



**FILM EDUCATION JOURNAL**

ISSN 2515-7086 (Online)

Journal homepage:  
<https://www.uclpress.co.uk/pages/film-education-journal>

---

# Film education pedagogy in Nigeria: A nation-specific approach to a non-Western university curriculum

Lani Akande 

## How to cite this article

Akande, L. (2020) 'Film education pedagogy in Nigeria: A nation-specific approach to a non-Western university curriculum'. *Film Education Journal*, 3 (1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.14324/FEJ.03.1.01>

Submission date: 16 June 2019

Acceptance date: 31 January 2020

Publication date: 23 June 2020

## Peer review

This article has been peer reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymized during review.

## Copyright

© 2020 Akande. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

## Open access

The *Film Education Journal* is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

---

# Film education pedagogy in Nigeria: A nation-specific approach to a non-Western university curriculum

Lani Akande\* – *York University, Canada*

## Abstract

Examining the pedagogy of Nigeria's post-secondary film studies, this paper joins the call against the universalization of film studies practices under a Westernized umbrella. To make that argument, it implicates issues of (neo)colonialism and indigenous knowledge-making processes in the analysis of Nigeria's film studies, taking into account the close relationship between Nigeria's film education and the local film industry, Nollywood. Calling on criticisms advocating for alternative ways for engaging with the practice of film studies (Irobi, 2014; Chambers, 2018; Redfern, 2014), the paper sets out to help reinforce the definition of the global by its many diverse and constitutive parts.

**Keywords:** Nigeria; Nollywood; film education; pedagogy; indigenous knowledge; indigenous practice

Far from the widespread assumption perpetuated and reinforced by Western biases that there exists only one legitimate, universal way of generating knowledge, there exist myriad indigenous and local knowledges through which diverse cultures have grappled with their immediate realities and environment. From the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Western knowledge systems gained dominance in large parts of Africa through their colonial replication on the African continent (Maty Bâ and Higbee, 2012: 3). Thereafter, pre-colonial, local and indigenous systems of knowledge gravely suffered under purposeful colonial marginalization. Subsequently, global Western hegemony has fostered an ongoing, transnational sense of legitimacy, supremacy and universality in our perception of Western knowledge systems (Van Rinsum, 2002: 29). Here, I position Nigeria's indigenously developed post-secondary film studies pedagogy as a challenge to existing perceptions of the legitimacy and universality of Western epistemology. In this article, I map out the contours of Nigerian film education at higher education level, outlining its particular pedagogy, one that harkens back to pre-colonial and traditional ways of knowledge-making – indigenous epistemological traditions – which I argue troubles the centrality of theory and theorizing within Western academic research.

Rather than the systemic and standardized pedagogical structures and practices that we identify with Western formal education, this essay concerns itself with Nigeria's autochthonously generated pedagogical methods, which arguably are constituted to accommodate a degree of flexibility and the individualization of methods (Bas, 1989: 487). Such a system has implications in terms of the breadth of space for individual

instructors to liberalize their approaches to pedagogy. This article also pursues an aspect of ethnography, drawing from the voices of academics responsible for shaping film studies curricula, alongside the students who are beneficiaries of this knowledge in Nigerian universities. In the first half of the article, I map out an indigenous, pre-colonial educational system in Africa as both a premise and context within which to situate film studies in Nigeria's higher education institutions. Following that, I explore experiences of film studies practices through interviews with Tunde Onikoyi, a film lecturer at Adeleke University; Akin-Tijani Balogun, a notable Nigerian film director who graduated in theatre arts from the University of Ibadan; Raphael Malachi Idoko, a film studies student in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Port Harcourt; and Bunmi Okefor and Gloria Kure, alumni of Nigeria's National Film Institute. In my selection of respondents, I have limited my survey to film studies programmes in Nigeria that lead to a baccalaureate – programmes that tend to extend beyond film production to contain a strong theoretical component. As such, prominent film production schools such as PEFTI Film Institute and Royal Arts Academy fall outside the parameters of this survey.

Historically, the study of film in the West reveals, broadly speaking, a tradition of theorizing film, whereby theoretical methodologies are necessary for investigating, understanding, interpreting, explaining and proposing meanings of film. In recent times, however, conscious efforts to de-Westernize academia have increasingly been troubling the traditional pedagogies with which the study of film has been organized. What does and should film education look like? Who teaches or should teach it? Are there legitimate, conventional ways of teaching and learning about film? And, if yes, who has the authority to determine which of these models and approaches are (il) legitimate? Such questions prompt a necessary re-examination of film education in its complexities and diversities. If we are to strive towards an understanding of film in its fullness as both a continually evolving technical medium, and a cultural and economic product marked by sociocultural aspects, we must seek perspectives beyond and outside currently existing forms and parameters.

## Questions of universalization and conformity in film studies

Nick Redfern (2014) and Jamie Chambers (2018) raise questions that seem particularly relevant, within the context of this study, to what I consider to be Nigeria's dominant approach to film education. Chambers highlights the fact that the slow growth of interest in non-Western film education pedagogies continues to compel the universalization of film education practices. It also leaves this terrain a collage, consisting of:

... the disparate activities of diverse film education practitioners across the world, many of whom are as yet unaware of each other. And yet, from a different perspective, can a body of activity as yet so disparate, unconnected, un-self-aware and lacking in any functional sense of community even be referred to as a field? ... In this respect, a global field of film education would seem to exist if we choose to look for it, if we choose to enact a global field of film education. (Chambers, 2018: 37)

Such healthy preoccupations in looking beyond the West provide a forum in which an understanding of Nigeria's film education may contribute to emergent global discourses on film education. Here, diverse and distinct non-Western approaches to film education might be seen to engage primarily with their respective local

cinema cultures, and thus might be characterized as having a tendency to be inward-looking, not inclined to seek critical attention, particularly outside their immediate locale. From the moment in which most films are assembled, they begin to reach outwards to viewers and audiences locally and transnationally. Contrastingly, film education practices are perhaps less eager travellers, remaining more anchored to their local spaces. It is therefore a welcome tendency of early film education discourses to illuminate the diversity of different approaches to film education worldwide. For Chambers (2018), problematizing assumptions of film education universality is a function of our recognition that different approaches exist across diverse regions and cultures.

In 2014, in a lecture at the University of Glasgow, Nick Redfern (2014: 2–3) bemoaned the restrictiveness of film methodologies in media studies:

... film studies has little relevance to the wider world ... This is largely a matter of ignorance on the part of critics but it reflects a failure to explain the scope and importance of the study of film and a persistent failure to make film studies matter ... In my opinion, the first step is to abandon film studies as an academic subject or discipline and to ask 'what do I need to do to understand the cinema?' Let's move the emphasis away from the subject and/or discipline and back on to the object we want to understand. After all, students study film not film studies.

Redfern challenges the conception of a film studies that comes to represent what we are unwilling to upend. Sedimented, conservative conceptions of film studies, Redfern argues, have formed at the expense of film itself, which ought to be at the centre of our interest and should drive its own study. In a sense, Redfern's concern is the restriction placed on *how* film is studied in film studies. He advocates challenging what seem to be the constraining walls of the discipline, and for the exploration of non-traditional methods in terms of how we study film. Overall, Redfern's pursuit is of a film studies that seeks a greater relevance to the industries from which it derives its research. Redfern (2014: 2) sees the study of film as having a potential, relatively untapped capacity to directly impact policymaking and enrich practice. For this to happen, one must therefore imagine a plurality of film studies methodologies, heterogeneous and non-universal, reconfiguring themselves to respond to distinct cinemas and their specificities in progressive ways. Indeed, following this position, film studies pedagogies may become as varied as cinemas themselves are different.

Redfern's argument as to the viability of quantitative methodologies in film studies is less relevant here than his argument that the discipline be opened up to whatever methodology benefits the study of film. Here the relationship drawn between (1) the recognition of heterogeneous approaches to film studies across geographical, national and cultural lines (Chambers, 2018) and (2) the call to transgress traditional boundaries within which research in film has been confined (Redfern, 2014) helps to establish a suitable frame for a consideration of Nigerian film studies practices, and its pre-colonial educational system more broadly. The benefits of such cross-cultural comparisons are not one-sided, for, according to Achille Mbembe, bringing African knowledge systems to bear on a broader analysis of global knowledge-making processes reveals the boundaries, limitations and weaknesses inherent in ongoing, systemic attempts to enshrine Western knowledge systems as universal phenomena, thus allowing better understandings of the inadequacies of Western knowledge processes for their own benefits as well (Shipley, 2010: 654).

## The history of Nigerian indigenous educational systems, and its impact on post-secondary film studies

Post-colonial debates over the West's universalization of theory-formulating processes shed light on Africa's indigenous educational methods. Defined as 'the cumulative body of strategies, practices, techniques, tools, intellectual resources, explanations, beliefs, and values accumulated over time in a particular locality, without the interference and imposition of external hegemonic forces' (Emeagwali, 2014: 1), indigenous knowledge predates the arrival of Europeans, Christianity and Islam in Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1974: 14). The purposes for which traditional education exists in Africa are closely informed by Africa's indigenous philosophies on knowledge and learning. Among Nigeria's multi-ethnic communities, the apprenticeship model of education tends to be the historically dominant indigenously generated educational system. As a system for equipping citizenry with hands-on skills, apprenticeship in pre-colonial Nigeria was localized to respond to the immediate social, environmental, economic and spiritual needs of a given community (Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003). In other words, the apprentice system insisted on practical skills for the mitigation of local, societal needs. Its underlying ideology prioritized learning by 'doing' (Oduaran, 2002), with a trainee's education beginning in childhood, and taking a holistic approach (addressing physical training, character development, intellectualism, poetic and prophetic aspects, agriculture and vocational training) to preparing the child citizen for adulthood (Fafunwa, 1974). African traditional education can be seen to be emphatically pragmatic, with learners 'internaliz[ing] a direct replica of the behaviour they see around them' (Lave, 1982: 182). Apprenticeship-based learning arises from observing the teacher in the practice of their skill/art/knowledge, and then imitating that practice, so as to acquire that practical knowledge; 'On-the-job training takes place at an ordinary workplace ... without organized theoretical courses following a planned sequence' (Bas, 1989: 485). Theorization and conceptualization – at least, in the contingent manner in which these terms are employed in Western-styled educational systems – are not a component of African pre-colonial educational forms (Shizha, 2012; Van Rinsum, 2002; Mavhunga, 2017). Rather, in a continent with an immanent oral tradition, the informal flow of knowledge from the master-craftsperson to the apprentice is transmitted through oral tradition, via spoken instructions, emphasized through sufficient repetition to ensure their mental retention, while minimizing the role of writing (literacy) (Pellowski, 1977: 44–5). Whereas writing is foundational within formal higher education in the West, Africa's oral traditions organize educational pedagogies to synchronize orality, observation and practice to instil knowledge in the African apprentice. Here, the centrality of practice in indigenous African education and its pedagogical processes is made clear.

While it was severely eroded by colonialism, apprenticeship as an educational system has survived to this day in Africa, emerging as the dominant traditional mode for informal education in industries such as carpentry, welding, tailoring and auto mechanics (Uwameiye and Omofonmwan, 2004). Weighed against institutionalized technical colleges in Nigeria, some have argued that the practical experience with which traditionally trained apprentices graduate is unmatched by that of their college counterparts (Mabawonku, 1979). This is not to suggest an absence of criticism regarding the potential limitations of African pre-colonial educational systems. Bas (1989: 489), for example, counts the absence of theoretical training as a defect. The overwhelming answer to this 'defect' among these scholars, however, is the

decolonization of academic knowledge-creation processes and the ways in which theory is deployed within Western education. Might theory appear in a different form in African epistemologies? (Irobi, 2014: 26).

Esiaba Irobi's 'Theorizing African cinema' (2014) situates debates around the de-Westernization of educational systems broadly within a discourse of African cinema studies, and Nigerian film studies more particularly. Irobi asks the question: 'What is theory, and why is the West so obsessed with it?' Irobi's intent is not to infer the absence of theoretical curiosity in Africa. Rather, his approach centres around the processes and methods by which theories are intrinsically infused with power and politics sympathetic to Western ideologies and modes of knowledge creation. Drawing on Houston A. Baker, Jr's work, 'There is no more beautiful way' (1996), Irobi (2014: 35) adds:

... theory, by its very conception and execution, at least how it has been understood in the West, is really about power. Power over thought, over what theory itself is or can be, over the media through which theories are disseminated, and a powerful control of what passes into currency as a valid intellectual contribution to the academy and the world at large.

Irobi (2014) posits a binary between those cultures centred around written traditions and those centred around oral traditions, associating the West with a generalized practice of legitimizing theory and its formulation only through writing. He questions the prioritization of Western theory-making processes simply on account of the regions from which they originate, and because of their *writtenness*. Irobi (2014: 26) asks, how might people from oral cultures theorize phenomena?:

At what point does a theory become a theory? Is it not possible that theory may choose to make its appearance in non-Western cultures of the world *differently*, in other words, in forms other than typographical writings, and as result of the differences in ontology, teleology, semiology, narratological strategies for visual, plastic, and performative arts?

Irobi is not alone in his criticism, and certainly not in his insistence that autochthonic ways of knowing should define pedagogical structures of learning. Irobi's work aligns with the contemporaneous work of other authors (see Anucha, 2008; Shizha, 2013; Hamilton-Ekeke and Dorgu, 2015) exploring pre-colonial Nigerian indigenous systems of education and their post-colonial legitimacy within academic institutions.

## The Nollywood industry and Nigeria's film studies pedagogy

Nollywood is widely accepted to have officially begun in 1992 when an Igbo business merchant called Kenneth Nnebue shot and recorded his film *Living in Bondage* (1992) on VHS cassettes for distribution. This endeavour was scarcely motivated by creative and artistic instincts: the account goes that shooting a film on these VHS cassettes was Nnebue's last-ditch effort to mitigate an impending financial loss. He had previously imported blank VHS cassettes to sell, but the anticipated sale failed to materialize. He was forced to decide whether to settle for a complete financial loss on the empty cassettes or use them to shoot a film in the hopes of finding an audience. Opting for the latter, he was rewarded by an almost frenzied response from his community and beyond, and Nigeria's contemporary cinema was born. Following from Nnebue's sales, the immediate interest in this burgeoning cinema was centred on its profit-making potential, and a multitude of Nigerians subsequently streamed into the industry,

drawn by its economic potential. Nollywood practitioners operated within a very lax system, which enabled them to push their films to audiences with minimum restrictions, rules and regulations (Haynes and Okome, 1998: 114–15). Before the new cinematic phenomenon registered in the consciousness of Nigeria's government, the industry had already grown into an uncontrollable juggernaut; the informal practices upon which its (non)infrastructure was built became its liberal, free-for-all *modus operandi*.

If there is a consistent theme that scholars have employed to characterize Nollywood's industry, it is its informality – the loosely standardized and regulated market practices that encouraged Nollywood's creation, and which have gone on to become the central philosophy by which Nollywood's industry continues to be upheld (see Haynes, 2007; Lobato, 2010; Jedlowski, 2012). A further similar trend among these writers is the refusal to attach a negative value judgement to this informality. If anything, Lobato (2010: 338) suggests that Nollywood's informality is a market model through which developing nations may enter into global economic systems. Any account would be incomplete, however, without an identification of complexities such as piracy, which have sustained Nollywood, while at the same time they have suffocated its economic thrust. Yet, both Nollywood's informality, which can be seen as a unique response to local challenges, and Nigeria's indigenous apprenticeship practices find strong resonances with the pedagogical framing of film education at undergraduate level in Nigerian universities.

The development of film studies curricula in Nigerian universities intensified in the 2000s, encouraged, perhaps, by the emergence of Nollywood in the late 1990s. Currently, most Nollywood practitioners continue to obtain their practical experience outside formal education, gaining experience largely through observation, imitation and practice. The introduction of film studies in Nigerian universities therefore might be seen as an attempt to formalize an informal process of film-knowledge acquisition that up to that point existed exclusively outside Nigeria's Western-organized university systems. This arguably creates a situation where Nigeria's university film studies projects an image of formality, while its pedagogical processes retain apprenticeship qualities. With an indigenous film industry characterized by its broad rejection of Western film traditions, and a considerable degree of industrial insulation from Western influences (McCall, 2004), film studies in Nigeria has been privileged to have a rich non-Western material source with which to directly interact. I would argue that, by coalescing around Nollywood's industry specificities, film studies at undergraduate level in Nigeria tends to follow in the tradition of pre-colonial indigenous education. It is supported by the ideology of practicality, functionality and relevance to the needs of its immediate environment. While I do not necessarily mean to suggest that there is a low regard for theoretical approaches to film in Nigeria's post-secondary education, it could be argued – provocatively for some, perhaps – that theory may be rejected when it is incapable of strengthening pragmatic solutions to immediate needs. If it is a priority for film education practices to consider their relevance to the ways in which films are made and experienced locally, then one can certainly argue for a symbiotic relationship between Nigeria's film education pedagogy and its film industry and practices. For one, there exists a government-issued mandate reinforcing the same responsibilities with which film studies practices and curricula in Nigeria are arguably tasked. The Nigerian Film Corporation Act of 1979 established the Nigeria Film Corporation, a federal government agency responsible for, among other things, providing 'facilities for training and advancing the skills and talents of persons employed in the Nigerian film industry generally, and the conduct of research into matters pertaining to film production and the film industry as a whole ...' (Malu, 2016: 149–50). According to

government policy at least, therefore, Nigeria's film studies has an obligation to Nigeria's local film industry.

I argue that the primary goals underlying the institutionalization of film studies within post-secondary education in Nigeria were to cater to Nollywood's industrial practices on the one hand, and to gain legitimacy through academic formalization on the other. While the former can be seen to be a response to local motivations, the latter can be seen as satisfying colonial and 'universalized' means of validating disciplines. As a result, in looking to generate a film studies pedagogy that, first of all, offers practical benefits to Nollywood, film studies in Nigeria as a discipline seems less concerned with broader theoretical perspectives on film than it is with paths towards broadly understanding film as a conceptual medium. Thus, Nigerian post-secondary film studies can be seen to be characterized by a strong emphasis on film practice.

## Conversation with primary stakeholders in Nigeria's undergraduate film studies

In general, the respondents I interviewed as part of an exploration of undergraduate film studies in Nigeria paint a largely cohesive picture of the systemic institutionalization of pre-colonial and indigenous African pedagogies in post-secondary film studies. Granted there are some slight variations in the respondents' mapping of their individual programmes (arising from whether film studies for them was a stand-alone or a combined/minor programme), the clear image that emerges from respondents' academic experiences nonetheless reinforces arguments exploring indigenous epistemological systems as a way to de-Westernize formal and institutionalized education.

Asked about the general approach to film studies in the universities at which he has taught, Tunde Onikoyi (reflecting in particular on film studies pedagogy at Kwara State University) maps a familiar approach:

We wanted a generation to be born, a generation of film producers, film directors, film-makers, people who would understand the industry as an industry – as business, as art, as film, as an area of study that you can actually learn at the university.

For Onikoyi, the model film studies graduate is skilled in some form of film-related practice that will be useful in Nigeria's film industry. Onikoyi contends that it would be a mistake to place equal priorities on studies courses (non-practice-based courses) and production courses. He reiterates that 'what they focused on in Kwara State University was to produce practice-oriented professionals'. Akin-Tijani Balogun, a graduate in theatre arts at the University of Ibadan, now a notable film director in Nigeria, mirrors Onikoyi's position. While theatre arts and film studies typically overlap in certain areas (and commonly coexist within the same faculty), the practice-driven character of Africa's indigenous educational systems makes the relationship of these two disciplines in Nigerian universities even more interesting. Here, a symbiotic relationship can be seen to emerge, blurring a significant portion of the boundaries between the two fields. While Balogun graduated with a theatre arts degree, the programme incorporated film studies courses, which he describes as significantly informing his experience as a student. According to Balogun, departments such as 'Theatre Arts, Dramatic Arts, Performance Arts and Creative Arts ... now have courses that cater to film-making'. According to him, film studies, as it was integrated within his honours degree, focused on training for film practice. Elsewhere, film student Raphael Malachi Idoko identifies



a similar system within the University of Port Harcourt's Department of Theatre and Film Studies. At the time of writing, the university is working to separate film studies from theatre arts, and according to Idoko, the university's goal is to further establish film studies as the domain of screen production. Balogun sees the symbiosis of both disciplines at the University of Ibadan as benefiting the Nigerian film industry, an arrangement he encourages:

I think they should be paired for a few reasons. Most of us who did theatre arts ended up in the [film] industry today ... We got the basics of film-making from theatre. And we expanded our horizon when we got into the industry ... The main difference between the two is that theatre teaches acting, while film-making [film studies] will teach the technicality involved, such as camera placement, lights and equipment generally.

Onikoyi provides insight into how course credits are apportioned between production and non-production courses at undergraduate level at Kwara State University. Although he recognizes the value of their inclusion in the curriculum, Onikoyi acknowledges non-production courses carry much less weight in terms of credits, since they play an insignificant role in preparing students that are industry-ready, 'who will take over as film-makers, film producers, costumers, make-up artists, public relations and marketing personnel'. In the final year of undergraduate study, Onikoyi outlines a curriculum that many Western educational systems might consider non-traditional in an honours degree programme, which could potentially lead to postgraduate studies. Out of 13 fourth-year classes, the 11 he lists off by heart are practice and production focused, including scripting, directing, screen sound, and editing. 'Having learned how to produce,' he adds, 'you will now want to think about exhibiting and distributing' – perhaps suggestive of a practice-based postgraduate studies. This pedagogical approach is not unique to Kwara State University. Idoko notes that at the University of Port Harcourt:

it gets to a certain level when a student would choose whether he or she is mainly specializing in film or theatre ... When a student gets to 300 level [Year 3], he or she specializes, maybe, in directing, acting, playwright, lighting, make-up, etc. It is the stage where students specialize in their own personal area of concentration.

Gloria Kure, who graduated from the National Film Institute (NFI), Jos, in 2004, recounts a similar experience. When asked about the career streams her studies prepared her for, she responds, 'directing, costume and make-up, still photography, editing and so on'.

Returning to Onikoyi's point, film theory, criticism and history are not completely excluded from Nigerian film studies curricula, even if their study will perhaps appear to the Western-trained film scholar as non-comprehensive and marginalized. What is just as peculiar is how film theory, criticism and history are employed when they form part of the curriculum. Theory and criticism are considered to the extent that they possess practical applicability, a pursuit that finds little use for more abstract trajectories. Instead, such theoretical approaches are reified into practices for informing students' film-making know-how. The study of theory was for 'practical work mostly', says Kure. For clear reasons, one can understand why formalism, a critical approach to understanding art form, occupies a principal place within the thin body of non-production courses that the NFI includes in its curriculum. Concerned with the analysis of art forms, styles and structures, formalism's relevance to how we understand the relationships between organized visual film elements and aesthetic meaning(s) inherently ensures its suitability for film-practice applications. At the NFI, Kure employed formalism as:

a systematic approach that ticks all the boxes to arrive at a particular form or structure. It is basically following a formula or pattern in the making of a film. So, one could choose to rigidly follow a particular method when making a film in order to arrive at a certain kind of film.

The experience of Bunmi Okefor (a 2003 NFI graduate) resonates with that of Kure, particularly the latter's references to her class examination, which – in this instance – focused on the auteur theory. Kure elaborates that auteurism taught:

us how to have knowledge in different aspects of film production and apply it in a personal way ... helping us see what others had done, and maybe understand the circumstances that led to their working in this way. Some of these we incorporated into experiments, either modified or in pure form ... An auteur wants to be self-sufficient, he or she wants to be responsible for directing, lighting, and so on, not only in a creative way, but also in a practical way.

Regarding film criticism, Okefor adds:

[It] helped us identify the elements in our film and how to apply them to different genres, for example element of music, colour, light and so on, each of these has a role they play in film. They help me to know what is acceptable in different genres of film, for example I should not put comical music in a horror film.

One might consider the NFI's approach, as outlined by Kure and Okefor, to be the practice of theory, or practicalizing theory.

Furthermore, the relationship between textbooks as a repository for knowledge and practice-based education is called into question at the NFI. The assumption that the validity of theory is contingent upon its writtenness (or, in this instance, printedness), as Irobi (2014) argues, presupposes the heavy reliance on textbooks by film studies in the West. The NFI's curriculum, which arguably displaces the central role of theories and concepts, problematizes this notion. When it comes to textbooks and academic articles focusing on film theory, criticism and history, Kure points out:

most of our textbooks were not recommended but were read in the school library to expand our knowledge ... in that they [textbooks] were not officially recommended or part of the curriculum, but their use was allowed in class as personal reading or reference material.

Okefor expounds on this point:

Textbooks were not really officially recommended; they were books in the library which follow the syllabus ... But they [lecturers] do sometimes mention some books which they found ... useful ... No, these books were not listed in our syllabus. The books were just our own discovery, but we were encouraged to read and explore.

Whereas Western pedagogy emphasizes textbooks as the source for leading and directing the student into cumulative knowledge, here, their role tends to be supportive, confirming the knowledge gained outside reading – through observation, imitation and practice. First, textbooks with more generalized film knowledge serve as sources of endorsement for more practice-based classwork, providing a sort of foundational understanding, not necessarily streamlined for course relevance and objective(s). These

books attend to the broad study of film, delivering an assortment of knowledge areas that ideally coalesce into an expanded context for practice. Second, the responsibility to seek out books that complement classwork falls on the students, and here it would appear that the ability to determine textbook appropriateness is directly linked to how a given student understands class teaching. Such a system also leads to pedagogical conditions under which students in the same class may graduate with slightly varying and diverse knowledge areas, depending on their textbooks of choice. Be that as it may, the practice-driven character of the programme ensures that students are guided towards film-practice-related textbooks. When I asked Kure and Okefor to list examples of textbooks that they consulted both as a source for foundational understanding, and for supporting their class work, Kure mentions *Techniques of Make-Up for the Screen* (author and publication date not remembered) and *Motion Picture Photography* (author and publication date not remembered); Okefor lists *Film Directing Shot by Shot* (by Steven Katz, Michael Wiese Productions in conjunction with Focal Press, 1991), *Techniques of Lighting* (author and publication date not remembered), *Special Effects in Film and Television* (by Jake Hamilton, Dorling Kindersley, 1998) and *One Hundred Years of Cinema* (by Sally Grindley, Kingfisher Books, 1995).

On the programme outline posted on the website of the Department of Theatre and Film, University of Nigeria, Nsukka ([www.unn.edu.ng/department-of-theatre-and-film-studies/](http://www.unn.edu.ng/department-of-theatre-and-film-studies/)), one gets a sense of the balance between practice- and theory-based courses. The outline is three years old (2016/17); however, at the time of writing, it remains in use. I break down the distribution of practice-based and non-practice-based majors (core) courses over the four-year undergraduate programme.

Of the majors (core) courses from Year 1 to Year 4, practice-based courses constitute the overwhelming majority, with 16 practice-driven courses (including Basic Acting Skills, Advanced Scene Design and Advanced Play Production and Directing) alongside 9 courses that are more theory-based (although also containing a practice component). Indeed, of the nine that are more theory-based, only one directly caters to film studies. As such, the overwhelming number of theoretical, non-practice-related courses come from the theatre arts and drama side of the department, both of which trace their ontologies to pre-Nollywood days of university establishments in Nigeria under British rule.

By contrast, formal film studies has only gained rapid recognition within some of Nigeria's post-secondary institutions more recently, and derives a substantial amount of its study materials from Nigeria's local film industry. I argue that film studies in Nigeria can be seen to employ indigenous epistemic processes, placing a significantly lesser emphasis upon written, non-practice-based studies. Irobi's disquiet about the undermining of African cinema scholarship, on account of the relative absence of theory, underscores the trajectory of film education in Nigerian universities. For Irobi, the absence of an emphasis upon written, non-practice-based courses does not equate to an absence of theoretical enquiry. Rather, I argue here that such an absence may point to non-Westernized systems of knowledge-making, whereby theory is located and preserved within practice.

## Conclusion

Gloria Kure, Bunmi Okefor, Akin-Tijana Balogun and Idoko Raphael Malachi (students within different post-secondary institutions) echo Tunde Onikoyi's (a lecturer) outline of film studies pedagogy. According to these respondents, film studies at post-secondary level in Nigeria is largely a study of the creative and industrial practices supporting Nigeria's

local cinema. Additionally, a symbiotic relationship appears to have evolved between theatre or dramatic arts and film studies, with the former providing a degree of academic legitimacy to a practice-based education less focused on theoretical and philosophical conceptualizations, while the latter presents students in the former with a broader and more commercial avenue for expressing their creativity. It is illuminating to consider the character of Nigeria's film studies pedagogy by its intended student outcome, and evaluate its success against this metric. Onikoyi's claim that students of film at undergraduate level are predominantly educated to become practitioners in Nigeria's film industry challenges what some may suspect is simply a less rigorous engagement with film studies. Rather, as I argue here, it can be seen as a curriculum built from the ground up, and designed to provide sustenance to local film industries and practices.

In advocating for such aspects of post-secondary film studies in Nigeria, I do not mean to suggest an absolute coherence between how film is studied in Nigerian universities and total instructor and student satisfaction. For example, unlike Balogun, Onikoyi and Idoko seem to view the common dependence of film studies on theatre, drama or communications less favourably. Arguably, however, such dissatisfactions as this do not pertain to fundamental pedagogical approaches, for none of the respondents here advocated against practice-based pedagogy. Further, while it would be both reductive and naive to imagine that calls for the adoption of Western pedagogical practices do not exist in certain quarters, I am unaware at present of any clear institutional desire to overturn local film studies practices.

The institution of practice-based film studies pedagogies in Nigerian universities is far from accidental. Beyond a more general rationale concerning the importance of practice within understandings of film, I argue here that initiatives to decentralize theoretical approaches to film in favour of film practice within Nigeria's university film studies derive from lingering African pre-colonial, indigenous ways of learning. Developed in relative historical isolation from Western film studies practices, Nigeria's film studies is a de-Westernized pedagogy with a strong commitment to contributing to ongoing local film-making practice.

## Notes on the contributor

**Lani Akande** is a PhD candidate at York University, Canada. His interests include Nollywood's film form, the use of African philosophies and outlook in understanding African cinema(s), and the indigenization of African cinema approaches. He is a filmmaker who explores the connecting boundaries between the theory and practice of film.

## Filmography

*Living in Bondage* (NG 1992, Kenneth Nnebue)

## References

- Adeyemi, M.B. and Adeyinka, A.A. (2003) 'The principles and content of African traditional education'. *Education Philosophy and Theory*, 35 (4), 425–40. Online. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-5812.00039> (accessed 13 May 2020).
- Anucha, U. (2008) 'Exploring a new direction for social work education and training in Nigeria'. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, 27 (3), 229–42. Online. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615470701381459> (accessed 13 May 2020).
- Baker, Houston A., Jr (1996) 'There is no more beautiful way'. In Donalson, M. (ed.) *Cornerstones: An anthology of African American literature*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 856–63.
- Bas, D. (1989) 'On-the-job training in Africa'. *International Labour Review*, 128 (4), 485–96.

- Chambers, J. (2018) 'Towards an open cinema: Revisiting Alain Bergala's *The Cinema Hypothesis* within a global field of film education'. *Film Education Journal*, 1 (1), 35–50. Online. <https://doi.org/10.18546/FEJ.01.1.04> (accessed 13 May 2020).
- Emeagwali, G. (2014) 'Intersections between Africa's indigenous knowledge systems and history'. In Emeagwali, G. and Dei, G.J.S. (eds) *African Indigenous Knowledge and the Disciplines*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 1–17.
- Fafunwa, A.B. (1974) *History of Education in Nigeria*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Grindley, S. (1995) *One Hundred Years of Cinema*. Kingfisher Books.
- Hamilton, J. (1998) *Special Effects in Film and Television*. Dorling Kindersley.
- Hamilton-Ekeke, J.-T. and Dorgu, E.T. (2015) 'Curriculum and indigenous education for technological advancement'. *British Journal of Education*, 3 (11), 32–9.
- Haynes, J. (2007) 'Nollywood in Lagos, Lagos in Nollywood films'. *Africa Today*, 54 (2), 131–50. Online. <https://doi.org/10.2979/aft.2007.54.2.130> (accessed 13 May 2020).
- Haynes, J. and Okome, O. (1998) 'Evolving popular media: Nigerian video films'. *Research in African Literatures*, 29 (3), 106–28.
- Irobi, E. (2014) 'Theorizing African cinema: Contemporary African cinematic discourse and its discontents'. In Ukadike, N.F. (ed.) *Critical Approaches to African Cinema Discourse*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 23–45.
- Jedlowski, A. (2012) 'Small screen cinema: Informality and remediation in Nollywood'. *Television and New Media*, 13 (5), 431–46. Online. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476412443089> (accessed 13 May 2020).
- Katz, S. (1991) *Film Directing Shot by Shot*. Michael Wiese Productions in conjunction with Focal Press.
- Lave, J. (1982) 'A comparative approach to educational forms and learning processes'. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 13 (2), 181–7. Online. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1982.13.2.05x1832l> (accessed 13 May 2020).
- Lobato, R. (2010) 'Creative industries and informal economies: Lessons from Nollywood'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13 (4), 337–54. Online. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877910369971> (accessed 13 May 2020).
- Mabawonku, A.F. (1979) *An Economic Evaluation of Apprenticeship Training in Western Nigerian Small-Scale Industries* (African Rural Economy Paper 17). East Lansing: Michigan State University.
- Malu, L.N. (2016) *Media Law and Policy in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press.
- Maty Bâ, S. and Higbee, W. (eds) (2012) *De-Westernizing Film Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Mavhunga, C.C. (2017) 'Introduction: What do science, technology, and innovation mean from Africa?'. In Mavhunga, C.C. (ed.) *What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1–27.
- McCall, J.C. (2004) 'Nollywood confidential: The unlikely rise of Nigerian video film'. *Transition*, 95, 98–109.
- Oduaran, A. (2002) *Learning to Live and Living to Learn in the 21st Century* (Inaugural Lecture Series). University of Botswana.
- Pellowski, A. (1977) *The World of Storytelling*. New York: Bowker.
- Redfern, N. (2014) 'Quantitative methods and the study of film'. Lecture delivered at the University of Glasgow, 14 May 2014. Online. <https://tinyurl.com/vyah397> (accessed 18 February 2020).
- Shiple, J.W. (2010) 'Africa in theory: A conversation between Jean Comaroff and Achille Mbembe'. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 83 (3), 653–78. Online. <https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2010.0010> (accessed 13 May 2020).
- Shizha, E. (2012) 'Are we there yet? Theorizing a decolonizing science education for development in Africa'. In Abdi, A.A. (ed.) *Decolonizing Philosophies of Education*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 163–76.
- Shizha, E. (2013) 'Reclaiming our indigenous voices: The problem with postcolonial sub-Saharan African school curriculum'. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, 2 (1), 1–18.
- Uwameiye, R. and Omofonmwan, G.O. (2004) 'The perceived objectives of roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs in mid-western Nigeria'. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 44 (1), 84–94.
- Van Rinsum, H.J. (2002) "'Wipe the blackboard clean": Academization and Christianization – siblings in Africa?'. *African Studies Review*, 45 (2), 27–48. Online. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0002020600031413> (accessed 13 May 2020).