

# DECOLONISING NIGERIA'S JOURNALISM EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Andrew Asan Ate, \* Joseph Omoh Ikerodah\*\*

\*Department of Mass Communication, Edo State University, Uzairue, Edo State.

\*\*Department Of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State

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## Abstract

African countries have, over the years, suffered from colonialism and neo-colonial tendencies in different spheres of life including the educational sector. This paper, which is anchored on cultural imperialism media theory, adopted a secondary material data collection approach in interrogating the colonial attributes of Nigeria's journalism educational system in the area of curricular, publication and cultural richness of the system. Findings revealed that the country's journalism curriculum is patterned after the western orientations and that the journalism teachers' publications activities are nuanced with neo colonial tendencies while little of our cultural values are integrated in our journalism educational system. The paper recommends the way out of the abysmal quagmire and insist on a holistic re-engineering the nation's journalism educational system through patriotic home grown educational policies and implementation by the appropriate stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Decolonialism, Journalism, Nigeria, Educational system

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many African countries rejoiced when they were physically freed from the clutches of their colonial masters after independence. However, the neo-colonial tendencies continue to linger on in different spheres of life especially in the educational sector, where they re tenaciously tied to the umbilical cord of the colonial masters in terms of curriculum and academic orientation. From the designing of the curricula to publishing of academic papers, we depend on western benchmark to move an inch. Our "independence" appeared to have taken away something great from us – our initiative to think creatively and bring something out of our cultural superstructure.

This same thing applies to journalism education in the continent which is borne and nurtured in the waters of colonialism. Experts confirm that journalism education in an organised manner is a 19<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. Folkeirt, Hamilton and Lemann (2013, p.5) confirm that "journalism education and teaching

was developed in America around 1900 under humanities". However, they opined that journalism education in schools and universities in Europe did not kick off until 1970s.

Other scholars, Boafo and Owete (2002, p.1) also alluded that communication education in Africa, like modern communication education on the continent is imported from the western Europe and North America. There are different perspectives concerning African and Asian journalism education systems.

It is argued that between 1980s and 1990s, some African and Asian countries adopted either European or American journalism education approaches and, in some cases, both models depending on the affiliation with the west. (Folkert, Hamilton and Lemman, 2013, p.2). Beyond the curricula, the colonial fever can also be felt not on journalism education alone but has some spillover effect on journalism practice. Odozi (2014, p.3) notes that "textbooks, teaching aids and the

foreign exposure of the pioneers of mass communication education did not start and end with a document on how and what to report, these skills are ideologically determined. Where and how to publish a paper for promotion exercise is also overtly or covertly dictated by colonial forces. It is against the backdrop that this paper intends to decolonize Nigeria's journalism education with particular emphasis on curricula, publications and cultural educational raw materials.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED WORKS**

In a study titled "Media Education Goes Professional? Media Teachers' Image, Positioning and Educational Focus". Amdam (2017) viewed media education as a critical element of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. The paper draws on a thematic review of media teacher in Nordic media research and on data from an exploratory on MC study programme. The study focuses specifically on two data sources where the first series as background for the second:

1. Quantitative descriptive data from a national teacher survey and,
2. Case study data from two schools (Amdam, 2017, p.83).

The study concludes that: by examining the media teachers' self images, positioning and interpretative repertoires, we gained an understanding of the local professional cultures they are part of, the positioning and tensions within these cultures and how professional backgrounds are the underlying historical media teacher positions are, or are not, thermalized within these settings (Amdam, 2017, p.93).

In another study titled "Assessment of Implementation of UNESCO Curricula for Journalism Education in Universities in South Western Nigeria" Ade-Johnson (2019) through document analysis interrogated the extent to which contents of the training frameworks for journalism align with the UNESCO curricula of 2007, 2013 and 2015. It also probed areas of improvement in contents of journalism education curricula that are not in the UNESCO curricula of 2007, 2013 and 2015.

Findings revealed that the selected universities aligned with the 2007 UNESCO curricula but one university partially adopted the 2013 curriculum. Findings also revealed that none of the universities complied with UNESCO 2015 curriculum. The study among other things recommends the domestication of UNESCO's

2015 curricula by Nigerian universities.

In their paper, Adamolekun, Ogedengbe and Odigie (2021) looked at communication curriculum and socio-economic development using desk research method. The paper evaluated the purpose of communication, development communication and mass communication curriculum in Nigerian universities. The study concludes that "development requires effective communication to make it achieve common frame of mind and understanding between development agents and targets. (Adamolekun et al, 2021, p.104). The scholars added that for socio-economic development to take place, curricular should be vigorously be pursued and should be development oriented.

In another study titled "The Challenges of Publish-or-Perish Pressure on Academic in Administrative Positions, Alemoh (2018) through survey research design examined categories of staff that held administrative positions in the university under study; how academics in administrative positions are coping with publish or perish pressure; how the pressure affects the level of academic productivity of academic in administrative positions and the extent to which academics in administrative positions think they should be given special consideration for promotion. The study concludes that publish or perish syndrome is a serious challenge to career growth of academics in administrative positions in Taraba State University, Jalingo. The study recommends among other things that academics in administrative positions should be given preferential considerations in terms of promotion.

### **Colonial Attributes of Nigeria's Journalism Curricular**

There are some colonial shades and nuances in Nigeria's journalism curricular. Studies according to Odulami (20014, p.47) have confirmed that journalism education and training in Africa is grafted on western paradigms. According to him, "from independence till today, the theories, models and applications of key concepts that guide media practice and education in Africa are steeped in foreign contents." Moge kwu (2006, p.7) notes that "different curricular of various programmes in the continent would give the impression that we are striving to produce clones of American or western journalists in parts of Africa."

Other scholars also express the cultural disparity of our journalism curricular which has some western

colouration:

The source of inspiration of teachers, curricular and textbooks are western. Teachers are mostly western educated, curricular are drawn from western models and most textbooks are authored and published in the West and North America. Under these circumstances, communication training in Africa can hardly be said to be culturally relevant. (Boato and Owete, 2002. p.1)

Another worrisome aspect of journalism education in Nigeria and Africa is the disconnect between the classroom and newsroom. Most of the so-called brilliant journalism students find it difficult to cope with the demands of newsroom and industry expectations. This abysmal trend has also raised an image problem for the journalism profession in Nigeria. Until recent times, Nigerian journalists were being viewed as bunch of dropouts who had been rejected by other professions. This uncomplimentary view of journalism and journalists in Nigeria has made the profession, trade, craft or vocation not very prestigious (Talabi and Ogundeji, 2012).

Currently, most textbooks in tertiary institutions offering courses in mass communication are mostly published in Europe and America with foreign authors and contents (Adamolekun, Ogedegbe and Odigie, 2021). These textbooks are culturally irrelevant to the reality of journalism in Africa (Alao, 2010). Ade-Johnson (2019) opines that journalism training should be able to reflect the developmental goals because journalists are watchdogs of the society.

UNESCO (2013, p.7) states that quality journalism education can be achieved when combined with other fields of knowledge such as education, sociology, liberal arts and humanities. A report by UNESCO (2007, p.6) provides a holistic professional superstructure of journalism education:

Journalism education should teach students how to identify news and recognize the story in a complex field of facts and opinions...conduct research ... Write for, edit and produce material for various media formats....and for their particular audiences. it should give them the knowledge and training to reflect on journalism ethics... practices

in journalism, and on the role of journalism in society...media law and the political economy of media. it should ensure that they develop or have as prerequisite...the linguistic ability necessary for journalistic work. (UNESCO 2007, p.6).

The above raised issues cannot be sufficiently taken care of if journalism curriculum is deficit with local contents. There is no gainsaying the fact that the western training got in Africa has made African graduates of journalism see issues from the frame of the west, thereby unconsciously contributing to the lack of development of their own continent, Africa (Adamolekun, Ogedengbe and Odigie, 2021, p.98). UNESCO (2013) underscores the desirability and inevitability of journalism training that is relevant to the socio-political and economic realities of the people:

At the core of journalism is the need for well-trained journalist who can contribute to the processes of democracy and development in their societies. Needless to say a quality journalism education is not only a guarantor of democracy and development, but also of press freedom itself. Citizens cannot exercise and enjoy their citizenship in the absence of crucial information and knowledge, while well trained journalists are better placed to provide. (UNESCO (2013).

Odulami (2014, p.45) argues that while “early Nigerian journalists leaned to liberal British ideas and opinion in their pungent anti colonial writings, the model of mass communication education came from America,” Nigeria's journalism education should be decolonized from the perspective of models, theories and domesticating international curricular to suit the developmental needs of the society. Information dissemination must take into account the cultural artifacts and ideofacts of the people and must be development oriented and devoid of unnecessary colonial encumbrances. Agba, Oshege and Ogri (2018, p.47) allude that one major quality of a functional educational curriculum is that “its goals and content have to be relevant to the socio-cultural, economic and political environments of the trainees as well as prepare learners to sustainably contribute their quota to the development of their societies.” This development is lacking in the present journalism curricular in Nigeria. The cultural imperialism

anchoring this study in manifest in this direction as superior nations has ideologically and culturally colonized journalism educational system.

### **Colonial attachments of scholarly publications in journalism education in Nigeria**

One of the areas where colonial forces have held our educational system to ransom is in the area of publication. Most universities administrators in Nigeria in a bid to tighten the rope of promotion exercise in their institutions are requesting and insisting on publication from foreign indexed journals - Scopus, Thomas Reuters and others. In the Nigerian educational system, the academic holding an administrative position is required to carry his administrative responsibilities along with his normal academic duties of teaching, research and community service. In spite of this enormous challenge, the academic is judged for promotion consideration on the same scale with his colleagues who are less saddled with such responsibilities (Alemoh, 2018, p.92),

Talabi, Adaja and Adefemi (2018, p.8) lamented that "Africans are the architect of the problem" arguing that it is "rare to see foreign articles in African journals except a few but foreign journals are the yardstick on which Africans measure their academic performance". The scholars further give their verdict:

Looking up to foreign journals and making them set the pace before an academic is assessed in Africa is another form of neo colonialism because the negative effect of imperialism is underdevelopment. Legalizing or making foreign journals the yardstick of quality is another symbol that stamps superiority of the West over developing countries (Talabi, Adaja and Adefemi (2018, p.8)

Impact factor journals increase visibility in the global academic landscape (Alemoh, 2018). However, Talabi, Adaja and Adefemi (2018, p.8-9) argue that as long as foreign journals continue to supersede journals published in Africa ... they confer status in themselves while we approve and uphold their status. Another area of colonial bondage can be seen in referring styles of publication. African journalism scholars keep on chasing foreign referencing styles which keep on bringing out new editions without thinking of developing them. Careful observation and document shown globally approval - no Nigerian or known African referencing style is in usage and nobody is asking any question.

The American Psychological Association (APA) format used in social sciences and other disciplines is referred to as the Harvard format. There is no doubt; the association is dominated by Harvard University Professors of psychology. Students of the social sciences, business studies, management and education are therefore, advised to adopt the APA format in their term papers, unless their lecturers recommend a particular style for them. (Mbaegbu, 2004, p.2).

Another popular format known as the Modern Language Association of America (MLAN) used by most humanity scholars in Nigeria and Africa is also alien. The same thing applies to the Katr Turabian format. This format according to Mbaegbu (2004, p.3) is "derived from the Chicago Manual Style and consequently it is referred to as the Chicago Manual format by some authorities", The question is where is Nigeria and Africa on the global referencing map? The answer is obvious: Nowhere to be found. African countries are consumed by the tidal wave of imperialism in different areas of study including journalism education. There is also a high fiscal flight to foreign countries where Nigerian scholars have to pay for publication in dollars and pounds sterling. However, nothing tangible is coming in African countries especially Nigeria, the acclaimed giant.

Rodney (2009, p.ix) in his book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, challenges Africans to "explore further the nature of their exploitation, rather than to satisfy the 'standards' set by our oppressors and the spokesmen in the academic world". Unfortunately, some of our highly educated people have become spokesmen for developed countries in the hundred percent adoption of their academic standards. Rodney (2009, p.247) blamed the woes of Africa's underdevelopment on colonialism which he describes "had only one hand - it was a one-armed bandit". It is clear that we are still under the regime of the colonial forces. A renowned anthropologist, bemoans this abysmal scenario:

The third-world people in Africa and Asia have for centuries to the material and intellectual attitudes to the life of first-world and second-world peoples. They recite the philosophy and ideologies of these people as if they are infallible. Above all, they have learnt to use most of their technological products without knowing how to make them. (Onwuejeogwu 1992, p.ix)

Decades after the above concern, another scholar captures the present realities of the dependency hangover:

We are still dependent upon the socio-cultural values of colonialists and we look up to them and follow the trends in the modes of dressing, language and such social communication - marking wedding anniversaries, birthday parties, naming ceremonies, medical treatment and the likes. They have become indispensable media of social intercourse and governance among us. Their religion has changed our world view of looking at life, superstition has lost ground and we now have divided ourselves permanently along religious lines, formal education now compliments and has even supplement traditional education as dominant agency of socialisation. (Ciboh 2005, p.116)

The colonial stronghold is also very evident in Nigeria's journalism education system. Rodney (2009, p.25) stresses that the "interpretation that under development is somehow ordained by God is emphasized because of the racist trend in European scholarship". He contends further that "an even bigger problem is that the people of Africa and other parts of the colonised world have gone through a cultural and psychological crisis and have accepted at least the European version of things (Rodney, 2009, p.25).

### **Theoretical framework**

This study is built on cultural imperialism theory. Cultural imperialism theory is a scenario where countries that are technologically and economically strong superintend over weaker of periphery that the domination by one nation over another may be direct or indirect based on mixture of political and economic controls.

Schiller (1976) and white (2003) cited by Okhaku and Ate (2008, pp.12 -13) outline key constructs of cultural imperialism thus: "modern world system"; a primitive concept which implies capitalism; "society"; a primitive concept which implies any county or community within specific geographic boundaries, considered to be less developed than the dominating centre ; "dominating centre of the system"; refers to developed countries or what has been commonly referred to in the discourse on the international flow of information as centre nations or western powers. contrary to the notion of

centre nations is that of peripheral nations- "developing countries", "developed nations", "third world ". or "less developed country"; and "values and structure"; refers to culture and actual organisation that originate from dominating centre and are foreign to the country considered to be less developed than the dominating centre.

Cultural imperialism destroys the cultural identity of a people. McQuail (1987, p.114) states that "notion of an imperialised cultural identity as a result of 'cultural imperialism' was first developed to apply to the more or less traditional societies of the developing world." the indirect control of journalism education even after years of independence by powerful countries against the weaker ones is a fine specimen of cultural imperialism theory. That justifies its relevance in this discourse.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts desk research approach in data collection. Desk research is carried out in the office by reference to organisation's records, published data, past research findings or any other sources which do not require face-to-face contact with subject or research or with representative of other data sources (Daramola and Daramola, 2011, p.38). The study used deductive research approach in interrogating research issues. Under this approach, "the researcher at first makes a mind-set of the desired construction and facts are going to be faced by the researcher while developing the whole research" (Obe, 2013, p.43). This research approach is very suitable for social science and judging human behaviour (Danny, 2009, cited in Obe, 2013).

### **4. FINDINGS**

The study finds that Nigeria's journalism curricular is a clone of western powers. And as such, it lacks the capacity to facilitate the socio-political development of the people. This finding agrees with Odozi (2014) earlier assertion that the skills gotten from foreign exposure are ideologically determined. Egbufor (2018) also confirms that such trainings were perceived to have been influenced by western patterns of education but lacked the ability to cope with ethical challenges and professional ability.

Findings also revealed that in the area of scholarly publication and referencing styles, Nigeria is playing second fiddle in its journalism education by following western standards hook, line and sinker. This development is counterproductive. Talabi, Adaja and Adefemi (2018, p.10) raise some fundamental

questions: why “is it that our publications are no more valid until they are certified by the West? Why should we continue to enrich their pockets and knowledge to our detriment? Why should they continue to sap our energy daily, dictate and dominate us?”

The situation has become so bad that African themselves are begging to have doubts about their capacity to develop their own environment. With such doubts, Rodney (2009, p.25) notes that we challenge our brothers who “say that Africa can develop through the development of its own people.”

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there are colonial nuances in Nigeria's journalism education system and have affected our identity and development as a people. An anthropologist, Onweojeogwu confirms this assertion when he insisted that “third-world peoples have a contribution to make to world civilisation, but it cannot come out of the part of cultures they have acquired from the people of the first and second world. It will come partly from what they are able to build up from materials mainly from their traditional and partly from part of cultures of others” (Onweojeogwu, 1992, p.xx).

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are put forward based on the findings from the discourse:

- A proactive and conscious attempt should be made by journalism educational stakeholders in Nigeria to de-westernize our curricular to make it more responsive to our ideological and cultural leanings of our society. The National Universities Commission, (NUC), Africa Council for Communication Education (ACCE), Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), Nigeria Press Council (NPC), Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) and The Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) among journalism educators at all level should come together to brainstorm and produce a culturally and ideologically friendly curricular with domestic materials for holistic development of the Nigerian society.
- Nigerian and African scholars should fine-tune their publishing and referencing architecture that is western oriented and dominated. Efforts

should be put in place by educational administrators to produce journals and scholarly works that can compete favourably to those in developed climes. This development calls for proper funding and celebration of indigenous research by all and sundry.

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