

Comparative Study of India and Nigeria Communication Policy

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ABSTRACT

A national communication policy enunciates the goals, objectives and functions of communication system and aims, at dovetailing these with the overall socio-economic, political and cultural development goals of the society. The Indian media policy is divided into “five year plans” for ease of implementation while for Nigeria there is no media policy in place to guide communication systems in Nigeria. The study made use of both primary and secondary sources in its methodology. The study concluded that a national communication policy to guide communication systems in a country is crucial for her overall development. The paper recommended that for Nigeria to have an acceptable communication policy that would fast track the expected development, there is the need to learn from the Indian National Communication Policy. Like India, Nigerian Communication Policy must be indigenously produced. India has not allowed foreign media materials to swamp the country and distort her tradition and cultural values.

Keyword: India, Nigeria, Communication policy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Communication is the dissemination of information and has been part and parcel of human existence and so very vital for individual survival. It is the foundation for all other fields of enquiry and is the vehicle for human action (Denton, 1990; Reddy, 2011). The system of dissemination of information in the present day has undergone great changes with the development of the state of the art technology and technological advancement in the field of mass communication. Media forms are a vital part of communication systems globally today and takes two essential forms – the print and electronic media. The basic function of the mass media is to provide information, education, instruction and entertainment to the people. The media also motivates people directly or indirectly in a community.

Media or communication policy is a set of principles and norms established to guide behaviour of communication systems and can also be defined as a set of laws, rules, regulations and traditions in the field of mass communication – the rules and regulations that govern the operation of newspapers, radio, television, video, and films. It is these rules and regulations that determine government media relationship and public access to media and telecommunication services of their choices and preference.

A national communication policy enunciates the goals, objectives and functions of communication system and aims, at dovetailing these with the overall socio-economic, political and cultural development goals of the society. It is carried out within the national environment and shaped by the socio-economic, political climate of the society. In essence the principal purpose of a national communication policy is to provide a favourable framework within which communication systems and technologies can be developed and utilized in a coordinated, consistent and systemic manner for the benefit of society (Kwame Boafo, 1986, p. 37).

According to Sarikakis (2004) cited in Johnson and Alao (2013, p. 50) media and communication policy refer to the general principles which guide the decision of the authorities usually government about the function of the 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, economic, infrastructural and social system within which public communication and the media system operate and function in. It is 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 harvest the benefits of the wellbeing of Nigerians. It is the definition and description of the media within the sophisticated and economic context of a given society. According to Balit and Ilboudo (1996):

Today, scholars are concerned about how development policies can best reflect overall priorities and what sort of national communication system encourages people’s participation, sharing of knowledge and skills at all

levels, and coordination of efforts among all partners involved in the development process.

According to Reddy (2011), policy denotes among other things, guidance for action and objectives; (b) a declaration of courses of action; and (c) a declaration of societal values. A policy may be general or specific, broad or narrow, simple or complex, public or private, written or unwritten, explicit, or implicit discretionary or detailed and quantitative or qualitative. That is why today on the agenda of most countries in Africa and one of the subjects high debated among intellectuals and policy makers is the subject of national development and communication policies. Kuo (1986, p. 1) in Akoja (2014), commenting on the complementary relationship between communication and national development observed that:

On one hand, communication is a fundamental social process underlying social change and development, while on the other, a communication system is an integrated part of the fabric of the society and is highly dependent on socio-economic development for its sustenance and growth.

The importance of a national communication policy for the development of any nation was stressed by Anaeto and Anaeto (2010, p. 30):

The lack of a clear cut national communication policy to guide communication systems within a country results in inadequate development of that country's communicative capacities and their appropriate utilization of communication resources for development.

1.2 Indian Media Policy

The debate on whether or not to have a media policy is an old one. Time and again policy, often called guidelines have been framed for different media activities, but a comprehensive media policy encompassing a holistic approach has never been attempted. Perhaps the idea of having guidelines and not a policy provides room for maneuvering and manipulating the media according to the convenience of the power that be (Prasad et al, 1996).

There has been a phenomenal expansion of mass media structures in the country since independence and more so during the last two decades in India. Apart from the traditional mass media, print media and the radio, the advent of the Television and subsequently Satellite Television, video and foreign Satellite channels through cable Television has completely changed the media scenario in the country as never before. This has been perceived as cultural invasion in many quarters since the programmes once available in the satellite channels are predominantly western and totally alien to the Indian culture and way of life. (Reddy, 2011).

1.3 Media Policy and Five Year Plans in India

India unlike Nigeria realized the importance of a media policy and thus developed her communication policy into five year plans.

The *first five year plan* (1950-56) recognized the necessity according to (Gupta and Dyal, pp. 55-56) to develop all the available methods of communication and that the people be approached through the spoken word. Above all, steps were taken to be taken to provide literature and information for the people in simple language and on a scale equal to the needs of the country.

The *second five year plan* document stressed that the plan has to be carried into every home in the language and the symbol of the people expressed in terms of their common needs and problems. It also outlined the measures for expansion of plan publicity through the mass media of communication. Intensification of the existing arrangements for bringing home the implications of rapid development and carrying the message of the plan to the masses throughout the country was proposed in the *third five year plan*.

The *fourth year plan* felt the need to inform the people in the rural area and particularly those in backward regions about the road contribution, marketing, the supply of credit and other inputs, so that the benefits of those programmes are so widely stressed.

Expansion of Television network to provide much needed support to education and to promote social economic development was stressed in the *fifth five year plan*.

From the *sixth year plan* onwards fund allocation for electronic media and particularly television progressively increased which led to massive expansion of television.

The objectives of the media policy in the *seventh five year plan* were: (i) national and emotional integration of various country segments of the country; (ii) utilization of the media as a means of development and social uplift; and (iii) dissemination of information and entertainment. The plan envisaged the objective of the television reaching the remotest parts of the country through a three tier service – primary service, national service and local service. The major thrust of the 7th plan relating to information and broadcasting sector was on raising the level of the consciousness of the people. It laid emphasis on skillful synthesis of traditional and folk forms of communication on one hand and modern audio visual media including Satellite communication on the other. The thrust of the *Eight Five year plan* has also been to consolidate the achievements of earlier plans by suitably auguring the production facilities at the existing centers and replacing equipment which has

outlived its useful life. The *Eight Five plan* visualized an unprecedented growth in terms of extension of current satellite service software schemes and production facilities. Even in the earlier five year plans the role of the media had been greatly emphasized to provide communication support and inform the general public about the objectives, targets and benefits of the plans.

The media policy in India today according to (UNESCO, n.d) is the outcome of India's media experiences during the last several decades. The components of this policy could be found in various legislations, instructions, decisions and statements of Government from time to time. The Indian constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression. Thus the freedom of the press is an act of faith with the state of India. The press has an important role in giving expression to national aspirations. Therefore, the government values its freedom and would impose no obligations on them. It is for the press itself to regulate its conduct having regard to obligations to the society. The government does not regard the press as a compulsive foe or a burden ally. In the common tasks of national development, the Government expects the press to extend the cooperation even being critical of it as occasions would demand. The media in India are therefore expected to voice their views freely. This is the basic philosophy that governs the communication process in India.

1.4 Media Policy in Nigeria

According to (Mgbejume, p. 48) mass media policies in Nigeria have been sensitive, undecided and unconcluded not only because of the diversity of Nigerian society but also because of the failure of majority of Nigerians and leaders to visualize the role of the mass media in the development of Nigeria (*West Africa*, 1977; Africa currents, 1975; Smart 1975; Mgbejume, 1991). Evidence of the lack of what the media should do for a developing Nigeria is found in Nigeria's 1979 constitution. The original draft failed to define the role of Nigeria media and guarantee their freedom during the post military regime, (Mgbejume, 1976). But after opposition from the Nigeria press and other Nigerians, a vague amendment to the draft constitution was made to protect the freedom of the press during the civilian regime (*West Africa*1977, p. 408). It is felt that right to freedom of expression is one of the most basic rights in a democratic society and it should be a right to which every Nigerian should be entitled to whether or not he is employed by the press (*West Africa*, 1977, p. 46).

The inconsistency in formulating mass media policies in Nigeria is also revealed in the statement by Alhaji Jose, former chairman and managing director of the *Daily Times*, and the then chairman of the Nigeria Television Authority. Jose distinguished between the colonial Africa press which was a tool for winning Africa independence and the post-independence press which he said should be directed towards national construction and development. He also said that, African press today could not use the strategy and weapons used against colonial governments (because) such sensational front page stories could create inter-tribal disturbances or violent demonstrations (*West Africa*1975, p. 405).

Group captain Samson Emeka Omerua, a onetime federal minister of information also confirmed the statement when he said in October 1984 during the silver jubilee celebration of television in Nigeria, that Nigeria press was only known for bringing down governments. He said the press in Nigeria has been antagonistic to the governments in power since the colonial era. Avoiding the creation of ethnic disturbances has been one of the most common warnings and reasons why several Nigerian leaders both at state and federal levels have threatened Nigerian journalists with arrests and detentions without trials. Mass media policies in Nigeria were not federally directed but mainly in the hands of state governments until July, 1975.

There is no denying the importance of policy in any organized society and system, policies are needed to provide direction for the communication programme of a nation, organization and even individuals. When Yakubu Gowon's administration was toppled (Oreh, 1976, p. 150; Mbejume, p. 49). In 1975, the Federal government took over the ownership of Nigeria's broadcasting media, the *New Nigerian Group* of Newspapers and acquired 60 percent shares of Daily Times.

In the wave of the take-over of 90 percent of Nigerian's mass media of communications (*West Africa*, 1977, the federal government said that it wanted to ascertain that (i) the newspapers... (made) constructive criticisms in their comments, but it was hoped that they too would see it necessary to serve the national interest and that they would take into consideration, at all times, in their reportage and commentary, the sensitivities of the Nigerian community and (ii) the broadcast media were taken over "so as to prevent Proliferation of the networks at the expense of the taxpayers money, (and) to effectively participate in the country's mass media to supplement its giant programmes, in educating the masses (*Daily Times*, Nov. 10, 1975).

Nigeria mass media policies have been directed mainly toward the unification of the country and to a lesser degree, toward the education of the masses.

According to Adekoya and Aljilore (2012), the birth of the Nigerian communication policy can be traced to the 7th of February 1987 at the seminar organized on national communication policy. The seminar which was held at the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), was organized by the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture in collaboration with a highly dedicated interdisciplinary group of university lecturers and

researchers appointed by the ministry and assisted by the Nigerian Institute of Journalism (NIJ) and eminent mass communicators in Nigeria.

There were 250 participants at the seminar from mass communication and related fields. During the six days event, 12 seminar sessions were conducted and 52 papers were commissioned in addition to another 24 papers at the panel of expert committee. To facilitate effective communication in Nigeria, the national communication policy document enunciated 10 cardinal objectives which are:

1. To identify critical or central organs media mechanisms or institutions of the Nigerian society that is involved in the development of Nigerian communication system, both internally and externally.
2. To provide guidelines for the mobilization and development of those institutionalized mechanism in (1) above to achieve national objective and aspirations.
3. To mobilize all structures in a society in a chain system relationship for the propagation of national goals and objectives.
4. To evolve a national and systematic parking of all communication media and resources for national goals.
5. To establish operational boundaries for the media
6. To promote and consolidate national interest.
7. To ensure better management of communication resources to facilitate development and nation building.
8. To harness Nigeria's measurable cultural wealth to develop an authentic Nigerian Culture, to cultivate a deep sense of patriotism in the Nigerian people and propagate worldwide distinctive national identity.
9. To further at home and abroad those cardinal principles upon which our nation and constitution are founded and which protect and enhance Nigeria's National interest and security in the international system.
10. To encourage creativity and promote indigenously rooted innovations for the collective good rather for individual expression.

In line with the objectives listed above boundaries of operation were allotted to the various media of communication then in existence in the country, these media are the broadcast media which include radio and television, and the print medium which include newspaper, magazine, books, posters, billboards, and hand bill (Adekoya and Aljilore).

2.0 Comparative Analysis of India and Nigerian Media Policy

The justification for this comparison is that both Nigeria and India belongs to the third world countries of the world. Also both India and Nigeria were colonized by Britain and they belong to the common wealth of nations.

Kwame Boafo (1986, p. 36) asserts that, the international communication scene during the 1950s and the 1960s was characterized by euphoria over the functions and impact of communication systems and resources in developing the newly emerging nations of third world. Communication was expected to play a significant role in bringing about a rapid transformation of the nations in political independence after the Second World War. Communication media and resources were seen as tools for social change and it was anticipated that development and "modernization" in the backward societies of the south would be concomitant transfer and utilization of communication and other technologies from the North and with the diffusion of innovation and messages through available communication systems. Communication was, indeed, assumed to be "the key that opens the door of change", (Rogers; Kwame Bafo, 1986, p. 36).

According to (UNESCO, n.d) the objectives of independent India have been set out in the constitution that came into force on the 20th of January, 1950. The directive principle of state policy enjoined on the states the duty of striving to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice – social economic and political – shall inform all the institutions of national life. The year 1950 also saw the establishment of the planning commission in the government of India. India thus is one of the first among the newly free countries to embark on planned development.

Free India chose not to opt for either the Capitalist free enterprise system or for the centrally planned set up of the Communist countries. The leaders of free India, under the constitution chose the third part of democratic socialism, within the framework of multi-party democracy, this provides for state ownership and control over the means of production and distribution in several areas along with a large area of economic operations left to private initiatives.

It is important to state clearly that the Indian Media Policy is compartmentalized into "Five Year Plans" detailing what is to be achieved in each of the Five years. This arrangement may have been responsible for the success of the Indian Media Policy. Unlike India, the Nigerian Communication Media Policy is bogus and did not follow the fashion of the Indian Communication Policy.

According to (Uwom and Alao, 2013), in Nigeria there is no single document tagged, "National Communication Policy" though different scholars have spoken on its importance to achieving the development objectives of the nation. However, there are laws guiding media practice in Nigeria like the National Broadcasting Commission Code (NBC), Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON), Nigeria Press Council (NPC) and Newspaper

Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), National Films and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), and also the National Communications Commission.

2.1 Media Content

Both nations encourage the adequate broadcast of local programmes and the broadcast of programmes in Indigenous languages. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) broadcast in English but the other NTA stations located in the states sometimes broadcast in indigenous languages. The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) also broadcast programmes mainly in English and indigenous languages at the regional level of the country. Similarly, state owned Radio Stations in the country also broadcast programmes in English and the Indigenous languages of the states. While the Nigerian policy cum the National Broadcasting Commission code states that a particular percentage for local to foreign programmes 60/40 (Uwom and Dayo, 2013), in India an important point which needs to be established with emphasis is that India has entirely been relying on herself in the matter of communication contents. Whether it is Radio, Television or Films, the programmes and materials have always been indigenously produced. She has not allowed foreign media materials to swamp the country and distort her tradition and cultural values.

2.2 Public Policy on Broadcasting and other Media

In the area of ownership, the media policy of Nigeria and India frowns at monopoly and encourages plurality of media ownership. This means that the countries do not subscribe to the concentration of media organizations in the hands of a few powerful people. However, the media policy of India specifies the need for Community Radio as opposed to Nigeria.

The Indian Mass Media today comprises over 300 TV channels (reaching 172 million households), 50,000 newspapers and magazines (with readership of over 250 million) around 300 radio stations, a feature films in 18 languages made every year, and a plethora of print, electronic, digital and telecommunication media. According to the latest FICC-Price-Waterhouse Cooper Report (2007) cited in Kumar (2014), the Indian and Media Entertainment Industry is worth over two hundred billion and is projected to grow at the rate of 18-20% per annum. State broadcasting has been witness to major changes over the last two decades. Doordashan, the national television network with 22 channels, and All India Radio, the National Radio Broadcaster are now managed by an autonomous corporation known as Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Trust). This means that it is an independent public service broadcasting service, less subject to state interference but still funded by the national exchequers.

The mushrooming of private cable and satellite channels in English and the Indian languages since 1990s has taken the whole entertainment industry by surprise. This unprecedented growth has been given a new impetus with the state authorities offering uplink facilities to both domestic and foreign networks and own earth stations. But most importantly, the impetus has come from digital compression and dramatic crash of satellite costs, in the opening up of the sector to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) the new opportunity of media companies to go public for raising capital.

The Cable Television Network Rules (1994), and the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act (1995). According to Kumari (2014) were amended to Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules 2000. The new rules have made it mandatory for all cable operators – over 30,000 of them in the entire country – to re-transmit at least two Doordarshan Channels (the national and metro channels) and the regional language channel in the prime band. Most cable operators gave little attention to those channels since they were free-to-air and did not fetch any revenue as the private satellite channels did. Further, cable operators were to be held responsible for programmes that were offensive as were as for other advertisements of tobacco and prohibits all advertisement which promote directly or indirectly, production, sale or consumption of cigarette, tobacco products, wine, alcohol, liquor or intoxicants. Also banned are infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles or infant foods. But cable operators ask how it is possible for them to stop overseas channels which carry such advertisements.

The amendment prohibits the transmission of any programme or channel if it is necessary to do in the national interest of the sovereignty or integrity of India or security of India or friendly relations of India with any foreign state or public order, seize any equipment or prohibit any programme or channel if it is not in conformity with prescribed programme and advertising codes...

On the other hand, according to Ojo et al (2013), the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) established in 1976 and 1933 are state owned television and radio stations funded by the control government. There are 45 NTA and 60 FRCN stations across Nigeria, with the headquarters in Abuja. The radio station reaches more than 100 million listeners, broadcasting in 15 languages, catering to the diverse broadcasting needs of multi-ethnic Nigeria. The corporation also has five of its stations streaming live audio on the internet, thus reaching millions in the world...

In Nigeria, both government and the private investors are participating actively. Government hitherto owned the moribund Daily Tunes, New Nigerian Newspapers (NNN) to Daily Scetch, Herald and the Standard Newspapers. The surviving ones are the Nigerian observer from to do state, voice from Benue state and the Triumph from Kano state are only grasping for breath.

While Indian Media Policy has encouraged the growth of private cable channels to boost the entertainment industry by amending the existing laws to create the enabling environment for private investment but with a caveat on advertisements on alcohol, tobacco, liquor etc. In Nigeria, the regulatory body on advertising – Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria has clearly underperformed in this direction. Also in the proposed Nigerian Communication Policy, Chapter 111 that deals with the print media subsection 4 states that:

The print media shall be used as a vehicle for national mobilization in support of policies and programmes aimed at improving the standard of living of Nigerians raising the level of consciousness and protection and defense of national interest.

According to Are (2006) the media is expected to educate, inform and entertain but it also expected to do it within the law. Similarly, security measures are imposed to protect society at large through measures which curtail rights and freedom, including that of the press. Security agencies too have to act within the confines of the law. Somehow, the national interest is expected to mediate these competing group and individual interests. The main pillar upon which the security and survival of Nigeria as a nation rests is that of national unity. It is to make Nigeria one that the country went into civil war between 1967 and 1970. Nigeria has continued to experience centripetal forces which threaten to pull the country apart at critical moments in her history. Some have accused the Nigerian media of sensational reporting, the promotion of ethnic and regional sentiments, accentuating the negative aspects which tend to divide rather than unite.

The depiction of marginalization, low representation of certain groups in specific sectors and other deficiencies tend to reduce the stake which certain individuals have in the country. The atomization of the Nigerian identity is one of the negative consequences of the way the media portrays the viability of Nigeria as country. This erodes public confidence and the commitment of the citizenry to a country whose survival are not sure of if they go by the information they receive from the media.

2.3 Funding

Uwom and Alao Funding (2013) posit that the Nigeria media policy states that public media will be funded through licence fees, grants and other industry charges; though the government through the ministry of information and communication funds the public media. However, funding in Nigeria is inadequate. One major critique of the report of the Nigerian communication policy is “the failure to address the funding of even the public broadcaster within the general framework of tackling the pervasive problem of sustainability, growth and development of programming, engineering and presentation in broadcasting. Conversely, the need for adequate funding is captured in the Indian communication policy and is vigorously pursued (Imesoimeso, 2015).

2.4 Agricultural/Health Communication

All India Radio has been the fore-runner in the process of implementing communication strategy being adopted by government. The Radio Rural Forum Experiment was conducted by the all India Radio at Poona during 1956. The project covered 156 villages where listening and discussion groups were organized in each of the villages. A programme of 30 minutes duration was broadcast on two days in a week covering agriculture and allied subjects to help promote rural development.

While the media policy of India recognizes the need for Community Radio, Nigeria Communication policy does not address the emergence of community broadcasters. It made mention of it but did not make it elaborate. It should be considered that some of these urban based media cannot get to the rural dwellers which constitute the majority of the population.

2.5 Interpersonal Communication

Realizing the value of interpersonal communication in the context of developmental publicity, the Directorate of field publicity was established in 1953 in India. It reaches the people through its 221 field units and seeks public support for national campaigns on plan development, family welfare, national integration and defence preparedness. Publicity against social evils like drinking, dowry etc. is done by the Directorate. The field units are provided with mobile vans organize film shows, photo exhibitions, song and drama programmes etc. oral communication like seminars, symposia, group discussion and debates are also organized by the field units. The units reach remote and hilly areas through foot marches, transporting the equipment even manually. While the India media policy recognizes the value of interpersonal communication it is unfortunate to state that there is no such thing in the Nigerian media policy.

The Song and Drama Division of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting established in 1954 has become the biggest live entertainment organization in the country. The Division has its departmental drama troupes. Besides, it utilizes the services of private registered parties which are specifically trained to disseminate information through folk art forms like drama. Composite programmes, folk recitals, puppet shows, ballets, religious discourses. There are nearly 400 private registered troupes in India, which on an average do 12,000 to 13,000 programmes in every year. There are similar song and drama units in the states which use the folk media. The use of traditional media in India for communication as described above has been a rewarding experienced foreign media material to swamp the country and distort their tradition and cultural values.

2.6 Conclusion

Communication is the dissemination of information and has been part and parcel of human existence. Media or communication policy is a set of principles and norms established to guide behaviour of communication systems and can also be defined as a set of laws, rules, regulations and traditions in the field of mass communication. A national communication policy enunciates the goals objectives and functions of communication systems and aims at dovetailing these with the socio-economic political and cultural development goals of the society. It is the definition and description of the media within the sophisticated and economic context of a given society. The Indian media policy is divided into “five year plans” for ease of implementation while for Nigeria, there is no media policy in place. May be this is one of the reasons for the under development of Nigeria. There is no denying the importance of policy in any organized society and system, Policies are needed to provide direction for communication programme of a nation, organizations and even individuals.

2.7 Recommendations

For Nigeria to have an acceptable communication policy that would fast track the development of the nation there is the need to learn from the Indian National Communication Policy.

- It is time for all stakeholders to break the jinx that has held captive the Nigerian communication policy from becoming realized.
- It must be expressly stated in the Nigerian communication policy that whether it is Radio, Television or films, the programmes and materials must be indigenously produced. This is what India has emphasized. She has not allowed foreign media materials to swamp the country and distort her tradition and cultural values.
- There is the urgent need to state elaborately in the Nigerian communication policy the need for community radios which can be used to get information to the rural dwellers who are the majority of the population.
- The radio forums should be established to broadcast programmes covering agriculture and health communication. This is what India has done.
- There is no-where in the proposed Nigerian communication policy where pains-taken efforts were made to emphasize the value of interpersonal communication. India has done this by establishing the Directorate of field publicity in 1953. This directorate is used to reach the people through its 221 field units and seeks support for national campaigns on plan development, family welfare, national integration and defence preparedness. Publicity against social evils like drinking dowry, etc. Is done by the Directorate.

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