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ABSTRACT

Issues in development of public policy concerning telecommunications and advancement of information technology facing third world countries are examined, and the situations of two very different countries (Nigeria and Russia) are considered, focusing on the development of commercial media in each. The media environment in both countries is described, and although media became entrenched in Russian society earlier than in Nigerian, both countries subjected the media to government control and manipulation. Use of the media for public interest issues and ways in which communication policy conditioned planning efforts are explored, and problems specific to Nigeria are examined. Emphasis is on areas in which Russia's experience can benefit Nigeria. These include choice of telecommunications facilities, providing access in remote communities, provision of incentives to develop mass media, and generation of resources for media development. (Contains 177 references.) (MSE)

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THE PERCEPTION AND CHALLENGES OF COMMUNICATION POLICY ISSUES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA AND RUSSIA.

By Olatunji Ogunyemi, Ph.D¹

'Let the people know the fact and the country will be safe'-Abraham Lincoln. (J.C.Merril, 1991:33)

The advances in information technology and the globalisation of communications are introducing new dimensions to national communication planning all over the world. The rapid development in these fields cannot escape the attention of communications policymakers, especially, as they are rewriting the boundaries of communications. For instance, the national regulatory framework is becoming premised on 'digital satellite environment' rather than the usual and controllable 'narrowband environment', where access is measured out as a precious elixir (Pyke, 1995). Moreover, to place their nation in the forefront of global linkage, policymakers can no longer adopt a wait and see policy before recommending new information technology. The implications of information technology on third world nations and their policymakers are huge. First, the national government's power to decide when, where and how to introduce a new technology has been weakened. Second, the policymakers are under enormous pressure to monitor development in global communications systems and be proactive in making regulations that will favour their countries.

Without mincing words, the world is at the threshold of 'Cyberage'. The dawn of 'cyberage' is heralding new concepts, which are now competing with dominant paradigms. The dominant concept of communication flow as 'centre and hierarchy' is giving way to new ideas 'periphery and horizontal' (Lynch, 1996). Likewise, change in concepts is also forcing change in perception. If perception is conceived as the result of active thinking about situation and the perceiver's relationship to it (Lynch, 1996), then the changing situation in the global

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communications systems is in conflict with the dominant perception of the State in relation to media. The State, especially in the third world, perceived the media as vehicles for the preservation and promotion of national cultural heritage. Global communications systems also create another dilemma for the perceiver. The concept and boundary of communities is widening and, therefore, difficult to localise. Communities are no longer defined by ties of kinship, class, age, nationality or shared interests but by electronic linkages based on chance and bizarre criteria (Lynch, 1996). The third world countries are caught in the middle of the dilemma of communications revolution. First, how could they introduce new information technology without surrendering its control to multinational corporations? Second, how could they ensure adoption of sufficient quantity of new innovations in order to avoid being at the periphery of global communications circuit?

Tackling this dilemma means returning to the boardroom of communication planning where policymakers will re-conceptualise national communication policy taking into consideration the peculiarity of their socio-cultural context. The third world's role as adopters of new innovations and consumers of communication products (both software and hardware) did not make matters easy for the policymakers. It was only in the 1980s that the majority of them formulated and passed into law a National Communication Policy which they hoped would last a couple of decades before being revised. But the rapid advancement of information technology has indicated a new urgency in reformulating communication policy to be consistent with global communications strategy. This requires fashioning a new dimension to national communication planning in order to have a slot in the orbit of global communications.

If communication policy is defined from Unesco's perspective as "sets of social norms established to guide the behaviour of communication systems" (Eddie Kuo et al.1983:41). The overriding effect of external forces over internal forces is giving way to new sets of standards for guiding media behaviour. The external forces viz process of globalisation and advances in IT have to be balanced with localisation strategy of sovereign states. These raise a number of issues, which must form the cornerstone of national communication policy. For instance, globalisation is being perceived to threaten cultural and linguistic diversity in the world. This concern was encapsulated in the speech of Canadian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Michel Dupuy, at a meeting of G7 on Information Age in 1995, when he said "we must prevent the creation of any form of cultural monopoly on the information highway. We have a duty to

enrich human experience in all its cultural and linguistic diversity” (Ogunyemi, 1997:8). Though the ‘Talk’ aims to involve all countries in a global effort geared towards establishing electronic libraries and museum galleries to promote global health care and maritime safety, it nevertheless, warns that there is a limit to globalisation strategy, if national identity is not to be subordinated and eradicated.

Advances in IT and its concentration in the hands of a few developed nations bring to the fore once more the call for New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The NWICO was meant to redress the imbalance in information flow between the countries of the North and the South. Information technology also raises the issue of access to technology and retrieval of information it contained both by individuals and States. Furthermore, privacy of individuals as a result of storage of people’s profile on databases is once more in the domain of public discourse because of its implications for career development, social communications and reputation.

All these issues compound the dilemmas for communication policymakers, most especially, in the third world. They are beginning to realise that their perception of communication policy must change and be increased in scope to match the digital satellite environment. Under the narrowband environment, passions have been allowed to override sense of judgement, in the haste to give the press an ideological orientation which deviates from western perception and more in line with Lenin’s definition of the press as mass propagandist, agitator, and organizer (Jakubowicz, 1995). The ideological disguise was packaged into a new brand name to appeal to both sides of the ideological divide. Hence, the concept of ‘development strategy’ in communication planning was born in the 1960s and perceived as economic nostrum. In this scenario, the press is dependent upon not only to delivering the ‘civilisation miracle’ but also to promoting and preserving national cultural heritage.

In the process, they jettisoned the credibility and the relevance of the media to social meaning. Their media environment reflects what obtains in modern Russia’s media environment. Recent studies of Russian media discovered a disturbing trend, which seems worse than the dreaded media policy in the Soviet Union era. Media in Russia has reached a state of ideological free fall, where the distinction between the State, individual, and financial interests is often blurred, editorial independence is often compromised, the reasons for slanting

news coverage in a certain direction are difficult to identify, and the laws governing media lack clarity and detail and are selectively enforced (internews.ras.ru).

The missing link in the national communication policy is the public interest concept. The trends in the growth of communication technology have made this concept more relevant today. This concept addresses the long-term implications of the new technology and attempts to unite the industrial, social and cultural policies. This confluence of policies is imperative because according to Melody "information and communication developments have tended to erode heretofore separate areas of public policy, and to increase the probability of unforeseen implications arising in areas outside the purview of traditional policy analysis"(Melody, 1993:16). The public interest issues are based on a number of assumptions: that public will need to adapt to and accept IT; that minorities and rural communities will not be denied access to IT; that media will serve as a vehicle for alternative opinion; that media will not reflect elite's perspective of event; that people's rights to be informed and of reply are respected; and, lastly, that media autonomy will not be compromised.

The existing national communication policy in most third world countries has failed to address the public interest issues in detail. It is the aim of this essay to compare the recent developments in the growth of media and the impact of deregulation in two countries. The author, hoped, such comparison would shed light on the performance of the media in meeting national objectives; in serving the society objectively, accurately and fairly; in maintaining standards and accountability as a result of proliferation of cable, satellite and digital channels in private hands; how they are responding to globalisation of communications; and the role the legal framework is playing in achieving a better way of organising mass communications in both societies. Nigeria and Russia have been chosen as the focus of this essay because of a number of reasons. First, both share a history of media development. For example, their political landscape dictates the structure and content of media. Nigeria's hypocrisy in faking the plurality of media was exposed when press freedom was stifled as a consequence of concentrated private ownership and government totalitarianism. Moreover, the media environment in both countries did not engender accountability in broadcasting and the right of reply to factual inaccuracies was denied. Second, the socio-cultural context in both countries depicts diversity in culture, language and population. Third, both have recently bowed to

internal and external pressures to deregulate the media in conformity with changing trends in global communications systems.

Nigeria provides a microcosm of what is obtainable in subsaharan Africa in terms of media practice and communication policy issues. Nigeria is the biggest consumer of media products, both hardware and software, in subsaharan Africa. It has a massive number of media institutions viz 85 newspapers (dailies, Sundays, weeklies and periodicals inclusive), thirty-seven radio stations, fifty-four Television stations and fourteen satellite redistribution stations. This figure shows no sign of stagnating as many more private entrepreneurs are applying to the newly constituted Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for rights to establish electronic media. Electronic media is the new dimension in media development in Nigeria today since decree No 38 passed in 1992 deregulated electronic media, thereby, effectively ending government monopoly of broadcast media, perpetuated since the colonial era.

The proliferation of media in Nigeria confounds critiques, as it is happening at a time of economic and political instability, whose prediction of stagnation in all spheres of human endeavours has not materialised. It was also posited that economic doldrums will force Nigeria to go the way of other African countries which are either streamlining their existing media institutions or totally putting a lid on the establishment of new media stations. The secrets of Nigeria's success lie, first, in the creation of more States (latest count is thirty six) which has fuelled State's rivalry in establishing media institutions dating back to 1967 when the first twelve States were created from the three Regions. Second, in the insatiable demand by its teeming population for entertainment (the 1991 census put the population at 87.5million) which has been transformed to new height by the travelling performers, who have found an effective medium in broadcast media without having to engage in expensive live shows.

Russia provides a unique example from the other side of the coin. The position of Russia after the demise of Soviet Union makes it an ideal case study. Russia, despite its faltering economic growth, has the biggest media market in the Eastern Hemisphere. A recent study of Russian television found that it has some five hundred legitimate non-governmental stations, which compete with three national television stations owned by the Federal Government. On the local level, there is a massive one hundred and five local government television stations, one of whose duties is to relay network programmes while carving a distinct identity for themselves as the purveyor of local culture and language. The media growth is

stimulated by advertising money which are increasing since deregulation of electronic media in 1991. For example, television advertising revenue overall is estimated at between \$421 million and \$1 billion for 1995, and may have grown as much as 50 per cent in 1996 (internews.ras.ru). Digital broadcasting is already making an inroad into Russia as some networks have begun signal transmission and others are hoping to switch over to digital within the next year (internews.ras.ru)

Unfortunately, the growth of media did not signal the growth of film industry in Russia. The Soviet era achievement in film production is being eroded because of lack of funding by government and lack of patronage by the new players in the media environment. It was estimated that film audience in the Soviet era used to clock 100 million a year but has now fallen to a paltry 2 million per year (internews.ras.ru). Russian film makers managed to produce around 50 films in 1995 which came down from 200 films produced in 1992. The major reason is lack of cash and the inclination by new broadcasting station to show foreign films. It was found that foreign origin accounted for the majority of new dramatic production shown on Russian television.

It is pertinent to look at literature in communication policy before continuing our study of media in both Nigeria and Russia in order to provide a sound theoretical foundation. The need to conceptualise communication policy from the public interests perspective was raised by Melody in an essay he contributed to a book on 'Public Communication, the New Imperatives' (M. Ferguson, 1993:16). According to Melody, a major challenge for public policy is to find methods to ensure that developments in the information and communication sector do not exacerbate class divisions in societies and that the benefits are spread across all classes. This requires new conceptions and operational definitions of the 'public interest' and of public services (Melody, 1993:18).

Melody's provocative but insightful perspective on communication policy challenges the traditional and dominant paradigms of communication policy which inform the orientation of national communication policy in many countries. John Middleton (Unesco 1980) identified four theories, which underpin communication planning. First, 'development theory' is seen as a sort of touchstone of philosophy and approach that determines the nature of communication systems to be planned for. The basic question here is, how can poor nations achieve a better life for their citizens? Second, 'sociological theory' focuses on the societies to be developed.

According to Kinloch (1977) , this theory sees society from three perspectives viz society as integrated structure; society in conflict; and society as individual and groups. Third, ‘communication theory’ forms a kind of bridge between theories of societies and theories about how individuals and groups learn and change, dealing with social and individual functions as well as with process of communication. Fourth, ‘organisation theory’ seeks to explain how organisations function and can be made to function more effectively (Middleton, 1980: 26-41).

The haste to leapfrog from agrarian to industrial society compelled the third world countries to embrace ‘development theory’ in the 1960s leading to a political approach to communication planning. The problem with this theory is that it is all consuming, pervasive and hijacks social communication from the grassroots by transforming it into a top-down process. Consequently, communication activity was perceived to be effective if centrally planned and utilized to promote political systems crafted from an imported ideology. This misinformed perception led to the failure of communication policy and overshadowed ‘public interests’ and ‘ethical’ approaches to communication planning.

The bane of communication planning in the third world countries was that it addresses short-term problems with little thought that development is dynamic and not static. Therefore, they were caught unprepared by new trends in global media communications. First, there have been both rapid corporate concentration and commercialization of media industries (McChesney, 1996). According to some political theorists, this rampant commercialization of communication poses a severe challenge to the social capacity to generate a democratic political culture and public sphere (Habermas, 1989; McChesney, 1996). Second, newly developed computer and digital communication technologies can undermine the ability to control communication in a traditionally hierarchical manner. The most dramatic along this line has been the Internet, which permits inexpensive, global, interactive, and mass computer communication, as well as access to a previously unimaginable range of information (McChesney, 1996). The internet has been alternately described as a ‘functioning anarchy’ that is virtually impossible to control from a centralized command post (Lipson, 1995) and ‘a grass-roots, bottom-up system’ (Flowers, 1995:24)

Subsequently, these trends in global media communications are rendering obsolete the recently formulated national communication policies in the third world. There is an urgent need for a new communication policy that will not only be informed by the new trends but also

consider their long term implications for national media and the country's place within the global communications systems.

Unfortunately, African scholars have contributed to the perpetuation of development paradigm in communication planning. Their compilation of informed knowledge to assist policymakers focused on answering one particular question.. For Communication scholars, a pertinent question has been what roles and functions their discipline should play in facilitating change and thus improving the lot of Africa's population. The ongoing debate has also meant a closer scrutiny is given to existing and emerging communication development theories and paradigms (Akioye, 1994:82). Hence, they have done little in propounding a new theory of communication borne out of African peculiar social context. The unrestricted transfer of technological innovations exacerbates the confusion of African governments about the role of the media in their evolving democratic system. This confusion is a product of what Agbaje called the legacy of Western intellectual influences on African studies. He proceeded to classify these influences into three levels viz trying to force African reality through the rigid cast of concepts forged from European realities; defining by negative qualification...a tendency to perceive African reality in terms of a Western notion of what it should be, but which it is not; and lastly, the binary approach that either state or society, the bad or the good, tradition or modernity, socialism or capitalism, etcetra(Agbaje, 1992; Akioye, 1994:88).

If media is an 'extension of man' (McLuhan, 1964:15), then media in Africa should respond to all aspects of social communications. There is a need to encompass the total creative aspect of African culture viz oral and written literature. This means media should document for posterity indigenous knowledge, which is in danger of being lost, and engender the interaction of modern and indigenous knowledge in every facet of national planning. At the moment, the media is elitist, for example, Agbaje proved this by presenting the results of a quantitative study of a randomly selected sample of stories carried by Nigerian newspapers between 1960 and 1983. The 1,208 stories content-analyzed show a coverage that is tilted toward the urban areas. Agbaje stresses: the fact is that the rural segment has been decoupled (or has decoupled itself) from the African post-colonial state (Agbaje, 1992:126; Akioye, 1994:88). Furthermore, the media is being used to deride the indigenous knowledge and culture. It aims to create a new man and a new 'progressive' society by eroding individual and collective identity. A communication policy that attempts to achieve this is not addressing public interests issues.

It is very insightful to read the critique of development and modernisation paradigm by Hachten. According to him lack of democracy had given birth to ‘authoritarian pattern of communication that has been called development concept (Hachten, p.102; Agbaje, 1994); and ‘modernisation paradigm’ ignores the impact of politics and political coercion on mass communication, particularly the press. Another major but ignored impact is the centralised government control of the economy and business, which has contributed to inefficiency and mismanagement in Africa (Hachten, 1993; Akioye, 1994). From this perspective, it is clear that communication policy paradigms adopted in Africa have further tightened the media in the grips of governments rather than deliver it. Communication policy must first aim to transfer media power from government/elite to the people through the concept of public interest before it must be seen to be effective. Only public interest concept is capable of making the media people-oriented.

Since the first step a policymaker takes is to do a general inventory of the total communications systems, we wish to note with regret that this inventory has neglected the traditional channels of communication in the third world. Consequently, ‘oramedia’, as we shall call them, have not been accorded their rightful place in the national communications matrix. This is more catastrophic at a time when communications infrastructures are inadequate and limited to the urban centres. It is also a denial of the role that oramedia are playing as indispensable sources of information in the rural communities. It is pertinent, therefore, to start with a quick look at what constitute ‘oramedia’ and why they have been so resilient in the face of competition from the more technologically advanced modern media. In this analysis of oramedia we shall use the typology used by Zelizer (1993) in his alternative approach to explaining journalism and journalistic authority.

Oramedia:

Media scholars and policymakers have traditionally analysed media within the context of sociological approach meaning the inquiry has favoured examining the dominant rather than deviant form of practice. It has addressed the identifiable and relatively finished products-news text (Fowler, 1991; Glasgow University Media Group, 1980; Van Dijk, 1988), news gathering setting (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978) or news audience (Graber, 1988; Robinson & Levy, 1986)-rather than the continuous negotiation toward such products

(Zelizer, 1993:81)'. Oramedia fall outside their purview because they lack most of the attributes that sociological approach presumed. Sociological approach looks for the source of media power and how this power is used. Power, they say, 'is the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others' (Dennis Wrong, 1979/1988:2; Zelizer, 1993: 81). It is the aim of this author to argue that inappropriate media theory has been applied to the study of oramedia resulting in them being discounted as effective channels of communication. The media scholars and policymakers have been obsessed with locating the source of power in oramedia rather than examining it via its own commonality (Zelizer, 1993:84).

Therefore, an alternative approach is needed in order to elicit and bring to perspective oramedia's rights to recognition as durable and effective media of communication. Humanistic inquiry provides this opportunity because it 'supports a view of power as also having ritual or communal dimensions' (Zelizer, 1993:81). The relevance of oramedia can be found within this context because they derive their power from the community, which exercises a collective bargaining power. Scholarly research in this direction has highlighted four frames of analysis. First, 'performance' which encompasses folklore and anthropology have been noted to signify both accomplishment and arfulness...(Abrahams,1997; Zelizer,1993). It offers group members a way to negotiate their internal group authentication (Abrahams,1986; Zelizer, 1993).

How do oramedia fit into this frame? Oramedia which is coined from two separate words 'oral' and 'media' emphasises the significance of the oral language in reaching large audience either simultaneously, if they meet in the marketplace, or individually, if the process is interpersonal (Ogunyemi, 1997). Their significance is found in the fact that they are rich in folklore and symbolism. Oramedia have been described as folk-media, which are grounded in culture produced and consumed by members of a group. They reinforce the values of the group. They are visible cultural features, often strictly conventional, by which social relationships and a world-view are maintained and defined. They take on many forms and are rich in symbolism (Ugboajah, 1985; Ogunyemi, 1997). From this perspective, oramedia qualify as media because they are a form of performance. Performance frame allows them to be studied as an unfolding cultural event, therefore, oramedia news should be understood as a situationally variant process that is neither static nor fixed (Zelizer, 1993).

Furthermore, other characteristics of oramedia as performance are obvious in 'Talking Drum'. Anthropologists have noted that African drum carry specific meaning. Talking drum is a

most fascinating agency of organised communication (Omu, 1978:4). For example, 'Dundun': a set of six drums, one of which was non-talking, is said to be able to imitate all tones and gibes in Yoruba speech. (Omu, 1978:4). Besides imitating speech, African drums serve other functions akin to what modern media do in industrialized society. The drums are used to produce music for dancing; direct movements of dancers; announce the appearance and departure of important persons at social gathering; recite and multiply praise-names (Oriki); summon special meetings; announce serious acts of sacrilege and disasters; alerts community against invasion; and in war, advertise the presence of war chiefs (Omu, 1978:4).

Second, oramedia becomes significant as a media through their 'narrative' qualities. Narrative frame indexes a group's ability to consolidate around codes of knowledge by examining which narratives are upheld, repeated, and altered. In this view, narrative helps us construct our view of the world, by allowing us to share stories within culturally and socially explicit codes of meaning (Barthes, 1977, 1979; Zelizer, 1993). Oramedia are important cultural artefacts, which assist the community to know its past, understand the present and predict the future. Therefore, African poetry and 'moonlight story' serve the function of a narrative perfectly. The moonlight story telling is a tradition that still persists in the rural communities where the children gather around the adults to listen to folk tales. Sometimes, the story is in form of animation, that is, using tortoise or other animals as heroes or villains. And in other occasions, the story might be about a distant King who was cruel to his people. The moonlight stories are didactic in tone because they teach morals and make the children understand that bad deeds are punished. The socialising effect of folk tales has long been recognised. They have been considered a serious form of communication because they help transmit to each generation factual information about the society as well as many of its values. The moral of an enduring folk-tale reflects the view of respectable people. Usually, however, their emotive function is more apparent. According to one observer, African folk tales offer a means of release for pent-up emotions. When an apparently weak character triumphs over a powerful chief, the listener may think of certain chiefs in real life whom he does not completely cherish, and thus, he rejoices in the whacks they are getting by proxy (Smith, 1940:70; Doob, 1961:76).

Whereas, in Yoruba poetry, for instance, the native classification is not according to subject-matter or structure but the group to which the reciter belongs and, in particular, by the technique of recitation and voice production. Thus there is 'Ijala' (chanted by the hunters in a

high-pitched voice); ‘Rara’ (a show wailing tyoe chant) and ‘Ewi’ (using a falsetto voice) and even though the content of various types may often be interchangeable, a master in one genre will not feel competent to perform a different type. He may know the words but cannot manage the necessary subtleties of tone and style and the required type of voice production (Finnegan, 1970; Ogunyemi, 1997).

Third, another critical media theory, which is applicable to oramedia and justifies them as media is ‘Ritual’. Taken from anthropology and folklore, rituals are seen as offering a periodic restatement of the terms in which (people) of a particular culture must interact if there is to be any kind of a coherent social life (Turner, 1968:6; Zelizer, 1993:83). From this perspective, oramedia create the opportunity for social interaction, in fact, they thrive on it. For example, ‘African dance’ and ‘marketplace’ qualify as ritual. The pattern of African dance relates to the social function of the music which are either ritual or non-ritual. There are four dance patterns which have been recognised as most prevalent viz leap dance, stride dance, close dance and stamp dance . Dancing can be a response to a melody or rhythmic beat. And here body movement is vital. This agrees with the theory of Eurhythmics that the practice of bodily movements awakens images in the mind. The stronger the muscular sensations, the clearer and more precise the images and thereby more metrical and rhythmic feeling is developed; for feeling is born of sensation (Peter Ekeh et al, 1989:94; Ogunyemi, 1997:26).

The marketplace, apart from being a place for buying and selling, serves other functions including social communication. People congregate in the marketplace to hear important news and it is a place to meet friends or to gossip about events in the community. It has been described as a powerful integrative force, an important news and gossip centre and a place of ceremonials and parades, a meeting place for relatives and friends from different localities and a place where people congregate to hear news from distant places. It, therefore, functions as a mass medium (Ugboajah, 1980:51)

Fourth, oramedia could reaffirm themselves as effective channels of communication if perceived from the concept of ‘interpretive community’. Hymes defined “speech communities” as groups united by shared interpretations of reality (1980:2; Zelizer, 1993:84). In literary studies, Fish defined intrepretive communities as those that produce texts and “determine the shape of what is read (1980:171; Zelizer, 1993: 84). Each view suggests that communities arise through patterns of association derived from the communication of shared interpretation

(Zelizer, 1993:84). Oramedia as a symbol of collective cultural identity serve this function very well because they have their distinctive features which cannot be replicated. They interpret the community to itself and to the outside world. For instance, one example can be drawn from the activity of the 'Town Crier'. The criteria which makes him suitable for the duty of a village announcer are: he knows his culture; he interprets his culture to fit the objectives of his society; he is not only respected and revered but perceived as authoritative and credible; and the notes from his communication medium, the gong or the drum, are directed appropriately and received attention from the specific audience to whom they are addressed (Ugboajah,1980:50; Ogunyemi, 1997:23).

This paradigm helps us in reaffirming oramedia as mass media and places them firmly within the communications matrix. Furthermore, the paradigm depicts that the traditional society reposes as much confidence on oramedia practitioners as modern day public does on reporters to perform the function of presenting themselves as cultural authorities for events of the real world (Zelizer, 1993). African policymakers will do their society a lot of good by reconsidering their perception of oramedia and by incorporating them in their inventory of national communications systems. This will serve as a short-term measure in bridging the information gap between the urban and the rural areas, thereby, connecting the indigenous and modern knowledge. And it will also make the symbol of modern media acceptable to the rural communities who, have until now, perceived them as the symbols of communication for the elite.

Print Media

The print media have a chequered history in Nigeria as they developed during the colonial era. They have passed through and survived a turbulent period of colonial repression, economic strangulation and stiff government regulations. During the colonial period, there was no written communication policy to guide the behaviour of the press. In fact, the government did not see it fit to promote the development of the press, therefore, the void was filled by missionaries and private sectors whose purposes relate to each other in oppositional dualism such as localism-nationalism, social service-profit motive, didactic-political dogmatism, indigenous language-foreign language. This media environment gave press a shaky start and was instrumental in shaping and directing the development of press in Nigeria.

The first newspaper was established in Southern-Nigeria in 1859 by the Christian Missionary Society (CMS). The newspaper called '*Iwe-Irohin fun awon ara Egba ati Yoruba*' which translates as 'Newspaper in Yoruba for the Egba and Yoruba people'; was started in the belief that it will foster proselytization and sustain retention of literacy among those trained to read the Bible (Nwuneli, 1986; Ogunyemi, 1997). As the name depicts, it was first published in the language of wider communication in the region which is 'Yoruba' but it later added an English edition. 'Iwe Irohin' did have influence beyond its small communities of believers as the colonial government was compelled to caution the editor-publisher to exercise restraint about foreign policy issues in 1863 (Nwuneli, 1986; Ogunyemi, 1997).

The success of this first religious paper prompted other religious organisations to establish their own organ. For example, Nigerian Baptist publishes a newspaper in English and Yoruba Languages and the Muslim society of Nigeria, which owns '*Labarin Ekklesiya*' publishes both in Arabic and English Languages. The historic amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria in 1914 also brought in its wake nine more newspapers with religious affiliation. It was not surprising that newspapers were growing in leaps and bounds in a society with oral tradition. The credit for this should be given to the mission schools, which had increased literacy among the indigenous people. It was estimated that by 1859, 3,000 Yorubas had learned to read their own languages (Hachten, 1971, Ogunyemi, 1997). This group of literate people formed the bulk of newspaper audience in colonial Nigeria.

The private sector was not to be left behind in this growing trade of newspaper publishing. A number of them capitalised on the increasing audience and the lack of communication policy to establish their own newspapers. Subsequently, a variety of newspaper organisations quickly sprouted with some having political undertones and others for profit motives. '*Anglo-African*' newspaper became the first paper to be published in English Language in 1863 and it performed the function of a carrier of news and information to the new literate audience. But there was a dramatic change in newspaper publishing with the advent of political newspapers. They were noted to be one of the instruments of African nationalism. Their birth and growth in different colonies depended on such factors as the fervour of the nationalist spirit, commitment to the nationalist cause and the state of the economy. Each nationalist newspaper was supposed to be a vehicle for opposition to colonial policies (Nwuneli, 1986; Ogunyemi, 1997). For example, '*Nigerian Tribune*' newspaper was started in 1947 and became the organ

of Action Group Party lead by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo; and '*Lagos Daily News*' was founded in 1925 by late Herbert Macauley as the organ of National Democratic Party.

The first newspaper to become successful as a business enterprise was '*Nigerian Daily Times*'. It was founded in 1926 by Ernest Ikoli, a veteran journalist, Adeyemo Alakija, a lawyer and a politician and Richard Barrow, the Chairman of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce. Its success both as a newspaper and as a business enterprise caught the attention of Cecil King, the owner of '*The Mirror Group*', London who bought the Daily Times in 1947 for 46,000 pounds. Cecil King was aware of the perilous environment within which newspapers practise in Nigeria and he was determined to steer Daily Times away from it as much as possible. This vision was reflected in the newspaper philosophy that it must not take sides in the political gang war, it must cater for Africans and be educated by an African and finally, it should print more local news (Barton, 1979; Ogunyemi, 1997).

'*West Africa Pilot*' was a notable newspaper and which derived its success by balancing political dogmatism with business acumen. It was founded in 1937 by late Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe. The vision of the founder was reflected in the newspaper's philosophy which read 'show the light and the people will find the way' (Nwuneli, 1986; Ogunyemi, 1997) and was proudly displayed in on the newspaper's masthead. Despite the lack of cohesive, articulate and co-ordinated communication policy in the colonial era, the early newspapers in Nigeria were able to make the most of the situation by influencing the course of political development, constitutional reforms, by widening participation of indigenous people in politics, and by achieving national independence.

The post-independent Nigerian Government perpetuates the colonial tradition in media relations and policy. It failed to map out a cohesive and articulated communication policy to guide the growing print and broadcast media industries. This lack of national vision for the press undermined democracy and led to the development of ethnic media in Nigeria. The young democracy in Nigeria needed a regulatory measure to sustain it. The measures are a combination of participatory democracy, accelerated economic growth and media policy. But the government failed to balance these three features by emphasising economic growth policy to the detriment of the other policies. If participatory democracy is perceived as enhanced by increasing the numbers of people actively participating, and capable of applying their own

critical assessments of mass media (Melody, 1993:24), then the political and media environment in the First Republic (1960-1966) dismally failed to foster informed citizenry.

First, the media was concentrated in the urban centres, thereby, increasing the gulf between the urban and rural communities. The press became more elitists as they publish predominantly in the colonial language, i.e. English. It was not a major policy issue to provide adequate information to those speaking languages of wider communication like *Hausa*, *Yoruba*, *Igbo* and other numerous minority languages. There are more than 200 different ethnic groups in Nigeria, each speaking a different language or dialect (Ugboajah, 1980:13) and it was left at the discretion of the publisher to provide information in these languages. This was the first major policy mistake, which rocked the boat of national integration.

Second, government started founding newspaper industries not guided by public interest motive but by political motive. Subsequently, the Federal Government of Tafawa Balewa established '*Morning Post and Sunday Post*' with the aim of reflecting policy to the people. And in 1975, the military government completed the government ownership of the press by acquiring controlling shares in '*Daily Times of Nigeria*'. Furthermore, political rivalry between the three Regional Governments caught the press in the middle and led to a wave of press restrictions. For example, the Premier of Western Region, Chief Akintola, banned seven newspapers viz '*West Africa Pilot*', '*Nigerian Outlook*', '*Tribune*' and four other newspapers published in other regions from circulation following his government's dramatic split from Action Group Party. These government actions discredited the press and isolated its influence within the circle of those sharing the same political allegiance. According to Agbaje there was a demise of the private press run by the publisher without strong partisan political affiliations during the First Republic (1960-1966) and the Second Republic (1979-1983) (Agbaje, 1992; Akiyoye, 1994). He continued that Nigerian press was at the center of the social struggle for representations, meaning, and therefore, for legitimation, consensus, and ultimately of the drive toward hegemony.

The communication process in the post-independent Nigeria was conditioned and structured by the social institutions and relations in which it is embedded. The economics of power shapes the production, distribution, and use of information as a commodity to which those able to pay have access. At the political level, it has been established that government and the elite tend to be the main sources of news and views reported in the press (Agbaje, 1992;

Akioye, 1994). Such a dimension in conditioning and structuring marked the deviation from public interests policy. The government was embroiled in a catalogue of missed opportunities to raise the awareness of the people. Three important features that could foster an informed citizenry were either not adequately provided or non-existent. For example, universal education, which formed the corner stone of education reform in the Western Region in 1955, was not built upon and left to crumble. Public libraries, were available, are scantily furnished with books and concentrated in the urban centres. The rural communities; where the largest of illiterate population resides and which needed the additional educational infrastructures like public library; were neglected. And lastly, mass media like newspapers never penetrated the rural communities. Even those newspapers, which publish in indigenous languages, circulate among the elite in the urban centres. The effect of urban concentration and information-gap between the rural and urban communities was brought to the fore in the aforementioned analysis of newspapers in Nigeria. In that analysis Agbaje concluded that the findings of the quantitative study of Nigerian newspapers between 1960 and 1963 depicts that newspaper coverage tilted towards the urban areas and the rural segment has been decoupled from the African post-colonial state (Agbaje, 1992, Akioye, 1994).

This tilt toward the urban areas and elite perspective in media was supported by the findings of the comparative analysis of the content of two newspapers conducted by this author recently. The content of *'Daily Times'*, which publishes in English Language, was juxtaposed with the content of *'Gboungboun'*, which publishes in 'Yoruba' Language, a language of wider communication in the South/Western Nigeria. The newspapers' reflection of the following categories viz 'illiteracy', 'unemployment', 'economic issues', 'population growth', 'political issues' and 'environmental issues' were examined using 'Directional Relations Analysis' (Hirsh et al, 1977). The result depicts that issues of main concern to the common masses were relegated to the background. For example, 'illiteracy and 'unemployment' were hardly covered by *'Gboungboun'* newspaper as they were both accorded 'contextual' level of 24.49 %. Contextual meant the issues were a secondary subject in the media discourse. However, *'Daily Times of Nigeria'* (DTN) which has a national coverage than *'Gboungboun'* fared a little better as it accorded both a prominence level of 11.26 %. Prominence meant the issues got a generous page display viz page 1, 2 and back page. But *'DTN'* failed to elevate these issues to the level of

a 'national social crusade' which would have compelled the government to initiate a programme of action (Ogunyemi, 1997).

This trend in media policy suggests that the government is not interested in fostering an informed citizenry. It also exposes government's hypocrisy in using media to promote national culture, national integration and national development because an informed mass is the backbone of any development.

The print media in Soviet era, by contrast, have no room for oppositional dualism that characterised media practice in Nigeria. The press has a distinct mandate to foster communism and therefore, pluralism of opinion was not condoned. The contents of newspaper are such that no multiple interpretations are to be derived from them as this will undermine national ideology. The Politburo, the highest legislative body, the press and the youth organisation '*Komsomol*' became the most forceful agents of public opinion. Their function as political bodies could be defined in E.E.Schattschneider's word as 'the mobilization of bias' (Nord, 1995). The linking of bias with formal organisations (Nord, 1995) gave the authority the power to shape the perception of events and people's psychological disposition. Therefore, there was a continuing need to interpret the tenets of communism to the people and according to Nord teaching readers how to read their papers is often a political work of utmost urgency. The newspapers like '*Pravda*', '*Izvestia*', etc were in the fore front of the struggle and pride themselves for reaching millions of households. But these papers lack variety, balance and impartiality.

However, the demise of the USSR has given the press a new lease of life. They now offer more diverse range of opinions than ever before. The '*Semisdats*' (alternative and underground press) of the Soviet era are now authentic newspapers of the modern Russia. But despite the newly found freedom to publish, a recent study of Russian newspapers discovered an unhealthy development in newspaper industry. It was reported that the newspaper industry has not recovered from its slump after the fall of the Soviet Union, and the corresponding loss of government subsidies and increase in paper and production costs. Even '*Argumenti I Fakti*', the largest national newspaper in Russia, only has a household circulation of 3,340,000 (internews.ras.ru). In the regions, the newspapers still have a strong and higher readership. But this may not last long with intense competition from the commercial stations, increasing cost of production and decreasing readers' purchasing power. A sign of what to expect could be found in the study of Russian media which discovered the economic slump is forcing newspapers to

cut down on their periodicity-many dailies have become weeklies, weeklies become monthlies (internews.ras.ru). All these are interim measures to stay solvent and continue production but how long this is going to last is a matter of conjecture.

Broadcast Media

The development of broadcast media was not informed by articulated communication policy. In fact, the early perception of broadcast media role was to use them as a vehicle of information and entertainment. Therefore, when the colonial administration established the first radio in Nigeria in 1933, it was to provide news of home to Europeans. By 1957, with the establishment of Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), radio broadcasting has transformed but has not changed from its perceived role. Section 12 and 13 of the 'NBC's charter gave the corporation power to organise, provide and subsidize public entertainment for the purpose of broadcasting; to collect news and information in any part of the world and any manner that may be thought fit (Nwuneli, 1986; Ogunyemi, 1997).

But it was not long before broadcasting became engulfed in the politics of ethnicity and political assassination. Radio failed its first litmus test in showing itself as an impartial and accurate medium when the leader of Action Group Party, late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was denied broadcast rights in response to what the party called unfair criticism by the Colonial Governor Macpherson, prior to independence. Consequently, the Western Regional Government ruled by Action Group decided to establish its own broadcast media.. It was within this midst of political controversy about legitimacy of authority, dominance over minority groups, and elimination of opposition views that the first Television Station in Africa was born in 1959. This controversy ensured that public interests in broadcasting became a secondary issue, though, the government gave commitments to use media in promoting national integration and fostering ethnic understanding.

Government monopoly of the broadcast media undermined media's role in promoting national integration because the aims and aspirations of the government and media were asymptotic. The government used policy as a political tool for legitimacy of authority while the media wants a policy that ensures press freedom and limits government control over media structure and content. The clash of interests between the government and media was evident when the government insisted on reorganising the 'NBC' in 1970. The government stated that

its reasons for setting up an Ad hoc Committee was to stem the tide of criticism of the broadcasting station. Some of the complaints relate to the structure of the corporation, others to the competence and discretion of its staff. But the Director-General of 'NBC' countered this claim and laid the blame squarely at government's lap. According to him, the story of the 'NBC' is, in the main, the story of a grossly under-financed, under-rated, over-hampered and over-interrupted public corporation, prevented from discharging its statutory functions when it is convenient for the government to be oblivious of the provisions of the Act of parliament under which the corporation was set up. Government had denied funds to the 'NBC' to carry out its development proposals (Ugboajah, 1985; Ogunyemi, 1997).

Since the government owns the broadcast media, it was a tale of he who pays the piper dictates the tune. Subsequently, the government, both in civilian or military era, has been dictating the tune of media development in Nigeria. It is no surprise, therefore, that we witness a proliferation of media each time there was a creation of new states and the movement from Unitary to Federal structure system has an impact on media ownership structure. For example, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) was constituted in 1977 and had six zonal system to reflect Federal character. The decree establishing 'NTA' also accord it the power of monopoly over TV broadcasting when it states the Authority shall, to the exclusion of any other broadcasting authority or any person in Nigeria, be responsible for TV broadcasting (Peter Ekeh et al, 1989; Ogunyemi, 1997). Federal Radio corporation (FRCN) soon started reflecting this character but along linguistic lines. Therefore, there were four linguistic national stations located in Abuja, Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna while Lagos National Station broadcasts in English only. Twelve indigenous languages became incorporated into radio programming (Ugboajah, 1985; Ogunyemi, 1997).

At this stage of broadcasting in Nigeria, a pattern was beginning to emerge. The government completely put in place a mechanism for the control of media content and their structure. Furthermore, the government's involvement in the formulation of broadcasting charters and appointment of key positions in the media portrays its willingness to use policy as tools of power (Braman, 1195) and to direct the functions of the media towards fulfilling the ideology of public service. This ideology is informed by cultural discourse and aims to achieve the basic functions of communication; viz information, education and entertainment; in Nigeria. This is not particularly surprising as Nigeria has not only inherited the colonial communication

policy but also has been following the trend of media development in Britain. Therefore, there was more similarity than contradiction between the tasks of the BBC and that of the NTA. The task of the BBC was re-emphasised in the 1992 Green Paper in which the Committee laid out the following as the task : informing the national debate by the provision of high-quality news and current affairs programs; sustaining a fairly elitist definition of the national culture, particularly through drama productions; carrying out an educational role for the whole of society; and communicating between the UK and abroad (Sparks, 1995.p.151). These roles were found ideal for Nigeria which is desperate to find a broadcasting ideology that could complete a process of cultural formation within a multi-ethnic setting.

However, this lofty ideal of broadcasting was matched with little action as the government failed to break the trend of the media's tilt towards the elite and urban concentration. For instance, the creation of more States has been met with fervent demands for State's Broadcasting Stations. These new State Governments were more concerned with ensuring that the government has an unfettered access to media. For example, when Imo State TV was inaugurated in December, 1981, the Governor of the State made this statement to justify his government's action. Imo State Television was established to inform citizens of the state of the activities of the government and to counter the mischievous propaganda mounted against the State by the Federal Government controlled news media (Peter Eketh et al, 1989:125). This depicts the government's perception of the media as a one-way linear process capable of not only manipulating the people but also moulding their attitude. Subsequently, the location of media was informed by this misguided belief as the residents of the urban centres became the focus of media attention and the residents of the rural communities were largely ignored. Media became synonymous with urbanisation and development while the poor rural areas were left in their squalor to degenerate and be caught off from the new communication circuit.

The cosmopolitan nature of media meant that access is guaranteed those who have the means to purchase the receiving sets and those who have the political influence in the corridors of power. Gradually, the media became disorientated from its public service task to reflect the interests and the information needs of the elite. This conclusion was confirmed in the finding of a content analysis of media conducted by this author recently. In the survey, the programmes of 27 Television Stations under the umbrella of Nigeria Television of Authority (NTA) were

examined for a period of three months (July-September, 1996). The aim was to determine to what extent the broadcast media are reflecting the cultural diversity of Nigerian society in their programming. Therefore, ten categories of programmes were highlighted viz Film/Movie; Sports; Religion; Current Affairs; Children Programmes; News; Soap Opera/Drama/Comedy; Music; Games; and Others. The emphasis is on their language of programming. Language is of paramount importance in broadcast media if they are to achieve their aims of fostering national development, national integration and ethnic understanding. Nigeria stands in a peculiar situation of using the media to reflect interests, culture and information needs of the illiterates and the minorities. The finding shows that there is a sharp fall in the percentage of imported programmes, however, there is still a high tilt towards locally produced programmes in English Language in all categories. The Nigerian media give prominence and more airtime to local programmes in English Language to the detriment of similar programmes in indigenous languages (Ogunyemi, 1997). The implication of this is that languages of wider communication in any region, where a Television station is situated, are subordinated to English Language. Consequently, the majority speaking their indigenous languages and without the knowledge of English language is marginalized from participating in media discourses.

The finding also exposed the inadequacy of media policy, which did not give specific mandate on language of programming. The example of Russia could be useful for Nigeria in this aspect. Although, Russia has not incorporated into its media policy a mandatory percentage of programmes that must be broadcast in Russian and foreign languages; it, however, ensures that 'Russian language' is not subordinated. It achieves this through licensing agreement signed by new broadcast stations which binds them to broadcast in Russian language. Moreover, the media environment dictates that the survival of new broadcast stations hinges on broadcasting in Russian language as Russian audience does not speak or is reluctant to watch programmes in foreign language. Therefore, many soap operas from Latin America, for example, 'No One, But You' and American popular Soap, for example, 'Dallas' have had to be translated to Russian language to make an impact on a Russian audience.

The trends in structure and ownership of broadcast media in Nigeria are reminiscent of media environment in Soviet Union era. Although Soviet era boasted of having the largest audience watching a national television at anyone time, there was a general lack of variety in programming. The broadcast media are simply vehicles of entertainment and an effective tool of

manipulation in the hands of the government. Besides ideology of communism, another concept guided the orientation of media in Soviet era. The government's communication policy craftily repackaged national ideology as public interests service, thereby, attempting to use the media in educational and cultural promotion. Many popular programmes were designed to reflect this, for example, 'RADUGA' became very successful that it moved into the international arena. It did not only become a symbol of cultural promotion but also a significant vehicle of cultural exchange with other nations. However, it harbours a hidden political agenda as Soviet Union used it to win more allies, especially, from third world. The International cultural programmes under RADUGA were shown to Russian audiences who picked the best for an award. Nigeria, through NTA won this award 1983 with a presentation called "Pot of Life", a children's adventure (Ekeh et al,1989).

Soviet Union had five functioning television channels before the 1991 coup that attempted to oust Gorbachev from power. The body that is responsible for broadcast media was Gosteleradio. Gosteleradio included two basic level of State-run TV: national channels and regional channels covering Republics and localities (internews.ras.ru). The coverage of two channels is national, therefore, channels 1 and 2 became the symbols of communism achievements and national objectives. Channel 4 was devoted to educational programmes and its signals can be received in European Russian and Ukraine. Moscow and St. Petersburg have additional TV stations because of their political status and cultural status. The St. Petersburg channel was available in European USSR, the Moscow channel in the Moscow oblast (internews.ras.ru.)

One remarkable achievement of Soviet Union in media development is the extension of media coverage to the regions and small localities. Nigeria is found wanting in this aspect as it failed to establish community media in any of its 776 Local Government Councils. But Soviet Union with 170 administrative districts known variously as oblasts, okrugs, krais or autonomous republics, ensured that each had a local Gosteleradio. These regional media produced local TV programming of one to three hours per day and had a quota of an hour or so per month of programming to be broadcast nationally over channels 1 or 2. (internews.ras.ru.) Nigeria could emulate this by encouraging some of the Local Governments to pull their resources together in establishing community radio or TV.

The demise of the USSR brought a new lease of life to the development of media on the one hand, and stimulated structural changes on the other. The Russian government was quick to replace Gosteleradio with a new body called Federal Service of TV and Radio Broadcasting (FSTR). The existing national broadcast media were also renamed variously. For example, Channel 1 first became known as Ostankino TV and was renamed again in 1995 as Russian Public TV (ORT) to depict that it is public limited company with government having part of the shares. The State owns 51 per cent of ORT, while 49 per cent is owned by private and public corporation, including Ostankino, ITAR-TASS Information Agency, the National Sport Fund, Gazprom, Logovaz, Milrodin, Ob'edinenny Bank, Stolichny Bank, Menatep Bank, National Credit Bank and Alfa Bank (internews.ras.ru)

The Russian Government retained three stations under its control. The other two are Russian TV (RTR) which took the place of channel 2 and the St. Petersburg channel 5. It was estimated that RTR officially reaches 98.7 per cent of the Russian population through a system of five satellites, close to 5,000 transmitters, and terrestrial communications lines (internews.ras.ru). The St. Petersburg channel was estimated to have potential audience of 90 million. Its signal is distributed by microwave to European Russia and the Ural Mountains on both VHF (77%) and UHF (23%) bandwidths (internews.ras.ru). Furthermore, it employs 2,500 staff some of whom stayed after the break-off from Gosteleradio. The controlling shares held by the government meant substantial sum of TV budget comes from government coffers. For instance, between 1995 and 1997 ORT's budget has been around \$250,000,000, approximately one third of which goes to signal delivery and one third to programme purchase (internews.ras.ru).

Like any other third world government controlled media, all the three broadcasting stations have been starved of funds. The State 'Duma' has been reluctant to approve funding for the stations, thereby, using the stations as one of their strategies in confrontation with Yeltsin's administration. The stations have been trying to get out of this political intransigence by tapping alternative sources of funding. For example, ORT has one of the highest advertising rates at \$24,000-30,000 per minute for prime time programming (internews.ras.ru). The station needs more funding to meet its recurrent expenditure on facilities including 9,000 transmitters, 7,000 receiving stations, eight satellites and 220,000km of terrestrial communications lines

(internews.ras.ru). The RTR has also been forced to engage in commercial activities as it only received 30 per cent of its budget in 1996.

The government has recently come under criticism for its handling of the stations. Mr Valentin Lazutkin, head of the FSTR called for complete privatization of ORT, while many Russian experts have called for the creation of 'public' rather than State TV, with a mandate to provide public interest programming, but with stronger editorial separation from the State (internews.ras.ru). Government ownership of broadcast media is still making audience sceptical of media content. But RTR is distinguishing itself and has received accolades from experts for objective reporting.. It is considered one of the more independent voices in TV media. Prof. Yassen Zasoursky, the Dean of the Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University, has called RTR "closer to the concept of independent media" than even the private commercial channel NTV (internews.ras.ru). NTV is a non-governmental channel, which has been granted complete control of educational channel 4 since 1996. Prior to that time NTV airs 6 hours per day on channel 4 but now allows only one hour of educational channel programming since the take over. This was due to the increasing unpopularity of educational programming with audience.

RTR has a sister radio station called '*Radio Rossii*'. This is a national radio which competes with two other national stations viz '*Mayak*' and '*Europa Plus*'. These stations share between them an estimated audience of 180 million scattered all over Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (internews.ras.ru). Radio is more versatile as an estimated 208 million radio sets are available to the people of former USSR. This number has since doubled as a recent survey suggests that 50 per cent of all households have two or more radios (internews.ras.ru). The share number of TV and radio sets in Russia makes its one of the leading nations with a greater number of citizens exposed to media information. The deregulation of electronic media is increasing the choice of this audience, who are eager for media to satisfy their information and entertainment needs.

Legal Framework for Commercial Broadcasting

It is pertinent in this essay to examine the history and development of commercial broadcasting in Nigeria because it portrays a new dimension in media growth and programming. The comparative analysis of the advent and trends in commercial broadcasting

in Russia and Nigeria is significant at the stage because commercial broadcasting is still in its infancy in both countries.

Nigeria has restricted commercial Television since independence because the government felt the society was not ripe for such; that commercial broadcasting will undermine government efforts to promote national development, national integration, and ethnic understanding. Furthermore, it felt no indigenous private investment is available for such a capital- intensive venture. Russia, on the other hand, resisted commercial broadcasting on ideological grounds. It felt, socialism is the government of the proletariat and the elimination of capital or private ownership of means of production in any form should be the ultimate goal of the society.

But both countries underwent a dramatic change in policy in late 1980s and early 1990s which opens the media to market forces and permits private investment. In the Soviet Union, the Gorbachev's government's policy of '*perestroika*', enacted in 1987, began the gradual transformation of the society and attempted to promote better life for its citizens. Government hoped to achieve this by hastening economic development, which has been stagnated due to excessive government control, people's apathy towards collective ownership and lack of creativity. The success of the policy encouraged the government to enact another policy called '*glasnost*', which translates as 'openness'. '*Glasnost*' was perceived as freedom of the people to participate in national development without hindrance or fear of government oppression, which has dogged the Soviet society since the 1917 revolution. It was this second policy that gave the media a voice and the tenacity to pursue their task as the watchdog of the society. Consequently, the diversity of opinion that was unleashed was difficult to be satisfied by the few government controlled media and the ground was gradually prepared for private investment in broadcasting.

In Nigeria, commercial broadcasting became a reality as a result of National Communication Policy enacted for the first time in 1992. No African nation has a tradition of guiding the behavior of the media through articulate media policy until 1971 when UNESCO initiated two strategies to raise awareness and support for national communications policy. First, UNESCO initiated a programme of publishing the communication policies of member States with the objective of promoting awareness of the concept of communication and professional levels through the analyses by member States of policies as they exist within

their countries (Lee, UNESCO, 1976:33). Second, it sponsored Regional Conferences on communication policy. The African Conference was held in Yaounde, Cameroon in 1980 at the end of which a communique was released exhorting African governments to build communication systems which meet their needs, bear the stamp of their genius, and take account of their situation, needs and aspirations, making it possible to establish relationships of equality, equity and dignity with the rest of the world (Ugboajah, 1985:321). This prepared the way for communication policy to be accorded a national significance and become a regular feature of national policy.

While Nigeria was still discussing the modality and dimension of national communication policy; Russia had taken a step forward when the then USSR Supreme Soviet passed into law a policy on the media called 'On the Media'. This ended government monopoly of media for the first time in the history of Soviet Union and subsequent policy directions confirmed government's commitment to permit commercial broadcasting. For example, a Presidential decree issued by Gorbachev in July 1990 allowed Ministry of Communication (*Minsvyazi*) and 'Gosteleradio' to make airtime available to non-government broadcasters. The decree also instructed *Minsvyazi* to create a plan for a Broadcasting Committee to issue licenses to non-government broadcasters (Internews.ras.ru).

Furthermore, the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the role played by the media, especially western media, in thwarting the coup against Gorbachev signified the new found media powers and the need for strengthening media law in Russia. Therefore, the Russian Supreme Soviet wasted no time in passing RF Law No.2124, 'On the Media', which came into effect in February, 1992. By 1994, a new regulation was passed which empowers 'Federal Service of TV and Radio Broadcasting (FSTR) to set up a broadcasting licensing system for non-governmental TV and Radio Stations (Internews.ras.ru).

In Nigeria, however, the dawn of commercial broadcasting arrived with the enactment of decree No.38 which created a regulatory body called 'National Broadcasting Commission' (NBC) and specified rules governing private investment in electronic media, satellite and cable services etc. In the spirit of fairness and to allay the fears of investors, the composition of NBC was diverse as it encompasses professionals from different background viz law, business, performing arts, education, social science, the media, public affairs. At the head of the Commission is the Chairman. The duties of NBC are:

- NBC advises the government of the Federation on the implementation of the National Mass communication Policy as it relates to broadcasting;
- Issuance, renewal and revocation of broadcast license;
- Approving transmitter power, location of stations, areas of coverage and types of broadcasting equipment to be used; Setting standards through the National Broadcasting Code on acceptable content and quality of programme and non-programme materials broadcast in Nigeria;
- Upholding the principles of equity and fairness in broadcasting;
- Promoting Nigerian indigenous culture, moral and community life through broadcasting;
- Undertaking research and development in the broadcasting industry. (NBC charter, 1992)

The mandate given to NBC portrays it as a ‘mega’ organisation with absolute power to execute nation-wide broadcasting licensing and regulation. It has issuance, monitoring, and sanction functions within its ambit. Some of these powers were formerly exercised by three other agencies viz ‘Wireless Telegraph Act of 1996; Regulations, Section 7(1) of the Nigerian Television Authority Act of 1976; and Section 6(1) of the Federal Radio Corporation Act of 1978. This new NBC powers, if not discretely, discharged could be used as a tool for media censorship in the hands of a dictator. But at the moment, the people of Nigeria are hoping the NBC will discharge its duties in good faith and in the interests of the public. It was, probably, this fear of concentrating too much power in the hands of one organisation and from earlier communist experience that has made Russia to split the duties of licensing a new broadcast station. In Russia, the licensing process is divided into three facets and new broadcasting stations must satisfy the requirements of each agency responsible for each facet. For example, the Ministry of Press and Information is the first point of call for a new station where it registers itself as a disseminator of mass media. The new station then proceeds to the Ministry of Communications (Minsvyazi) where it receives license to use a broadcast frequency or authenticate a contract with someone who has such a license. And the last leg will take the new station to the Federal Service of Radio and Television Broadcasting (FSTR) which issues a broadcasting license.

The ‘FSTR’ considers an application within three months of its submission and it has the sole discretion to reject or accept an application. In the first instance, the new broadcast

station must submit with its application the list of its broadcast intentions, its technical capabilities, its experience, its resources, the names of its founders, its mass media registration and either its frequency license or contract with a frequency license holder (Internews.ras.ru).

When there are multiple applications from the same coverage area, the FSTR may adopt a decision making process on a 'first-to-apply' or 'tender' or 'auction' basis. The agency may also request extra regulatory studies or inspection at applicant's expense. The vastness of Russian geographical composition and the expanding media market compelled the agency to establish sixty Regional Licensing Committee with regional knowledge in order to ease workload, make primary decisions and to arbitrate in cases of competition (internews.ras.ru). The NBC is yet to consider such a strategy because of the shallow commercial interests in Nigerian broadcast media. However, judging by the popularity of new stations and the acceptance of diversity in programming by the audience it may not be long before NBC is inundated with requests for broadcast license beyond its normal capacity to grant within a short period.

The NBC charter did not specifically state if the license holder could transfer ownership or what happens to the license, if a license holder's company was acquired another company. The only aspect, which appeared to answer the question of non-transferability of license could be found in the reference to sponsorship. NBC states that a sponsored programme shall be clearly identified as being sponsored, and the sponsor clearly named in the opening and closing credits of the programme. Reference to the sponsor, his message, product or service is forbidden within the programme being sponsored, except in respect of prizes donated for game shows. Newscasts shall not be sponsored and the broadcasting station shall not abdicate responsibility for either the content or scheduling of a programme to the sponsor. In Russia, however, the safety catch was put in the licensing edit which specifies that licenses remain with the receiver and are not transferable, although companies which possess them may be purchased and control may be transferred through contract (Internews.ras.ru).

The Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree vested the control of all media industries in the hands of Nigerians from 1977. The decree states that all media institutions except book printing, book publishing, publishing of periodicals and the mass media related business of pulp and paper milling, were to be owned exclusively by Nigerians. In each of these four exempted areas, foreigners are allowed 40 per cent ownership (Metrovich, 1978; Ugboajah,

1985). However, with the deregulation of electronic media and the need to attract foreign investment, the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree was an obstacle that needed to be revised. The new changes to the decree were informed by economic discourse and aimed to hasten the commercialization of broadcasting; maximize profit; promote advertising-funded broadcasting; encourage competition; and, perhaps, complete the fragmentation of information by providing information to specialized groups. Likewise, Russia demonstrated her commitment to free market by permitting foreign ownership of media for the first time since the 1917 revolution. Consequently, any foreigner may have 100 per cent stake in a media house provided he registers as a Russian company. But the fear of external influence through foreign investment in the growing media market and its repercussions for national culture is compelling legislators to consider limiting foreign ownership to 35 per cent.

The NBC wants to protect the integrity of audience and limit their exposure to indecent programming by specifying in its charter its level of tolerance of such programming. For example, portrayal of violence or obscenity or materials in bad taste is forbidden and X-rated programming shall not be broadcast when children are likely to be watching or listening. The Commission made it mandatory for broadcast stations not to have advertisement exceeding 15 per cent of total programme duration/slot. The policing function of programming that contravenes this provision has been given to the viewers who have been empowered to complain to the Commission in writing the name of the station; title of the programmes; day and date of broadcast; time of the broadcast; essence of the complaint or observation. In Russia, however, in addition to a viewers right to complain, there is a higher registration fee for broadcast stations who would disseminate erotic material or programming with more than 15 minutes per hour advertising (Internews.ras.ru).

The NBC sees its power to revoke a license not as censorial but as a nurturing framework. It will only exercise this power in extreme circumstances when, according to the Commission, the vital interests of the nation or the industry or the audience are threatened. Therefore, there are two grades of sanctions. Grade A could take the form of immediate shutdown or seizure of transmitting equipment or withdrawal of license. And Grade B is very mild as it includes written warning to remedy a breach within a specific time frame; failure to comply with a warning invites a reduction of the daily broadcast hours or suspension of license; and payment of recommencement/license restoration fee (NBC Charter, 1992). The

NBC did not specify, however, if its decision is final or if it could be challenged in the court. Whilst in Russia, the decision of the FSTR is not seen as final as it could be challenged in court. The FSTR has a right to revoke a license if the broadcast station fails to broadcast within three months or if the station breaches its licensing terms or if the station is found guilty of fraud.

Non-Governmental Broadcasting

It is pertinent to clarify what is meant by non-governmental broadcasting. This phrase refers to media houses that are exclusively owned by private entrepreneurs as opposed to those owned and controlled by the government. It also excludes any broadcasting station in which the government has a controlling share. The deregulation of electronic media in Nigeria in 1992 has made it possible for private investment to be injected into the media market and following the modality laid down in the legal framework, an entrepreneur could establish a broadcast station and compete with existing government stations within its coverage areas. In Russia, where the past six years has seen a similar growth in private investment in media, supporters have lauded this trend by referring to the benefits of non-governmental broadcasting. They claim that non-governmental TV, on both the national and local levels, has established itself as a significant presence, offering viewers alternatives to government controlled channels and programming; and increasing the diversity of voices in the public forum (internews.ras.ru)

There is no doubt that non-governmental broadcasting is adding to the diversity of voices in Nigeria's public forum and, probably, contributing to efforts to give the minority a voice in the Nigerian body polity. There is abundant opportunity for the growth of broadcast media in Nigeria and the number of applications for license received from private investors confirmed this notion. For example, the NBC claims that within three years of its existence, it has licensed fifteen private television stations, out of which seven are on air and two more are warming up; one private radio station on air 24 hours; and one private international Satellite Tv operation originating from Nigeria, likely to take off soon. This extraordinary feat is happening at a time of economic downturn in Nigeria. In fact, Nigeria is fast emerging as a major force in media market in subsaharan Africa. While Nigeria is counting the interests of private investors in numeric terms, Russia is having a deluge. Since it opened its media

market to private investors, every major city has had a local non-governmental TV station. In some cities viewers receive as many as 12 different channels. 'Internews' estimates that approximately 30 per cent of peak watched Tv hours in Russia are provided by non-governmental broadcasters. This demonstrates the popularity of these new stations and their programming. It is a fact of life that people like something new and unusual, therefore, Russian audience associates these features with non-governmental broadcasters who are perceived as windows to the outside world.

At the moment, Russia has between 500 and 750 non-governmental Tv stations, according to FSTR, and some 640 stations have licenses to broadcast while 80 have licenses to operate cable stations (internews.ras.ru). The growth and popularity of commercial broadcasting also spurred the growth of media apurtenance. For instance, Russian households are investing in receiving sets and creating a boom in the market unprecedented in the history of broadcasting in the country. A survey depicts that many of the TV sets are imported from Japan, South Korea and other East Asian countries. Published statistics claim that imports have been growing at a rate of 20 per cent per year for the past three years. Current imports are 2.5 million sets per year. The most popular foreign brands are Sony, Panasonic; Phillips; Samsung; Funai; Daewoo; JVC; Sharp; Akai; and Goldstar have also entered the Russian market.

This sort of development is not evident in Nigeria. Though, Nigerian is a potential big market with likelihood to rapidly expand; economic problem has been a major impediment. The prices of Tv sets have been skyrocketing since 1992 as a result of instability of local currency (Naira). The devaluation of the *Naira*, which is now officially exchanging at 80 to one Dollar, has priced receiving sets out of the reach of ordinary citizens. Perhaps it is appropriate to present this table of change in prices of TV and Video recorders for us to appreciate the extent of this problem for media consumers. This figure was compiled in 1992 when the *Naira* was exchanging 18 to one US dollar and there has been a dramatic change in the people's purchasing power as the economy is yet to improve.

Electronics	Old Price	New Price
JVC 20" Colour TV	8,000	10,908
Sony 14" Colour TV	5,900	6,724

Sony Video Recorder	7,500	9,500
Samsui Amplifier	9,800	11,940

Austere economic situation is making Nigeria struggle to meet the 'Unesco minima', which laid down media receiver targets to be met by nations to provide for every 100 of its inhabitants. The Unesco says at least 10 copies of daily newspapers, five radio receivers, two cinema seats and two Tv receivers must be available to every 100 inhabitants (Hachten, 1971). In Nigeria, for example, the number of Tv sets is 7 per 100 inhabitants judging by the TV survey of 1983, which shows that there are five million television sets in the country and based on the 1991 census figure which puts Nigeria's population at 88.5 million (Ogunyemi, West Africa Magazine, 1995). The current trend in economic situation could have a devastating effect on the 'Unesco minima' and the gains Nigeria had made. Contrasting the figure on ownership of TV sets in Nigeria with that of Russia depicts a pathetic development in Nigeria's media and economic environment. In a Gallup survey of eight regional cities in Russia, 73 per cent of households have had a colour TV set since 1993 and around 43 per cent have two or more TVs. Other statistics claim that in European Russia, 93 per cent have TV and 15 per cent have a VCR (internews.ras.ru).

The growth of commercial broadcasting in Nigeria is following the established trend whereby media is concentrated in urban centers. The NBC is not seen to be making active effort to stem this lopsided development which may have untold repercussions for rural residents. For example, on a count of the numbers of commercial broadcasters licensed by NBC and their location, we found the following:

Cities	TV	Radio	Cable
Lagos	11	2	19
Abuja	1	-	-
Kaduna	1	-	2
Benin	1	-	1
Enugu	1	-	3
Makurdi	-	-	1
Jos	-	-	1
Akure	-	-	1
Port Harcourt	-	-	1

If this trend is not checked either by NBC or through government policy, the rural communities are going to be by-passed and completely cut off from the communication circuit. They will not only have their voices suppressed but also miss out on the benefits of new technology. Experiences of other third world countries have shown that rural areas benefit more from satellite communication and new information technology both economically and socially. For example, Indonesia has realized the effects of its 'Palapa' satellite on national development. The government says it assisted Indonesia by accelerating national development through improving the efficiency of economic, commercial and administrative activities; disseminate information; broadened education; enhancing equitable distribution of development in rural and remote areas; allowing global linkages which attract investment activities (Pyke, 1995).

Nigeria should take a leaf out of Indonesia's book if it must transform the rural landscape economically. Lopsided development in all its ramifications should be discouraged. NBC's role should include preparing Nigeria for the information society by the adopting concept of Universal Service Obligation (USO) which is dominating telecommunications debate in the international arena. The concept was defined as affordable access for virtually all citizens to basic services by the 'Californian Intelligent Network Task Force' and it has been re-conceptualize to embrace access to service and a receiver rather than transmission signal coverage (Pyke, 1995). The basic services that the USO is promoting are

touch tone service; access to emergency services; access to educational services; services for customers not fluent in English; and services for people with disabilities (Pyke, 1995). These are services that are either totally lacking in Nigeria or grossly inadequate. It was high time Nigerian government woke up to its social responsibility because a government that fails to protect or provide basic amenities for its citizens cannot expect unwavering patriotism. The government must demonstrate that it cares before it could start making demands on the people.

The programming of the commercial broadcasting stations needs to be closely monitored to see that they are complying with the regulation on local content. The regulation states that new television stations must transmit not more than 30 per cent total foreign content of a week's broadcast, while old television stations are limited to 20 per cent (Ekeh P. et al, 1989). In Russia, there is a great commitment to local programming which Nigeria commercial broadcasters should emulate. Russian commercial stations believe that locally oriented, locally produced programming is essential for long-term health of the station, as it gives the station a local character distinct from the national channels and networks (internews.ras.ru.) Therefore, a substantial number of stations now produce many hours a day of their own programming including news, talk shows, interview programmes and music shows (internews.ras.ru.)

The programming of commercial broadcasting stations in Nigeria is still evolving. One of these stations, 'Channels'; owned by former NTA broadcasters, Mr and Mrs John Momoh; broadcast eight news bulletins on an hourly basis viz prime news, newstrack, newslight, newshour, special report, health news and 'news at Ten', a network news. 'Channels' Tv is mainly news oriented and it produces 'hard copy' programmes i.e. a discussion programme anchored by a leading journalists, where journalists and other professionals discuss topical issues affecting Nigeria (Ogunyemi, 1997). To improve on their ability to meet local content requirement, they have to be resourceful in the use of capital and in generating income from other sources. None of the Nigerian commercial broadcasting stations can match the revenue of their Russian counterpart. For example, a handful of stations in Russia now consistently gross over \$200,000 per month in advertising revenue and probably 20 to 30 stations gross over \$100,000 per month. Most of these stations are in cities with over one million residents. There are, probably, at least 50 stations that gross over

\$50,000 per month. Smaller stations bring in between \$5,000 and \$20,000 per month and some still subsidize Tv with other enterprise (internews.ras.ru)

This sort of growth is the envy of most broadcasting stations and Russian commercial broadcasters deserve a pat on the back considering the shaky start they had a decade ago. Nigerian economy will need to improve first before commercial broadcasting could become a successful venture because stable economy is the catalyst of steady advertising income. Furthermore, a market research to evaluate viewer preference will have to be conducted regularly. At the moment, this area is at best patchy and at worst neglected. The government media have not paid particular attention to audience ratings because they depend on government subsidy. Therefore, the surveys conducted were organizational-focus rather than audience-focus; neither are they for the purpose of increasing advertising nor for showing the demographic composition of viewers. For instance, only seven surveys have been conducted since television was established in 1959. Most of these surveys have analyzed the percentage of local content on television. Perhaps, the most significant of them were those conducted in 1980 and 1985. The findings of 1980 survey showed for the first time the number of television sets in the countries when it gave 2 million sets in places where there are electricity. The 1985 survey built on these findings and the involvement of an independent organization called Research Bureau (Nig.) Ltd, improved the reliability of the finding. The survey discovered that the number of television sets has risen to 5 million and estimated average of 6 persons have access to one television set. It was at this time that NTA claimed that 30 million viewers watch its 'News at Ten' every evening (Ekeh et al, 1989). This marked the first time Nigeria was shown to have surpassed the 'Unesco minima'.

Russia, which has a long history of not conducting an audience survey, has woken up to the significance of such venture. The growing media market, the increasing number of independent broadcasters and the rising advertising money meant that an authentic method must be found to show the audience rating of broadcast stations. For example, in Moscow where ratings are tracked consistently, ORT, RTR, NTV dominate the top ten weekly programmes. Top ten programmes are ORT's '*Vremya*' and '*Novosti*'; NTV's '*Itogi*', '*Sevodnya*' and '*Kukli*'. The most popular weekly show generally receives an audience share of around 20 per cent (internews.ras.ru.) Market research is also becoming a booming business in Russia. Latest estimate gives their number at 90 and rising. This is a tremendous

achievement in a country where the first commercial company to conduct market research was established in 1992. The growing number of research companies means an expanding scope of audience research. For example, a recent poll notes that 71 per cent of Moscow residents watch Tv almost everyday, while only 2 per cent hardly ever watch. A study of 22 regional cities found Tv to be seen even more popular with 86 per cent of respondents claiming that they watch almost everyday. In all age groups and educational levels, over 80 per cent claim to watch almost everyday. Furthermore, prime time falls between 19:00 and 23:00 hrs and peaks between 20:00 and 21:00 hrs, when around 78 per cent of viewers watching on any particular day will tend to tune in. From 9:00 am to 12:00 noon most watchers are pensioners and housewives, while after 23:00 hrs viewers tend to be male or younger (internews.ras.ru).

Independent broadcasters in Nigeria are in dire need of resources to buy appropriate equipment if their participation in the media market is not to be a fluke. It was speculated that Africa would spend about \$300 million in 1996 alone on media spare parts (West Africa, 10-16 June, 1996). None of the independent broadcasters are as yet a big player in the media market, therefore, government will still continue to be the big spender on media equipment. In Russia, the situation is slightly different because the independent broadcasters have found a way of getting financial support. For example, while most started on VHS by 1991 many were able to acquire some S-VHS equipment as well. A very few had access to other tape formats such as Hi-8 or ¾ inch. Almost all stations use SVHS for news production. At least 30 stations have acquired Betacam or nonlinear editing capacity.

Lack of capital and poor telecommunications systems pose major hindrance to media growth in Nigeria. There is an urgent need to overcome these obstacles if Nigeria must play a role in the global communications systems. At the moment, the country is unable to reap the benefits of Internet either for business or for social communication and until this is available, the country will find it difficult luring foreign investment into the economy. Russia is at a vantage position in telecommunications infrastructure, though, some of them need updating. The independent broadcasters have capitalized on this by using e-mail for communications, thereby, bringing themselves closer to programming sources, advertisers and each other. Research by the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) suggests that there are

around 500,000 e-mail users in Russia and 25,000 to 50,000 with Internet access (Internews.ras.ru).

The NBC should encourage the growth of cable channels because it portends the future in community broadcasting. They are cheap to acquire and this makes them suitable for use in rural areas. Cable could also be used to break the urban concentration of media in the country and to halt the tilt towards the elite. Community cable channels will empower the rural residents, who produce the wealth of the nation, and ensure their rights to be informed. Cable channels are growing in Russia and, in fact, it is in this area that the fastest growth has been recorded. A Russian research survey found that cable penetration was 12 per cent nationwide, but varied widely by region. In Moscow, cable reaches 50 per cent of households, but in almost no other region does it reach more than 12 per cent and in some only 1 per cent. Some regional cities have high cable penetration. For example, Saratov has a multi-channel cable system that claims to reach 80 per cent of the city (internews.ras.ru).

A developing economy like Nigeria needs cable system to promote its national development programmes and foster ethnic understanding. In this instance Nigeria has a lot to gain from Russia where cable has been put to best use. Media analysts predict that cable services, especially MMDS systems, will continue to grow in cities throughout Russia. Cable availability should be greatly boosted by the expected widespread use in fibreoptic in telephony. Kagan World Media claims that cable availability grew 25 per cent from 1994 to 1995 and expects similar growth in the coming years. As of yet, however, the real penetration of large-scale cable services and MMDS systems is minimal. (internews.ras.ru). Cable channels in Moscow and St. Petersburg are not only big business as subscribers are increasing but are also becoming multi-channel providers of all networks. In Moscow, for example, Metromedia/ITI runs an MMDS system known as Kosmos. It has approximately 18,000 subscribers and provides up to 30 mostly international channels to viewers for a set subscription fee. At the other end, St. Petersburg has a sizable cable operator, Lencetel, with 300,000 subscribers. There are reports of a possible new cable network for Moscow of 12 channels to be built by Lucent technologies (an AT & T spin off) and Kornkor (affiliated with Moscow City Telephone). This network is expected to cost \$240 million initially and a total of \$500 million over 10 years and to reach \$3.5 million viewers. The US export-import bank is financing the project (internews.ras.ru).

Recommendation/Conclusion

The author has attempted in this essay to juxtapose the development of media, especially commercial media, in Nigeria and Russia. Some background information on media development preceded this to give an understanding of the media environment in both countries and moreover, to show that, although, media became entrenched in Russian society before Nigerian, both countries subjected media to government control and manipulation. The deregulation of media in both countries in the early 1990s freed the media from the clutches of government and revived the credibility of media with the audience. The essay also depicts that the similarities in media environment of both countries are more than their dissimilarities. For instance, both countries share a history of misplaced priorities in national communication policy and Nigeria's situation was compounded by inadequate telecommunications infrastructure.

In both countries, the role of media was perceived from the interests of the government rather than from the interests of the people. Therefore, media were not people-oriented. The media before deregulation served mainly as organs of the government and to disseminate government's news and strategy of achieving national development to the people. In fact, Lenin's perception of media's role as collective agitator, propagandist, and organizer was implemented to the letter. In Russia's haste to entrench the tenets of communism and in Nigeria's haste to achieve rapid civilisation both countries' media policies merged. But while Russia used the media to promote mass literacy, healthcare, and penetrate rural communities because information was seen as the cornerstone of their political ideology; Nigeria largely neglected or paid scanty attention to these aspects of public interests issues. However, Nigeria attempted to revive public interests issues in broadcasting when it launched a number of campaigns, for example, adult literacy campaign, green revolution campaign and Better Life Programme etc. The media was used as vehicles for disseminating information vital to the campaigns and to change the people's psychological disposition. But lack of feedback undermined the success of these campaigns, as communication became a top-down process. The penetration of media into the rural communities, especially during the campaigns, was not made a permanent feature. Therefore, media was presented as part of national economic rescue efforts, a sort of a fire brigade tactics.

Both countries' perception of communication policy conditioned the planning theories adopted in implementing their programmes. For instance, Nigeria perceived communication as aiding development and, therefore, development theory was embraced. They hoped that this theory would provide answers to their development problems but after more than three decades of independence, they are beginning to see the need for openness in the media market. Russia, likewise, made her mistakes when she adopted sociological theory of communication planning. The policymakers perceived society as being in constant conflict and, in Russia's case, conflict was seen in the sphere of ownership of means of production. The deregulation of the Russian economy and media ensured that this perception was jettisoned.

The choice of what telecommunications facilities to acquire is still a problem for Nigeria. The era of the economic boom in the 1970s was the ideal time to provide adequate facilities in the urban and rural communities but the opportunity was missed because of government's misplaced priorities, political bickering and ethnic chauvinism. For example, the Nigerian Government rejected a recommendation to install 'Aerostat' in 1976, a tethered balloon system, which would have afforded Nigerian audience the opportunity to select programmes of any of the then six television stations at the wake of the FESTAC '77. The government installed 'Domestic Satellite (DOMSAT) instead (Ekeh et al, 1989). Russia is at a vantage position in this area as it has invested heavily on telecommunication facilities during the iron curtain era. What it needs now is to upgrade some of these systems to international standards. It is no surprise, therefore, that 'Internet' did not take long to make an in-road into Russia.

The NBC as the adviser of Nigerian Government on communication policy would need to be resourceful in generating funding for improving telecommunications facilities. Government efforts need to be doubled up in introducing television to rural areas and in bridging the information-gap between the urban and rural communities. Ghana, another West African country, is already taking a bold step in this direction. According to Hon. Totobie Quakye, Ghana Minister of Information and Culture, we found it necessary to build up our local broadcasting reach and we have established a far-reaching programme of providing television sets for rural communities where the service had not been received for decades. Our community television service has provided several thousand TV sets for rural areas so that those who cannot afford to buy their own still have access to the service (West Africa Magazine, 24-30 June,

1996:985.) The similarities in people's socio-economic conditions in African sub-regions meant that government intervention is needed in facilitating access to media and fostering participation by majority in media discourse.

However, experience has shown that government alone cannot meet the huge demand especially in rural communities. Therefore, rural residents could be encouraged to form local cooperatives to buy earth satellite stations, some of which are solar powered and are adequate for use in small communities. Scientists are developing 'teleports', which will meet the needs of Nigeria very well if preparations are made now to tap into it when it becomes operational. Teleports are central locations allowing telecommunication carriers to share satellite earth stations, nodes for fibre and microwave distribution systems, relay stations and equipment (much like an airport allows air carriers to share facilities) (Pyke, 1995).

Nigeria should take a leaf out of Russia's book where the government has given a number of media incentives. For example, Russian media have been granted a variety of fiscal incentives through regulatory structures, including exemptions from custom duties, value added tax, profit tax, mandatory currency conversions. Furthermore, Russian government will direct grant totalling 140 billion Rubles (\$25 million) to media in 1997. Out of this money, 80 billion Rubles will go to electronic media and 60 billion Rubles will go to print media (internews.ras.ru). Nigeria should also source foreign aids not only for improving telecommunications facilities but also to provide receiving sets because the focus of Universal Service Obligation (USO) has shifted from transmission signal coverage; to access to a service and a receiver. This receiving equipment, for example, mobile telephone handsets, pagers, payphones or earth stations would ensure global linkage for rural communities while meeting their basic information needs.

Investment could be generated internally to promote media development. Searching for sources of funding for media from this avenue is important because there is a global race towards global communications systems and Nigeria should ensure that is ready for it. The government could introduce taxes to be paid by transnational media corporations transmitting to Nigeria and taxes should be levied on foreign films to encourage local production by commercial broadcasters who might want to bail out by showing cheap but popular foreign films. In Russia, for example, a \$3,000 registration fee has been levied against foreign films since the end of 1994, excluding children's films, educational materials, co-production and

international prize winners (internews.ras.ru.) Russian commercial broadcasters are finding that co-production with foreign companies are the easy way out in meeting their local content requirement.

I believe some urban cities in Nigeria are ripe for pay-per-view TV and efforts should be made to improve subscription collection and stem piracy by those who might want to cheat the system. Piracy is a big problem in Nigeria and it is truncating the growth of music industries. The NBC should tackle the endemic problem of piracy and ensure that artists get appropriate royalty for the use of their work. Law enforcement agents need to be paid better to enforce copyright law in Nigeria and their success will demonstrate to the Nigerian and international communities that Nigeria recognises Intellectual Property Rights. For instance, Russia was forced to declare a war on piracy because of its notoriety. For example, by 1990, the first wave of cable stations were showing exclusively pirated material and collect tiny subscription by connecting video tape players to already wired master antenna systems in apartment buildings. Though by 1995, this had abated, the government had to demonstrate its commitment to protecting intellectual property by adopting a copyright law on July 19, 1995, which protects all forms of artistic production. The law is enforced by an independent agency, established in 1995, called 'Inter-agency commission on Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement'. Article 49 and 150 (4) of the Russian Federation Criminal Code took effect on January 1, 1997 and can set penalties for piracy of up to five years imprisonment and confiscation of equipment (internews.ras.ru.)

The license fee for broadcast receivers should also be revived because it is a veritable source of revenue. But collecting the money should not be the end of the story, the government must demonstrate commitments to use the proceeds in improving telecommunications facilities in the rural and urban communities. And finally, the objectives of NBC cannot be achieved in an atmosphere devoid of press freedom. The commission should champion press freedom and denounce any press abuse in whatever form. It is only through press freedom that the range of voices and opinions can be ensured. While one should not be quick to jump to conclusions that the pluralism of voices on media is most at risk from government, experiences have shown that unchecked concentration of ownership in the hand of one private entrepreneur poses as much risk to pluralism. This risk was realised in Canada where Black, through the Hollinger group, now runs 59 of Canada's 105 dailies. This dominant position also allows him to influence the

Canadian press wire service, the Broadcast News and Press services, which goes into broadcast news rooms across the country (Free Press 100, 1997).

Nigeria had a similar experience, though on a small scale, during the First and Second Republics when private newspapers became partisan and stifled pluralism. Such occurrence must be prevented from repeating itself as Nigeria prepares for the Third Republic and at this critical stage of commercial broadcasting. The 'NBC' should make it mandatory by law for licensed broadcasters to have a public duty to give adequate expression to a diversity of perspectives and viewpoints, and to facilitate the participation of different groups in the collective dialogue of society (Free Press 100, 1997). Furthermore, 'NBC' should strive to ensure the inclusion of the clause on press freedom in the constitution. Lack of press freedom is opening up the media to manipulation by government. The entrenchment of press freedom in the constitution will change the trend in media practice in the country as mediocrity will be stamped out and media professionals will adhere to the principle of social responsibility. The Commission owes media professionals the obligation of ensuring press freedom for all whether in government or private media stations, if Nigeria must witness continuing media growth well into the next millennium.

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