TOWARDS A ROBUST COMMUNICATION POLICY IN NIGERIAN: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract
The paper examined the existing corpus of texts forming the bedrock of communication policies that provided the framework for the organization, operation, training and practice of mass communication in Nigeria. The policy guiding the various professional disciplines of mass communication is in several legal documents. These documents: APCON Act, 1988; NBC Act, 1992 and as amended 199; NIPR Act 1992, NCC Act 2003, and NPC Act 1992 provided the data for the study.

Discourse analysis was employed as the methodology for the study. Discursive analysis revealed that there is no coherent communication policy in Nigeria, it is made up of litany of constitutional and institutional (professional) frameworks, with a lot of powers vested in the minister. From ideological perspective of the theories of the press, Nigerian Communication policy is more of the 'Authoritarian ideology'.

However, research evidences over the years have shown the capacity of communication to stimulate and fast track development, the involvement of communication scholars, academic and professional institutions is imperative for workable and robust communication policy. Importantly the need to have an integrative document encapsulating the totality of Nigerian communication policy is recommended.
Introduction
Information is power but communication is empowerment. Communication has become the major centralising factor of facilitating interaction and relationship amongst people and institution in any society. The mass media as the fourth 'estate of the realm' in the society exercise control over the flow of information and the exchange of ideas, views and opinions of people in the society, providing the platform through which these exchanges take place.

Due to the pervasive influence of the media in the society, several policies- constitutional, institutional and professional codes of ethics and practice are usually put into place by the government and professional bodies to guide the conduct and operation of communications specialist, professionals and organisation.

The responsibility of the media as a social medium, an agent of socialisation, participation and democratisation in modern society have made it open to control, regulation and sometimes ‘oppression/suppression’ by authorities through various policies, attempting to shape, direct and control the media landscape.

Mass media are "capable of affecting people’s behaviour". (Lippmann 1965). "promote active citizenship education and social integration" (Croteau and Hoynes, 2001, P.39).

There is no denying the importance of policy in any organised society and system. Policies are needed to provide direction for the communication programmes of a nation, organisation and even individuals.

They are important at:

- Correcting and addressing the imperfections of communication flow, particularly in a market-oriented economy like ours, so that power is not concentrated to the few that can afford it.
- Providing a system of regulations that primarily guide the culture of an organisation, institutions and nations.
- Tool of legitimising the ownership, operations, and administration of media organisation
- Provision of professional and academic qualification and requirements of practitioners
Statement of problem
Over the years, scholars, practitioners and other commentators have advanced various arguments on what role communication could play in bringing about social change and development. And, there are evidences that have shown the usefulness and impact of communication in social change. It is a generally accepted belief that the systematic employment of communication can help individuals, communities and nations to achieve their goals and objectives. Communication has the capacity for awareness creation, consensus building, citizenship participation, engagement and involvement in developmental process. Government has the sole responsibility of providing the mechanism for the use of communication in developmental process: This is achieved through communication policy.

The role of communication for development became a dominant feature of developmental initiative of national and international bodies in the 1960's. (Sobowale ,1989;UNESCO,1972).

Also central to development, is the role of education in the society. McBride, Abel, Bueve-Mary, Ekonzo, Garcia-Marquez, Losev, &... Zimmerman (1981), pointed out that "the communication sector may be taken to embrace a large part of education and science" (p.228). Education is the agent of personal, national and societal transformation. The education system put in place plays crucial role in the overall achievement of societal goals and objective. The amount of resources made available for research and development is directly related to the speed and spate of growth of any society.

The common complaint of communication researchers and practitioners is that communication policies and plans are too often in the hands of those who do not know enough about communication to set up and contribute to the communication systems that best serve the development needs of their countries (Yu, 1977,p.170).

However,

A communication system can perform only as well as the people who run it. Hence, training in a wide variety of communication skills is a key point in the development of the system

A basic problem is to match the needs of the system with available manpower resources. A country may elect to plan in details its educational system at various levels and its professional and vocational training programmes over a long term, and may carefully control the intake of students, thereby endeavoring to provide skilled personnel in appropriate numbers to fill the nation's manpower needs (Unesco ,1972, p.22).
The focus of the paper is to examine the existing corpus of communication policies in Nigeria, which provided the framework for the organization, operation, training and practice of Mass Communication.

It seeks to critically evaluate the existing framework so as to provide a new paradigm of integrated communication policy for professional and institutional development in Nigeria.

For the purpose of this paper, relevant sections and subsections of communication acts will be examined and reviewed to measure the level of, if there are consistencies or inconsistencies, contradictions or agreement within the frameworks guiding media practice in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on provisions for personal, professional and institutional development vis-à-vis the roles of educational institutions in the attainment of the objectives of these policies.

Also, these corpuses of text will also be examined to see, if there are exclusive provisions explaining the roles and responsibilities of Academic Institutions responsible for the training and development of media professionals, policy makers and conduct of media research?

The structure and composition of the council of these bodies will be dissected to determine level of representations for academic institutions in the bodies.

**Methodology**

Discourse analysis was employed as the methodology for this paper. It focuses on the relationship between language, ideology and institutions, in particular how language relates to and is shaped by power structures.

Issues of relevance and significance to individuals and institutions are conveyed or distorted through the use of Language, a principal tool of communication. Accordingly, Hodge and Kress (1993) state that "Language is an instrument of control as well of communication". Through systematic use of language, issues can be manipulated and presented in a way that has an 'ideological' view-constructed reality. Reality is no longer reality but a creation, through discourse.

The language used in the drafting of the communication policy of Nigeria will reflect the ideological leaning and lineage of her communication system. Ideology, here is described as 'systematically organized presentation of reality" (Hodge and Kress 1993: 15). Using theory of the press as a classification, the language will reveal the placement of Nigeria's communication policy along the spectrum of theories of the Press.
Fairclough (1989), provided a useful framework for the employment of discourse analysis of texts:

- **Selection of texts**
  - Selecting a sufficient number to be representative.

- **Description**
  - Identifying and labeling formal features of the text(s) (semantic, syntactic features)

- **Interpretation**
  - Analyzing the cognitive processes of the participants in the discourse: the cues in the receiver of the text(s), the traces of the ideological intentions of sender of the text(s)

- **Explanation**
  - To show how the discourse is part of a social process, how it is determined by social structures or power relations.

The key concern of the study was the collection of and analysis of communication policy documents in order to deconstruct Nigerian Communication policy. And as, Littlejohn & Foss (2008, p.2 &39) put it, “Communication is one of those everyday activities that is intertwined with all human life ... Communication is the vehicle by which meaning is assigned to experience”. Therefore, these acts: APCON Act, 1988; NBC Act, 1992 and as amended 1999; NIPR Act 1992, NCC Act 2003, and NPC Act 1992 provided the data for this study.

**Literature review**

According to Kilpatrick (2000), Public Policy can be generally defined “as a system of laws, regulatory measures, cause of action and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a government entity or its representatives”. In view of his assertion, communication policy likewise could be likened to a system of laws, regulatory measures or, courses of action and function priorities of the communication system in a given society.

These laws, constitutional or institutional direct the state and duration of media system in given society. Communication policy is therefore, those specific laws, instruments and ethics guiding the activities of players and actors in the communication environment of the society.

Public policy is confined within these frameworks that provide the starting point for it. It includes some or all of the following:

- State, national and international laws
- Institutional/ professional institutions code of ethics and practice
- Societal values system and norms.
Phelan (1988), states that "various professional guide, trade association and public interest groups have come up with guidelines for proper behaviour [of its members]". Although media policy is usually formalized by national government, it can also be designed by International bodies and organisations such as the European Union, World Trade Organisation, (WTO), as well as by the media organizations professional bodies (Sarikakis, 2004).

Communication policy
According to Sarikakis (2004), media and community policy refer to "the general principles which guide the decision of the authorities usually government about the function of the mass media". It is centered on the structures, organizations and regulation of the communication process of the given society.

Communication policy focuses on the legal, ethical, political, economical, infrastructural and social system within which public communication and the media system operate and function in. It is the politically regulated (constitutional provision) and in some cases self-regulated (professional ethical standards) in guiding the activities of key actors in the communication sphere of the public domain.

Sobowale (1988) defines Communication policy as "a careful, consistent and workable plan of action formulated by government or any other agency to harness the benefits of the process for the wellbeing of all Nigerians". It is the definition and description of the media within the sociopolitical and economic context of a given society.

The evolution of communication policy
The 1970's witnessed and pre-occupation of the United Nation (UN) on the role communication can play in fostering and fast racking development. This was reflected in Article 1.2 of the UN Constitution (Mc Anany cited in Nair and White 1993; Servaes, 2003).

The need to study communication policy and planning has acquired a new importance in the 1970's- not only in developing countries but also in developed countries...calling the 1970s "the communication decade" UNESCO has sponsored a variety of publications, conferences, and activities “to help members states in the formulation of their mass communication policies”(Lee in Yu 1977,p.167).

**Nigerian communication policy**

With relations to the practice of mass communication in Nigeria, the policy guiding the various professional disciplines of mass communication- journalism, broadcasting, public relations, and advertising and by extension, Telecommunication and Information Communication Technologies are scattered in several legal documents. (APCON Act, 1988; NBC Act, 1992 and as amended 199; NIPR Act 1992, NCC Act 2003, and NPC Act 1992). These acts provide the data used for analysis in this study.

Lending credence to this assertion, Sobowale (1988) posits:

> The problem we face today in Nigeria is not that we do not have a communication policy. The problem is that we do not have a comprehensive and well articulated communication policy especially, one to which the Nigerian State is committed, and one that conduce to a functional national communication system. Each mass medium has its own policy, which many times, is at variance with others.

> ...[And]the lack of such a well articulated communication policy is bound to create complex maladies and anxieties the sphere of communication, generally, and mass communication, particularly.

Sobowale’s view is an affirmation of the submission of McBride’s team in Unesco’s project:

> The formulation of communication policies is sometimes of a general constitutional nature, sometimes more detailed and specific, usually based on national legislation. Freedom of belief, of opinion, of speech, of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of information...are expressions commonly used in Constitutions, together with guarantees of freedoms in which communication is involved, such as the freedom of assembly and the freedom to hold processions and demonstrations freedom of correspondence, freedom of travel, etc.

> Moreover, in many countries professional regulations adopted by the members of the professions themselves also form part of the legal framework; they may constitute a major source of communication law, and take essentially the form of codes of professional conduct and press or media councils. (McBride et al, p.207)

As pointed our earlier, Nigerian Communication policy are embedded in many documents, such as the 1999 Constitution, the enabling laws and the professional codes of bodies
Communication policy, therefore in my view, is the deliberate mainstreaming of communications strategies [- (Software-Programme: information, education, entertainment, enlightenment, social mobilisation, political participation, citizens empowerment and engagement; Training: Educational and training institutions) and the (Hardware-TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, internet, ICTs and indigenous media into)] into framework that forms the philosophy of communication programming of a nation.

Theoretical foundation.
Littlejohn and Foss (2008, pp 2-3) posited out that "Theories provide explanations that help us understand the phenomenon we call communication...Theories, then provide a set of useful tools for seeing the everyday processes and experiences of communication through new lenses".

The system theory provides the theoretical foundation for this study. The theory assumes that there interaction amongst elements within a given system in an environment. Within the systems roles are defined.

Lattimore et al (2007) posit that System theory looks at the organization as made up interrelated pails, adapting and adjusting to changes in the political, economic and social environment in which they operate. Recognizable boundaries, within which there must be communication structure [System, Policy,Framework...].

Relating the principle of this theory to communication policy, Anaeto, Onasanya and Osifeso (2008) suggested that "the system theory provides an internally insistent framework for classifying and evaluating the world", in this case, the world of communication system. Communication policy provides the framework for classifying and evaluating communication system.

Communication is a system within a system. Communication systems may grow in accordance with the needs of the people or to serve the purposes of those in positions of power (Unesco report).

Systems are sets of interacting components that together form something more than the sum of the parts But system cannot remain alive without importing new resources in the form of inputs .Thus, a system takes inputs from the environment, processes, these and creates outputs back into the environment...In addition systems are characterized by self-regulation and control
Systems are embedded within one another, such that one system is part of a larger system forming series of levels of increasing complexity (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008, pp 39-40)

Querying the appropriateness of System theory in explaining Communication, Littlejohn and Foss (2008) state that “Although General System Theory and other theories in the cybernetics traditions are excellent for understanding relationships, they are less effective in helping us understand individual differences among the parts of the system. However, General System Theory provides a starting point for explaining communication policy as system of relationship and exchange of inputs and outputs by all parties in the communication system. Hence, its assumptions are central and relevant to the focus of this study.

Discussion

1. Council Membership Representation: The structure of the council members representation is presented below is reflection of the dimensions, attention and placement given to Educational Institutions by policy makers in Nigeria.
   - APCON: 20 members, with Two members from Academic Institution (10% representation) (Section 2)
   - NIPR: 20 Council members, no representation for academic Institution (Section 4)
   - NPC: 19 members, One representation for academic institution (Section 2)
   - NCC: 9 Commissioners, no representation for academic Institutions and media industry (Section 5 and 7)
   - NBC: 12 members, one representation from education [sector or Institutions not specified], with specific reference to mass communication or journalism training.

2. Nominations of Council Members: The process of council members' nominations is highly politicized, overtly subjected to the recommendations (control) of the minister, who in most cases are media professionals or practitioners but majorly politicians, whose tenures are not sacrosanct, predictable or given, they can be changed anytime. The sections of the agencies of communication policy in Nigeria are captured below, illustrating the overwhelming influence of the minister on the direction and structure of Nigerian Communication policy.
See: Section 4, sub sections 1,2a and b in NIPR Act; Section 2, sub sections 1a-I,2a and b and 3 of NPC act; Section 2,sub section 1a-d;Section 3,subsection 1,2 and 3 of NBC Act and Section 5,subsection 1 and 2a-d are the exclusive provision indicating the composition of the councils of these bodies, with majority of its membership appointed by the minister.

A. NIPR Council

(1) There shall be, as the governing body of the Institute, a Council which shall be charged with the administration and general management of the Institute.

(2) The Council shall consist of the president and vice-president as chairman and vice-chairman respectively, and a total of twenty other persons being fellows, members or associate members of the Institute, that is-

(a) Five persons appointed by the Minister, all of whom shall be persons engaged in the practice of public relations in Nigeria; and

(b) Fifteen persons elected by the Institute annually, of whom not more than eight shall be persons in active practice as public relations practitioners (Section 4 of NIPR Act).

B. NPC Council:

(1) The Council shall consist of a chairman and the following other members, that is-

(a) four representatives of the Nigerian Union of Journalists;
(b) two representatives of the Nigerian Guild of Editors;
(c) two representatives of the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria who shall be practising journalists;
(d) four representatives of the general public, one of whom shall be a legal practitioner and a woman;
(e) one representative of educational institutions involved in the training of journalists;
(f) one representative of the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation who shall be a practising journalist;
(g) two representatives of the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria;
(h) one representative of the News Agency of Nigeria, who shall be a practising journalist; and

(i) Executive Secretary to the Council.
(2) The chairman of the Council shall be appointed by the President, on the recommendation of the Minister, after due consideration of the submission of the Nigerian Press Organisation and shall be a person-

(a) of high intellectual and moral qualities and knowledgeable about the press and public affairs; and
(b) with not less than twenty years experience as a journalist.

(3) The members of the Council appointed under paragraphs (d) and (f) of subsection (1) of this section shall be appointed by the Minister and members of the Council appointed under paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (e), (g) and (h) of the said subsection shall be appointed by the Minister after an election by or on the nomination of the union, association or other body concerned (Section 2 of NPC Act).

C. APCON: Membership of the Council

(1) The Council shall consist of-

(a) a chairman who shall be a distinguished fellow of the profession to be appointed by the President;
(b) seven persons to be appointed by the Minister one of whom shall be from the Ministry and others from amongst other interests in the field of advertising which in the opinion of the Minister ought to be adequately represented;
(c) ten persons to be elected by the Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria (in this Act referred to as "the Association") in the manner for the time being provided by its constitution; and
(d) two persons to represent institutions of higher learning in Nigeria offering courses leading to an approved qualification, to be appointed by the Minister in rotation, so however that the two persons shall not come from the same institution (Section 2 of APCON Act).

D. NBC - The Commission Section 3 of the principal Decree is amended

(a) by substituting for the existing subsection (1) the following new subsection (1)

(1) The Commission shall consist of -

(a) a Chairman;
(b) ten other members as may be approved to represent the following interests, that is -
(i) law,  
(ii) business,  
(iii) culture,  
(iv) education,  
(v) social science,  
(vi) broadcasting,  
(vii) public affairs,  
(viii) engineering,  
(ix) State Security Service,  
(x) the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture; and

(c) the Director-General of the Commission.

(b) in subsection (2) by substituting for the words "in the opinion of the Minister" between the words "are" and "capable", the words "on the recommendation of the Minister and the approval of the President"; and

(c) in subsection (3), by inserting before the word "appointed" the words "citizens of Nigeria who shall be"

(2) Chairman and or members of the commission shall be persons of proven integrity, experience and specialised knowledge in broadcasting industry or who by reason of professional or business attainment are in opinion of the Minister capable of making useful contribution to work of the Commission (Principal Act).

(3) Chairman and or members of the Commission shall be appointed by the President, commander in Chief of the Armed Forces on recommendation of the Minister (Section 3 of NBC Act–as amended)

E. NCC: Governing Board

5. (1) There is established for the Commission a Governing Board (in this Act referred to as "the Board") charged with the administration of the affairs of the Commission.

(2) The Board consists of 9 Commissioners made up of-

(a) a chairman,

(b) a chief executive who shall also be the Executive Vice Chairman

(c) 2 Executive Commissioners, and

(d) 5 non-executive Commissioners who shall be appointed by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 5, NCC Act 2003).

The Minister of Information and Communications in Nigeria is an embodiment of the totality of Nigerian communication policy. He is the communication policy personified.

See the following Sections 6 of NBC Act; 23, 24 and 25 of NCC Act.

6. Subject to provisions of this Decree, Minister may give Commission directive of a general character relating generally to particular matters with regard to exercise by Commission of its functions under this Decree and it shall be duty of Commission to comply with such directives. (NBC Act)

23. The Minister shall have the following responsibilities and functions pursuant to this Act—the formulation, determination and monitoring, of the general policy for the communications sector in Nigeria with a view to ensuring, amongst others, the utilisation of the sector as a platform for the economic and social development of Nigeria; the negotiation and execution of international communications treaties and agreements, on behalf of Nigeria, between sovereign countries and international organisations and bodies; and the representation of Nigeria, in conjunction with the Commission, at proceedings of international organisations and fora on matters relating to communications.

24. (1) Prior to the formulation or review of the general policy for the Nigerian communications sector, the Minister shall cause the Commission on his behalf to first carry out a public consultative process on the proposed policy formulation or modification.

(2) In formulating and determining the policy or amendments thereto, the Minister and the Council shall take into consideration the findings of the consultative process under subsection (1) of this section.

25. (1) Subject to subsection (2) of this section, the Minister shall, in writing, from time to time notify the Commission of and express his views on the general policy direction of the Federal Government in respect of the communications sector. (NCC 2003 Act)

4. Professional Certification.
NIPR, NPC, and APCON all have their own requirements for professional certification of practitioners, as well as accreditation requirements for Institutions running Journalism and Mass Communication and other allied disciplines.
These powers were granted by the enabling laws used to establish this institution. However, NBC on its part has not lived up to its constitutional of this involvement as provided in its enabling law cited below:

ensuring qualitative manpower development in the broadcasting industry by accrediting curricula and programmes for all tertiary training institutions that offer Mass Communication in relation to broadcasting (Section 2p, NBC Act 1999 as amended)

The implications of this, outside of NUC and NBTE, the two regulatory bodies for Higher Education in Nigeria, Tertiary Institution running mass communication programmes and other related discipline would have to subject themselves to the accreditation process of these bodies—Six in all!—“A classic case of too many cooks…”

Conclusion
McBride et al (1980, p.207) conclude that:

Rational and dynamic links between communication and overall development goal is, to be sure, at the core of all discussions …The formulation of communication policies should:
(a) Serve to marshal national resources;
(b) Strengthen the coordination of existing or planned infrastructures;
(c) Facilitate rational choices with regard to means;
(d) Help to satisfy the needs of the most disadvantaged and to eliminate the most flagrant imbalances;
(e) Emphasize universal and continuing education;
(f) Help in strengthening cultural identity and national independence;
(g) Enable all countries and all cultures to play a more prominent role on the international scene (p.207).

From the foregoing discussion, it is evidently clear that there is no coherent communication policy in Nigeria, it is made up of litany of constitutional and Institutional frameworks, with a lot of powers invested in the minister. From ideological perspective of the theories of the press, Nigerian Communication policy is more of the ‘Authoritarian ideology’. The involvement of tertiary institutions in communication policy conceptualisation and implementation is limited, if not non-existence in some cases.

However, research evidences over the years have shown the capacity of communication to stimulate and fast track development, the involvement of communication scholars and Institution is imperative for workable and robust communication policy. Creating and fostering a convergence amongst the various Institutions responsible for certifications of practice for professionals in communication discipline is recommended, as the present
arrangement is not healthy to the growth of this important sector. Importantly the need to have an integrative document encapsulating the totality of Nigerian communication policy is recommended.

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