arrangement is still faulty in the view of Nwosu (2005:4) who advocates for the adoption of the global trend by suggesting that even though mass communication is a little bit of arts, social sciences and information and communication technology, it should be cut off and isolated and studied as an autonomous discipline.

**Lack of serious commitment by bodies regulating mass communication education:** To ensure that institutions offer standard and functional mass communication education in Nigeria, government has established bodies charged with the responsibility of regulating its teaching and learning. These bodies, the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) have the power to determine whether universities or polytechnics are qualified to offer mass communication as a course based on prescribed standards or laid down conditions.

Where approval has not been granted by these bodies, institutions have no right to offer mass communication. While the efforts of these bodies and even those of the auxiliary bodies like the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) are, to some extent, appreciated, much is still desired. There are many institutions running mass communication programme for many years without these bodies' approval or even knowledge. Such institutions are not only illegally teaching

the course but they are providing below the minimum required standard of knowledge. Their products parade themselves all over Nigeria as journalists, information managers, advertising experts and so on meanwhile they are “wolves in sheep’s clothes.” But the NUC, NBTE and their auxiliaries cannot, in some situations, claim they are not aware of such institutions running mass communication illegally; their memberships are made up Nigerians who have full knowledge of the available institutions in the country.

**Employment of deceptive strategies to gain accreditation:** Some institutions, in order to gain accreditation of the course from regulatory bodies resort to “dubious and criminal” means. Instead of taking their time, building and providing facilities required for functional mass communication education and accreditation, such institutions resort to hiring or borrowing facilities or equipment from other schools or organisations. Lecturers and technologists are also contracted from other institutions to convince members of the accreditation panel that they deserve approval and accreditation. As soon as the accreditation visit or exercise is over, a visit to such schools will leave one dumb and astonished for what one can see in the so called department of mass communication; a desolate or empty and dirty block with people called lecturers who are not more than literate.

**Over reliance on visiting personnel:** Some institutions offering mass communication education have deliberately refused to employ qualified permanent staff who can settle down and do the job of imparting both theory and practical knowledge to the students. Such institutions rely much on visiting lecturers. While the policy of visiting personnel is welcome, the danger lies in the fact that some visiting lecturers are more of academic “prostitutes”. They are visitors to many institutions. Their effectiveness, in this regard, in delivering is highly questionable. Many of them are after what they can take home at the end of the day and not after how much time they can spend with their students and impart quality knowledge to them.

**Inadequate qualified personnel and modern facilities:** Being a highly professional course, there is serious lack of qualified people to teach mass communication education in many tertiary institutions. Apart from qualified lecturers in public relations courses, print and broadcast journalism courses, advertising courses, development communication courses, online journalism courses, modern equipment or facilities like studios, lecture rooms, theaters and auditoriums to guarantee effective teaching and learning of the course both theoretically and practically are lacking. Collaborating this view, Ashana (2012) in Okoro et al (2013:235) have observed that this problem of “Lack of modern, automatic and highly sophisticated communication gadgets for production and transmission, creates a very serious



obstacle to professional training and development and has negative influence on the dream of both lecturers and students respectively.

**Over admission of students:** Admitting too many students in mass communication classes is another prevailing problem that is affecting the teaching and learning of the course in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The number required by NUC and NBTE in a mass communication class is between 40-45. This is to allow room for effective interaction between students and lecturers. A visit to many institutions, however, can shockingly reveal that they do not honour the NUC and NBTE policy in this regard. Lecture rooms are often over crowded, with some students standing, others hanging on windows, others standing even outside during lectures. This becomes even more problematic if the students go to studio for practical exercises. The studios can hardly accommodate such a number even if they are divided into forty groups. The facilities are not just adequate for this kind of number. The implication of this problem is that students are denied of practical knowledge that is very key in this regard.

### **Conclusion**

From all indications, all is not well with mass communication education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This paper has succeeded in discussing only such issues and challenges that appear to be glaring. Addressing these issues can go a long way in uplifting mass communication education in Nigeria to meet up with developments in the practice of the profession globally. This can go a long way in reducing unemployment in Nigeria as the course is inclined to entrepreneurship. Where mass communication education is improved upon, we can see many graduates of the course not waiting for white collar jobs; we can see them employing others in their businesses of photography, editing, film, camera and home videos, telecommunication, printing and publishing, advertising and others. This can contribute in bringing about development that is so much cherished and talked about in Nigeria .

### **Recommendations**

In order to address prevailing issues/challenges in mass communication education in Nigeria, this paper has made the following recommendations:

1. **Enlightenment programmes:** There should be organised campaigns aimed at enlightening managements of tertiary institutions offering mass communication and bodies involved in the regulation of the course. The campaigns can be held in form of seminars or conferences and workshops. This can go a long way in solving the problem of where to domicile mass communication. Through such programmes, tertiary institutions in Nigerian can come to understand and adopt the global trend in mass communication education.

2. **More commitment by regulatory bodies:** Bodies involved in the regulation of mass communication education in Nigeria should add more efforts in this regard. They should ensure that they are always scanning and surveying the Nigerian environment. This can enable them to have more information about the status of all institutions offering mass communication in Nigeria. They should show no mercy to institutions running mass communication courses without meeting up with the required standard for accreditation by not accrediting them and sanctioning those teaching the course without approval.
3. **Careful planning by managements before establishing mass communication department:** Mass communication education is very expensive. Apart from many personnel, studios and equipment, other facilities are required. In fact-modern mass communication education requires radio and television broadcasting with functional machines for printing and publishing. This shows that establishing a mass communication department is capital intensive. Managements of tertiary institutions should, therefore, never be in a hurry to introduce mass communication courses in their institutions. They should take their time, plan well and ensure that the necessary things are in place before introducing mass communication education. This can even prevent them from devising deceptive strategies to obtain accreditation.

### References

- Akinfeleye, R. A. (2009). *Proliferation of Journalism/Mass Communication Institutions and its Effects on Professional Standards in Nigeria*. Retrieved May 8, 2017, from <http://www.journalism.co.za>.
- Chiakaan, G. J. and Ahmad, J. I. (2013). *Mass Communication for Beginners* Makurdi: Azaben Publishers.
- Chiakaan, G. J. and Bulus, G. (2015). "Education in English Language Information and Communication Technology as Nexus for Journalism Impact on a Multi-Lingua African Society: Focus on Nigeria" in *Word Educations Forum*. Vol. 6 PP.141.
- Chiakaan, G. J. and Tsegysu, S. (2008). "Mass Media and Sustainable Development: Nigeria in Focus" in *International Journal on Sustainable Development*. International Research and Development Institute, Uyo. Nigeria: Kan Education Books, pp105.

Dominick, J. (1999). *The Dynamics of Mass Communication*. New York: McGraw Hill Inc.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education* Lagos: FRN.

Idebi, S. K. (2010). “Globalisation, the Internet Information Communication Technology (ICT)” in Idebi, S. K. (ed) *Fundamentals of Radio Production*. Ibadan: Media Concept.

Madaki, W. M. and Kudu, B. (2016). *Communication and Development: A Theoretical Perspective*. Makurdi: Deafex International Prints.

Meomeka, A. A. (1994). *Communicating for Development: A New Pan-Disciplinary Perspective*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Nwosu, I. E. (2005). “Mass Communication: One Course, Many Professions: General Introductory Overview” in Nwosu, I. E, Aliede, J. E. and Nsude, I. (eds) *Mass Communication: One Course, Many Professions*. Enugu: Prime Targets Ltd.

Okoro, N., Obayi, P. M. and Onyebuchi, A. C. (2013) “ The Status and Challenges of Mass Communication Education in Nigeria” in *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*. Vol.5, pp.227.

Okunna, C. S. (1999). *Introduction to Mass Communication*. Enugu: New Generation Books.

Osunbiyi, B. (2004). “PR Strategies for Repositioning Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria” in Dokunmu, F. and Odetoyinbo, A. (eds). *Public Relations for Governance and Reputation Management*. Ogun: Ogun State Chapter of NIPR.

Soola, E. O. (2003) “Development Communication: The Past, The Present and The Future” in Soola, E. O. (ed) *Communicating for Development Purposes*. Ibadan: Kraft Books ltd. pp9.

The National Teachers’ Institute (2006). *General Methods in Education*. Kaduna, Nigeria.

Ugande, G. B. (2007). *Communication for Development: An Introduction Text*. Makurdi: Dinpet Media Ltd.