

**COURSE
GUIDE**

BCJ 433

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

Course Team

Nsiakn Senam, PhD

(Course Developer/Writer) - University of Uyo, Nigeria



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

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National Open University of Nigeria

Headquarters

University Village

Plot 91, Cadastral Zone Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway

Jabi, Abuja

Lagos Office

14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way

Victoria Island, Lagos

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng

URL: www.nou.edu.ng

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The course discusses the nature of public service broadcasting, its history and its application as an important media policy option in democratic settings. Students learn the differences between public service broadcasting and other forms of media operational policies options around the world. It also discusses programme policies and philosophies of public service broadcasting in relation to press freedom and other related issues in media pluralism and democracy.

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INTRODUCTION

BCJ 433: Public Service Broadcasting is a two-credit hour course for undergraduate students of Broadcasting and Media Studies. The material has been developed with the Nigerian context in mind. This Course Guide gives you information on the organisation and requirements of the course.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE

This Course Guide is designed to show you what you will be doing in this course and to prepare you adequately for the task ahead. It is essential that you read the course guide carefully and be familiar with its contents. This will enable you to get your work properly done and get the best out of the course.

Public Service Broadcasting equips you with a deep knowledge of the history, nature and demands of broadcasting that mainly hinges on governance and public affairs in a democracy. It also gets you acquainted with broadcast programme policies and philosophies or broadcasting in relation to governance, democracy and press freedom.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To achieve its aim BCJ 433 has specific objectives. The unit objectives are at the beginning of each unit. I advise that you thoroughly read through the various unit objectives before you start reading the entire units. You can also refer to the

unit objectives as you read in order to make for easy self-assessment and seamless understanding of the course contents.

Below are the general objectives of BCJ 433 (Public Affairs Broadcasting). When you read the objectives, start building up your mind to what to expect at the end of studying the course. The broader objectives of Public Affairs Broadcasting indicate the knowledge level on this course expected of you, even in the course of studying this course. Thus, on a successful completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- define broadcasting
- define public service broadcasting
- understand the difference between public service broadcasting and other forms of broadcasting
- understand the purpose of public service broadcasting
- know the essential laws regulating public service broadcasting
- understand the role of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code in public service broadcasting
- be acquainted with ethical codes of public service broadcasting.

COURSE AIMS

The aims of this course are to help you understand the nature and scope of public service broadcasting as well as applicable ethics and codes of public service broadcasting. This broad aim will be achieved by:

1. introducing you to public service broadcasting;
2. introducing you the fundamental principles and issues in public service broadcasting;
3. acquainting you with the basic demands of a public service broadcaster.

WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercises for which you need a pen, a note book, a copy of the National Broadcasting Code among other materials listed in this guide.

At the end of the unit, you will be required to submit assignments for assessment while at the end of the course, you will write a final examination.

COURSE MATERIALS

The major materials you will need for this course are:

1. Study units
2. Assignment file
3. A copy of Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists
4. The National Broadcasting Code
5. Relevant textbooks including those listed under each unit.
6. You will also need critically listen to radio and watch television regularly.

STUDY UNITS

There are 6 Units of 3 Modules in this course. They are listed below:

MODULE 1: COMMUNICATION AND THE MASS MEDIA

Unit 1: Nature of Communication

Unit 2: The Broadcast Media

MODULE 2: PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Unit 1: Broadcast Media and the Public

Unit 2: Public Service Broadcasting and the Public Service Media

MODULE 3: BROADCAST MEDIA AND THE WATCHDOG CONSTRUCT: WHO WATCHES THE WATCHDOG

Unit 1: Public Service Broadcasting and the Watchdog construct

Unit 2: Public Service Broadcasting, Commercialism and Government
Control

TEXTBOOKS AND REFERENCES

A number of books and other materials have been recommended for a good understanding of this course. You will see them at the end of each unit. Indeed, they are the books the course developer consulted while the course material was being prepared. You are advised to obtain them and other related ones for further reading.

THE ASSIGNMENT FILE

Two kinds of assessment are involved in the course: tutor-marked assignments and a written examination. Although the answers to the Self-Assessment Exercise (SAEs) are not meant to be submitted, they are as important as the tutor-marked questions. The SAEs give you an opportunity to assess yourself and know to what extent you understand each topic. On the other hand, the tutor-marked assignments are to be answered and submitted for marking. The work you will submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total score.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

You will be required to submit a specific a number of TMAs. Each unit in this course has a TMA. You should attempt all the questions, and you will be assessed on all of them but the best four performances will be used for your 30% TMA score.

After you have completed each assignment, send it together with a tutor-marked assignment form, to your tutor. Please ensure that each assignment reaches your tutor before the deadline for submission.

If you have a genuine reason for not completing your work on time, contact your tutor to see if he/she can give you an extension. Normally, extensions may not be granted after the deadline. Since a commitment to deadline is the soul of

the journalistic enterprise, broadcast journalism students are trained to meet deadlines.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination for BCJ 433: Public Affairs Broadcasting will be a test of three hours, which will carry a score of 70%. The examination will be set from all the topics covered, and will reflect the kind of self-assessment exercises and tutor-marked questions you encountered. You should revise the entire course and review all your self-assessment exercises and tutor-marked assignments before the examination.

COURSE MARKING SCHEME

The actual marking scheme for this course shall comprise assignments and the final examination.

Assignment: Four assignments will be given. The four assignments will be marked, but only the best three will count for 30% of course marks.

Final Examination: The final examination shall hold towards the end of the semester. The examination will carry a total of 70% of course marks.

Total: Both the assignments (30%) and the final examination (70%)
Will make up a total of 100% of the course marks.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

The various Units, the number of weeks it would take you to complete them and the relevant assignments are outlined as follows:

MODULE 1: COMMUNICATION AND THE MASS MEDIA

Unit 1: Nature of Communication

Weeks 1 – 2 Assignment

Unit 2: The Broadcast Media

Weeks 3 – 4 Assignment

MODULE 2: PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Unit 1: Broadcast Media and the Public

Weeks 5 - 6 Assignment

Unit 2: Public Service Broadcasting and the Public Service Media

Weeks 7 – 10 Assignment

MODULE 3: BROADCAST MEDIA AND THE WATCHDOG CONSTRUCT: WHO WATCHES THE WATCHDOG

Unit 1: Public Service Broadcasting and the Watchdog construct

Weeks 11 -14 Assignment

Unit 2: Public Service Broadcasting, Commercialism and Government Control

Weeks 15 – 18 Assignment

Revision Weeks 19 – 21

Examination Week 23

HOW TO GET THE MOST OF THIS COURSE

You need both material and non-material things for this course. The material things you need include:

- i. Dictionary of Mass Communication
- ii. A good dictionary of English, e.g. Oxford Advanced Learners of English
- iii. National Broadcasting Code
- iv. The recommended textbooks on broadcasting

The non-material things you need for this course include:

- i. At least four uninterrupted hours per week
- ii. Self-discipline and commitment to excellence
- iii. Integrity
- iv. Hard work and focus

MODULE 1: COMMUNICATION AND THE MASS MEDIA

Unit 1: Nature of Communication

Unit 2: The Broadcast Media

UNIT 1: NATURE OF COMMUNICATION

Contents

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Contents
 - 3.1 Definition and explanation of Communication
 - 3.2 Elements of Communication
 - 3.3 Types of Communication
 - 3.4 Mass Communication
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The whole sphere of human endeavour in the society revolves around communication. No social endeavour succeeds without communication. This justifies why the study of communication is always important at all levels and in all perspectives. The heterogeneous nature of the society then necessitates the use of the Mass Media and the channels of communication so that messages can be easily disseminated to the mass audience effectively.

To fully understand the nature, function and practice of communication, broadcasting becomes very outstanding because of its advantages over other forms of communication practice. In broadcasting, human beings relate more directly with human beings (audience) than in other forms of mass media practice. This also justifies the significance or proper understanding of the nature of communication by both broadcasting students and the broadcasters.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the nature of communication
- understand the elements of communication
- explain how the various elements of communication relate to broadcasting
- understand the types of mass media, with particular attention to the broadcast media.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF COMMUNICATION

Much as communication exists at all time with human beings, takes place wherever there is life and enhances human efficiency, is it difficult to say exactly what it is. Many communication scholars and other professionals have at various times attempted precise definitions of communication. These attempts have always been yielding good fruits, yet the “good fruits” are not good enough to garnish communication with a universally accepted definition.

Immediately the word communication is mentioned in a literate society, people tend to have a fair idea of what the speaker or writer intends to say, yet they may not really picture out in their brain what communication is. However, where there is effective communication there is understanding among the participants in the communication situation.

It is humanly impossible to give an all-embracing definition of communication. The easiest way to define communication is to attach the definition to a particular case or situation. To make for easy understanding of what communication is, the following definitions and explanations are instructive:

1. Communication is the transmission of idea, message or information from the source to the receiver. Transmission here indicates that there is a starting point and destination principally occupied by the source and the receiver respectively.
2. Communication is the expression of feelings or experience. In this case the source may not really have a particular person in mind as the receiver. The person that perceives the message is automatically the receiver.
3. Communication is “the transmission of a message from a source to a receiver” (Baran, 2007, p. 4). Baran goes on to cite Laswell (1948) as stressing that a convenient way to describe communication is to answer the questions: Who say what? Through which channel? To whom? With what effect?

4. Communication is the transmission of ideas, knowledge, belief or attitude from one person to another within a given social organization or situation. In this case, communication is clearly presented as a process.
5. Communication is “a social interaction in which the source transmits a message to the receiver who assimilates the message and responds with appropriate feedback to the extent of altering the communication behaviour of both the source and the receiver” (Senam, 2022, p. 2). The definition has broadened the concept of communication to encompass environment interaction and social behaviour.

The process of selecting and sending the message is called encoding while the process of perceiving, understanding and assimilating the message is called decoding. Encoding is usually done by the source while decoding is usually done by the receiver. Note that the source and the receiver can exchange roles where the communication is interactional. Both encoding and decoding involve intellectual activity called psycho-cognitive process.

In a single communication transaction, the source can become the receiver and vice versa. This is usually brought about by feedback. Feedback is indispensable when communication is interactional. At this level communication involves cognitive, logical and psychomotor processes which bring about understanding among the communicators. Cognitive process has to do with the mental process of attaching meaning to the signal or code received. Logical process has to do with reasoning that brings about understanding while

psychomotor process has to do with perception and registering the signal or code in the brain for processing.

3.2 ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

Many components and factors work together to complete the communication transaction which ultimately results in meaning sharing. The basic ones are:

- (i) **Source:** The source is the person who originates the message, normally after selecting and processing the message intended to be transmitted to the other entity called receiver. The source can sometimes be referred to as the sender or the encoder. Source also means where the message emanates from while decoder means the person who transforms the message into an understandable sign and symbol system called the code.
- (ii) **Context:** This relates to the place, time, setting and situation that prompt the communication.
- (iii) **Message:** This is the code stimulus or the actual product or contents that the source sends to the decoder.
- (iv) **Channel/Medium:** This is the vehicle that conveys the goods (message) or the way through which the message travels to the receiver. It could be through the sound wave (for spoken words), through the light waves (for visual messages), air current which decoder serves as olfactory channels carrying messages or stimuli to the nose etc.

- (v) Receiver: The receiver perceives the source's message and translates or interprets it into a form that eventually makes meaning to the receiver. This process is called decoding. The receiver at various instances could be called the decoder, audience etc.
- (vi) Feedback: This is the reaction or response that the receiver makes that shapes and alters the subsequent messages of the source.
- (vii) Noise: Literally noise is anything that interferes with the delivery of the message to the receiver. In other words, noise is an unwanted message or stimulus that interferes with or alters the intended meaning of the source.
- (viii) Feed Forward: A feed forward is a sort of "message before a message". It is a signal, stimulus or cue that gives a clue on the upcoming message.

3.3 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication can be broadly categorized into two:

- (i) Personal communication
- (ii) Mass communication

Personal communication could be:

- (i) Intra-personal communication, where the communicator communicates to himself or herself. That is the communicator is both the source and the receiver. Example is when a person "thinks aloud", soliloquizes or addresses himself or herself.

(ii) Inter-personal communication, a communication takes place between two persons or among many persons. In this type of communication, the source is distinct from the receiver, although they can exchange roles if the communication is interactional. Example of inter-personal communication include: group communication, public communication, dyadic communication etc. Dyadic communication is a type of inter-personal communication that involves two people at a time. It is otherwise referred to as two-person communication; e.g., doctor-patient communication, employer-applicant communication, lawyer-client communication etc. With the emergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs), the use of technological devices is not only applicable to mass communication, but also to inter-personal communication. With the ICTs, the use of cell phone, the email etc. for communications between persons who are not physically together is very common. It is only in intra-personal communication that technological devices are not necessary.

MASS COMMUNICATION, on the other hand is a type of communication in which the source communicates to a heterogenous audience simultaneously through a mass medium. It is a “message communicated through a mass medium to a larger number of people” (Bittner, 2004, p. 11). The mass media are indispensable institutions in mass communication. The word “mass” mainly predicates three things:

- (i) The non-personal nature of the communicator or source.
- (ii) The heterogeneity of the audience or receivers.
- (iii) The simultaneity of the message reception.

The mass media are the channels through which mass communication messages pass to the audience. They are therefore intermediaries between the mass communicator and the audience; that is, between the source and the receiver. Two peculiarities are obvious here:

- (i) Reaching a large number of people virtually at the same time.
- (ii) Use of technological devices.

There are two broad categories of mass media:

- (i) The print media, e.g. newspaper, magazine, book etc.
- (ii) The electronic media, e.g. radio, television etc.

The mass media have many characteristics which include:

- (i) Mass media messages are designed for a large audience.
- (ii) The mass media messages are transient or fleeting.
- (iii) Mass media messages are culture-bound and, to some extent, affected by time, season, environment and circumstances.
- (iv) Mass media transmit messages that are pre-planned and produced.
- (v) Mass media transmit messages that pass through many persons or personal technically referred to as gate-keepers.
- (vi) The mass media make use of delayed feedback mechanism except in live interactive broadcast programmes.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Communication is so central in the society that neither human beings nor human endeavours can survive without communication. The role played by communication in the society affects every aspect of human life and social activities. For this reason, communication harmonizes the various facets of the society and make out meaningful output to citizens. It creates a strong synergy between the various organs of the state and the governed. Communication also encourages and makes room for accountability in the society because, it is through communication that meaningful information is transmitted which in turn, serves as the gateway to self-examination, caution and accountability. Generally, communication engenders all-encompassing functions in the society.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, the foundation has been laid for you to understand the basics of the course BCJ 433 – Public Service Broadcasting – by first leading through communication, the main stem on which public service broadcasting grows. Note that communication serves like a vehicle which conveys finished products from the manufacturers and sellers to the consumers. In this case, while communication is the vehicle, the message is the goods and the receiver is the consumer. So as much as vehicle and transportation are important in an economy, so is communication in human survival.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Communication is indispensable in human survival. Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Baran, S. J. (2007). *Introduction to mass communication: Media literacy and culture* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Co. (Inc.).

Bittner, J. (2004). *Mass communication: An introduction* (6th ed.). Eaglewood: Prentice-Hall Int'l Inc.

Senam, N. (2022). *Mass media law and ethics* (4th ed.). Uyo: Inela Ventures and Publishers Ltd.

UNIT 2: THE BROADCAST MEDIA

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Contents
 - 3.1 Broadcasting in Nigeria
 - 3.2 Functions of the Radio
 - 3.3 Functions of the Television
 - 3.4 Broadcasting and the Law
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The broadcast media occupy a significant space in mass communication. They are very important in the contemporary society, especially now that fancy and aesthetics form part of the expanded social needs of members of the society. In addition to providing histories with a variety of information, entertainment and education, the broadcast media influence culture and help define social reality (McQuail, 2007). The broadcast media also function as an important component

of the economic system in the society. The fundamental role of the broadcast media in the society makes public service broadcasting an important genre of broadcasting and broadcast studies.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- trace the history of broadcasting in Nigeria.
- explain the functions of the radio in the society.
- understand the function of the television in the society.
- explain the need for and implications of the law in broadcasting.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 BROADCASTING IN NIGERIA

Broadcasting is a recent development in mass communication practice in Nigeria. This is due to the fact that broadcasting generally was introduced in Nigeria after the print media had conveniently settled in the country. Many British colonies made their first contact with broadcasting through the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). In 1924, BBC's Director-General, Lord Reith conceived the idea of Empire Broadcasting from London to the British territories overseas. Nigeria was no exception in this plan, hence the advent of broadcasting in the country.

Broadcasting came to Nigeria in stages. The first stage was the induction of wired broadcasting, more popularly known as Radio Distribution Service (RDS). It was a service which provided for the relay of programmes by means of wires connected to head speakers installed in the homes of subscribers. This distinguished from wireless broadcasting which is the transmission of programmes intended for reception by means of Radio (Hertzian) waves.

A rediffusion service did not usually originate programmes because the programmes were produced by BBC staff in London and relayed or sent to other commonwealth countries for further relaying through the rediffusion services.

Broadcast era started in Nigeria when the BBC launched the world's first regularly scheduled short waves service on December 19, 1932 (Senam, 2022). The aim of the service was to develop political, cultural and economic link between the United Kingdom and Anglo-phone countries under British colonial rule. Also, within the same 1932, a monitoring station was opened in Lagos and the station became the relayed eyes and ears of the BBC. Two years afterwards, proposal to establish the system in densely populated areas like Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Kano was accepted. The rediffusion service was confined to re-broadcast of BBC programmes. Thus, the main line of duty of the Radio Distribution Service (RDS) was to relay BBC programmes, but in the evenings. The RDS stations were under the then Post and Telegram (P and T) Department.

A new dawn was unshared into broadcasting in Nigeria with the establishment in 1959 of National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) which became

the first public broadcasting corporation to have existed in any British colony. It was modeled after the BBC with national and regional organizations. The 1956 Ordinance was amended and passed into law in 1961 to give birth to the National Broadcasting Service (NBS), a substitute to the NBC. The NBC, NBS remained the official public broadcasting outfit in Nigeria until its restructuring and decentralization which, through Decree No. 8 of 1978, gave birth to the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria which is still in existence till date (Senam, 2022). Like the NBC and the NBS, the FRSC had gone through a series of reorganization to reflect and satisfy the government in power. This notwithstanding, the nine-point objectives of the FRCN as a public corporation has been to:

- (i) provide efficient broadcasting services to the whole federation of Nigeria;
- (ii) provide a professional and comprehensive coverage of culture through broadcasting; to promote cultural growth through research into indigenous culture and disseminate the results of such research;
- (iii) contribute to the development of the Nigerian society, and to promote national unity by ensuring a balanced presentation of views from all parts of Nigeria;
- (iv) ensure the prompt delivery of accurate information to the people;
- (v) provide opportunities for free enlightened and responsible discussion of important issues, and to provide a two-way contact between the public and those in authority;

- (vi) provide special broadcasting services in the field of education and in all other areas where the national policy calls for special action;
- (vii) promote the orderly and meaningful development of broadcasting in Nigeria through technical improvements, the training of appropriate professionals, production of programmes in the country;
- (viii) promote research into various aspects of the communication media and their effects on the Nigerian society;
- (ix) ensure that facilities and techniques of broadcasting in Nigeria keep pace with developments in the world of communication.

Television broadcasting was introduced into Nigeria when radio seemed to have reasonably settled. The government of the day seemed satisfied and somehow complaisant apparently because the radio gave them the necessary socio-political tool for greater achievements. This action by the government (i.e., feeling fulfilled and comfortable with the establishment and operation of the radio) paved way for the regional government to initiate television broadcasting in the country. There is the obvious tendency to consider the television in Nigeria as a child of conflict. The reason is that Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) which was later called Western Nigeria Television Service (WNTS) was the first television station in Nigeria, and in fact Africa, came into being under a tensed political atmosphere on 31st October, 1959.

The establishment of WNTV by the first premier of the then Western Region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was mainly politically motivated because the premier was

denied fair access to the federal radio (Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN) because he was the leader of the opposition party, Action Group (A. G.). Given the fact that the establishment of the WNTV was politically motivated, it served as a potent instrument of political propaganda, political vendetta and regional pride. This tendency seemed to have overlooked the inaugural statement of the region's premier and father of the WNTV, Chief Obafemi Awolowo who said that the WNTV was established to play a major role in enhancing peace, high standard of education and serve as a key to progress and national development. Political motivation notwithstanding, the WNTV ventured successfully and became the pride of the region and the nation as a whole. Unfortunately, despite the giant strides of the WNTV, political interest, regional consciousness, nepotism, ethnicity and other undesirable social tendencies obstructed the television from achieving all its lofty aims and initial aspirations.

Despite whatever shortcoming of the WNTV, it played a fundamental role in the history of television broadcast as well as educational broadcasting in Nigeria.

- (i) It succeeded in breaking the jinx in which the television was hitherto considered a "magic box" and the idea of its being established in Nigeria was a mirage.
- (ii) It decongested the radio, particularly the FRCN.
- (iii) It gave a new face to national and political consciousness.

On April 1, 1962, the central government launched its television service under the call signal, Nigerian Television Service (NTS), which became an integral

part of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and the call signal was changed to NBC TV in 1967. From 1967, the television service experienced a number of problems which ranged from the problem of frequency allocation, owing to too many illegal stations, to lack of indigenous programmes as well as bureaucratic problems arising the struggle by three ministries – Information, P and T (Post and Telegraph Services) and communication – over who has the upper hand in running the NTS, NBC-TV. On April 1, 1976, the federal government took over all the television stations including the NBC-TV but allowed watch station to function under its own governing boards until 1st April, 1977 when the decree establishing the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) was promulgated. The Decree empowered the NTA to operate as a public corporation in the interest of Nigeria and to render independent and impartial television broadcasting. The NTA remains the only federal government-owned television service till date.

SELF ASSESSMENT

To what extent would you justify the assertion that there is the obvious tendency to consider the television in Nigeria as a child of conflict?

3.2 FUNCTIONS OF THE RADIO

In a setting of mostly illiterate, poor and rural communities of most Third World countries, radio broadcasting is the most effective medium of mass

communication as it transcends geographical, linguistic and other traditional barriers (Nwanze, 2003). It is a very effective medium of reaching the masses, mostly the grassroots. This is so because the print media have limited reach and audience as they are restricted to the educated people and are mainly circulated in urban areas. Also, television has limited audience compared to the radio, and this adds to the advantages and benefits of the radio over the print media and the television.

Radio broadcasting therefore remains the most effective mass communication medium available mainly due to the low cost of radio sets and the fact that radio programming in Nigeria today is increasingly accommodating the local languages of the respective audience of the numerous stations spread across the country.

Other factors which make the radio more effective than other media include its portability, availability in most homes; indeed, there are usually more than one radio sets in most homes in Nigeria. There is also the advantage of instantaneous effect of radio, its mass outreach, its sensitivity to peculiar socio-cultural and religious character of its audience, the simplicity of the technical process of operating a radio set, and the fact that radio can be operated without the epileptic power supply system in the country.

Radio broadcasting is an effective tool of mass mobilization and the socialization of a people culturally, politically and economically. It is a potent factor

in the enhancement and acceleration of development. Radio also readily, easily and effectively lends itself to the oral culture of African communities.

3.3 FUNCTIONS OF THE TELEVISION

The television is a very potent medium of Mass communication. As a result of its ability to transmit sound, vision and motion at the same time, the television is a powerful medium for mass mobilization. It also has other advantages which include:

- (i) Instant and simultaneous access to an immense audience.
- (ii) High credibility and nationwide scope. The credibility of the television mainly hinges on its ability to transmit sound that is matched with vision and motion.
- (iii) Conveys status on personalities and issues.
- (iv) Increase political participation.
- (v) Helps in socio-political agenda setting.

It must be noted that the effectiveness of the television as a mass communication medium depends on factors such as availability of television sets, power supply situation, availability of local programmes etc. The unfortunate side of the scenario is that, the Nigerian situation does not guarantee these: television set remains a luxury to many homes, power supply in the country is epileptic, the cost of producing local programmes is far higher than the cost of procuring foreign

programmes for airing etc. These factors constitute a serious setback for the television to discharge its functions in the society effectively.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Discuss the functions of the radio and the television in the society and highlight their advantages over each other.

3.4 BROADCASTING AND THE LAW

The broadcast media, like other mass media constitute a potent institution in any society, be it modern or primitive. This then creates the need for a body of law to guide the operation of the broadcast media. The law is a central point of peace and order in the society. The mass media generally cannot operate in isolation from regulatory bodies guiding their operation since they are an institution within the society governed by law. The philosophy that guided the development of broadcasting was based on localism. Broadcast stations thus started as public corporations. The intension then was that broadcast station were to be integral part of the communities and be responsive to the needs of the local residents.

Over the years, laws have been enacted to favour broadcasting as companion to local residents and corporate citizens of the communities. In Nigeria broadcasting was established by law under the colonial administration with the enactment of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service Ordinance (1951). The Ordinance evolved into the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation in 1957 through Ordinance No.

39 of 1956 which later evolved into the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC). As for the television broadcast, the first television station in the country was the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) established in Ibadan in 1959 by the then Premier of the Western Region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

Among the various mass media, the broadcast media have always been a source of great worry to governments. Two reasons can be advanced for this:

- (i) With the power of the airwaves, governments want what is in their best interest to be broadcast in the way that is best suitable for the government than for the public good.
- (ii) Given the peculiar characteristics of broadcast media, broadcasting greatly influences public opinion to a high concern of government.

Government control of broadcasting has always involved more than ownership; it extends beyond government-owned to include privately-owned broadcast media (Senam, 2022). Even in advanced democracies, broadcasting is subjected to government regulation, which however varies in degree from country to country. In Nigeria, prior to the promulgation of Decree No. 43 of 1992 on Privatization and Commercialization of Broadcast station, the ownership, operation and management of broadcast stations were basically an exclusive reserve of public corporation. The primary interest here was to satisfy the needs of the people rather than the political and economic aspirations of owners and operators, which is the case in the contemporary broadcasting in the country. This does not, in any

way, vitiate the fact that the evolution of broadcasting in Nigeria has a strong link with political, economic and cultural factors.

Currently the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is the corporate body saddled with responsibility of regulating and controlling the establishment and operation of broadcasting generally in Nigeria. The NBC was established by Decree No. 38 of 1992 – the National Broadcasting Commission Decree – by the Federal military government of General Ibrahim Babangida. On establishment, the NBC was vested with so many responsibilities relating to broadcasting. According to Section 2 (i), the commission's responsibilities include:

- (i) Receiving, processing and considering applications for the ownership of radio and television services, direct satellite broadcast and any other medium of broadcasting.
- (ii) Recommending applications through the minister to the president for the grant of radio and television licenses.
- (iii) Regulating and controlling the broadcast industry receiving and investigating complaints from individuals and corporate bodies regarding the contents of the broadcast and the conduct of a broadcasting station; uploading the principles of equity and fairness in broadcasting.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Broadcasting is a very powerful genre of mass communication. It is the most audience-friendly and interactive form of mass communication. The impact of

broadcasting is being felt everywhere in the society. The broadcast media have the advantage of breaking barriers to transmit messages to the audience, even in areas that are not easily accessible to human beings. The ability of the broadcast media to appeal to both the sense of sight (eyes) and hearing (ears) positions the broadcast media at a greater light of advantage above other media of mass communication.

The Nigerian broadcast industry has witnessed a lot of changes and transformation, both in terms of structural development and contents of broadcast. In terms of law, it has witnessed a lot of legal changes which have brought broadcasting to its present state of liberal and commercialized practice. There is a sharp departure from the re-diffusion and empire radio service to the present satellite and digital-based broadcast services in Nigerian which have enhanced massive transmission as well as revolutionized broadcasting in Nigeria is well seated in the world in line with the global village construct.

5.0 SUMMARY

Broadcasting in Nigeria is highly regulated now, and as such, there is order and a high level of professionalism in the industry. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is the corporate body saddled with the responsibility of regulating broadcasting in Nigeria. In this unit you have learnt the various phases of broadcasting in Nigeria beginning from the colonial era system of re-diffusion to

the present era of satellite and digital broadcasting system. You have also been led effectively into understanding the functions of the radio and the television as well as the role of the law in broadcasting in Nigeria.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- a. Discuss the socio-political antecedent of television broadcasting in Nigeria.
- b. Discuss the role of the law in broadcasting in Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 2:PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Unit 1: Broadcast Media and the Public

Unit 2: Public Service Broadcasting and the Public Service Media

UNIT 1: BROADCAST MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public broadcasting is basically one of the different aspects of broadcasting that cover the functions performed by broadcasters. These functions are

performed by giving particular attention to beats in the various government establishments and other areas of significance to the audience. Public service broadcasting is concerned with packaging and transmitting broadcasting contents within government establishments which include executive, legislature and judicial arms of government by broadcasters.

Apart from law and ethics which govern broadcasting generally, certain principles peculiar to public information management and order also regulate the activities of public affairs broadcasters. The principles constitute the basis for the social responsibility of Nigerian broadcasters in disseminating broadcast contents affecting the government to members of the society (the audience). These principles stem from the fact that most government information is regarded as being sensitive and as such, classified. Public service broadcasters therefore have the obligations and civil responsibility to the government or the state, and are duty-bound to project government against anarchy, revolution, civil disorder or disloyalty by the citizens. The conscious effort of broadcasters to protect the interest, operation and success of government as well as balancing same public interest becomes imperative. This constitutes the whole gamut of public service broadcasting.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to comfortably:

- understand social responsibilities and ethics of public broadcasting;

- explain the nexus between broadcasting and public interest;
- understand the duties of a broadcaster to the public;
- explain the role of public broadcasting in socialization.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ETHICS

The broadcaster's social responsibility hinges on professional ethics. In every profession, ethics is usually designed from among the professional circle to guide and encourage acceptable behaviour by members of the profession. The emphasis of social responsibility and ethics is usually on the moral stance and rational judgement of the broadcaster. Ethics generally is a moral philosophy concerned with the standards of good or bad conduct, rightness or wrongness of an action. Ethics is self-legislation as opposed to official or government legislation through outside compulsion which is characteristic of law (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012).

The basic tenets which guide social responsibility and ethical dimension of broadcasting include accepting and carrying out certain societal duties, setting high professional standards of truth, accuracy, objectivity, balanced presentation, fairness, self-regulation in line with the law representation of divergent view points and accountability to the audience. They are basically the soft obligations that enable the public service broadcaster to bring about peace and order in the society.

As a matter of importance, social responsibility and ethical demands of broadcasting strongly detest and discourage the following:

- (i) Presentation of biased contents
- (ii) Invasion of people's privacy
- (iii) Dishonest or careless presentation of information
- (iv) Violation of public taste and decency
- (v) Hoarding or suppressing of harmless vital information that would guide the audience in arriving at a rational discernment.
- (vi) Broadcasting of divisive contents or contents that breed internal strife in the society.

Social responsibility in broadcasting generally makes broadcasters be accountable and enables them fulfil their civic duties. This means the action of individual broadcaster must be of benefit to the society and must create a balance between economic and socio-political wellbeing. This approach to professional responsibility should be incorporated into daily actions or decisions, particularly the ones that would direct effect on other persons and the environment as a whole.

3.2 BROADCASTING AND PUBLIC INTEREST

Broadcasting is the transmitting of messages through electronic media to a mass audience who receive the messages simultaneously or virtually simultaneously. It is a plausible portrayal of the society to the society with aesthetics and exaggerating visuals. A broadcaster is therefore an air-wave

professional who is engaged in the holistic process of gathering, processing, packaging and disseminating broadcast contents to the audience in a bid to satisfy the information needs of the audience.

In broadcasting, public interest is the core of media contents. Thus, where the media contents do not satisfy the interest of the public, they serve little or no useful purpose. Public interest means the concern, significant and meaningful desire and information needs of members of the society, especially those who perceive the broadcast media content. Public interest lies in the broadcast media engendering a safe, healthy and functional society through media contents. The press complaint commission code defines public interest as including, but not limited to, detecting and exposing crime or serious impropriety and preventing the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual organization. Public interest is also the holistic right to know available to every member of the society. There is no doubt some degree of public interest in freedom of expression in any democracy.

Broadcasting contents that satisfy the public's right to know is central to public service broadcasting. Public interest broadcasting, can be considered as the antithesis of Media's darker side which includes propaganda sensationalism, censorship etc. public service broadcast journalism is often equated with the watchdog role of the media as well as factual contents that provide a platform for debate or the basis for rational discernment on issues or significance. It is not stories that are merely interesting to the public, but with no civic value. This is

because not all revelations or truths are worth pursuing under the guise of public interest.

There are however be some other social concerns that might need to be considered alongside public interest storytelling. These include individual's right to privacy, general legal considerations and the potential for other harms, such as national security risk etc. in every democracy, broadcast journalism plays a central role over the interest of the public. It gives people information they need to take part in the democratic process. The broadcast journalist thus has to scrutinize the executive, shine a light in dark places and expose anti-social acts such as corruption. Since there is public service ethics in the heart of a true professional, unfound infringements on law, social norms and morality have to be abhorred. Some countries even build the public interest into their legal system. So, if a journalist wants to broadcast an incriminating or controversial matter, but of public interest, it is advisable to know whether the legal framework will give the journalist any protection or not. On the other hand, in some other countries, while those in power might deliberately suppress journalists to stop them from revealing information of public interest because such information might threaten the socio-political power. In such a situation, the broadcaster needs to firmly hold onto law and professional ethics in order to overcome the dilemma.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Discuss the centrality of public interest in broadcasting.

3.3 BROADCAST JOURNALIST AND THE PUBLIC

Besides the watchdog role that the public expect the broadcast journalist to perform through investigative reporting, the public also regard both the journalists and the broadcast media as information tool and the pivot for the articulation of topical issues in the public domain. True democracy requires citizen's participation in governance and in decision making. This then brings in the broadcast journalists who are expected to keep the citizens engaged in the business of governance through rich broadcast contents (Senam & Udo, 2015).

The broadcast media serve a channels information dissemination to audience members, both in the urban and in the rural areas. This aids the public in making informed choice and decisions in issues of governance, such as whom to vote for, which policies to embrace, what input to make in public issues of significance, etc. Ideally, broadcast contents, especially public affairs programmes are excellent means of keeping the audience informed, educated and engaged in public issues. The broadcast journalists keep tracts of important matters in the society; they go as far as unravelling the unknown and rejuvenating the past in order to strengthen the audience and articulate their interest in public matters (Okunna, 2003). As the society becomes more modernized, the media becomes more pervasive, have more power and ability to influence both the ruling class and the electorate etc., on socio-political matters (Schulte, 1981). It is therefore a common occurrence for the broadcast media to persuade or guide the public to

endorse, accept or support a particular candidate of their choice. The broadcast media usually contribute greatly to public education on election process. Public affairs programmes produced on broadcast stations provide in-depth, context and critical analysis that commercials do not.

In recognition of the crucial that the broadcast media play in conflict situations, many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and Media organizations have trained broadcast journalists in Peace Journalism, which endeavour to promote reconciliation through careful reportage resists explanations for violence in terms of innate enmities and ancient hatreds. Peace journalism, as new role expected of journalists by the public, is a platform used to avoid undue attention to violence, focusing instead on the impact of war on communities on both sides of the divide and their efforts to breach their differences. Peace journalism has been promoted through the training of journalists covering conflicts, including journalists who come from the various religious or ethnic groups at war (Roger, 2017).

Furthermore, the public also expect and believe in journalists to champion the course of peace in times of war or conflict. The public recognize journalists generally as an indomitable force and pressure against the erstwhile colonial masters for the freedom and independence of any oppressed country. This was the situation and the role of early journalism in Nigeria in the fight for the nation's independence. It is on the basis of this that the public have great confidence in journalism, public service broadcasting inclusive, as a potent instrument of peace

and freedom. Specifically, as purveyors of public service information, broadcast stations owe a sacred duty to the public to provide them with truthful and accurate information to help the public arrive at a rational discernment, make informed decisions. It is in recognition of this significant role of the media, generally that the Federal Government enacted the freedom of information (FOI) Act 2011 as a guiding rule for the media and other public institutions to feed the public with the information that members of the public need because information is power for public participation in governance and decision making.

3.4 PUBLIC BROADCASTING AND SOCIALISATION

The relationship between broadcasting and socialisation predicates the interphase and synergy between human beings and social institution in the society. The concept of public broadcasting and socialization is synonymous to broadcasting and interactivity in the society. Broadcasting and the society have mutual roles, benefits and obligations to each other. While the society provides the enabled social environment and law within which realm broadcast media operate, broadcasting provide programmes and information that satisfy the yearnings and aspirations of the members of the society. In other words, the major public that embrace broadcast programmes and contents include government, political parties, politicians, companies and their chief executives, captains of industries, institutions or learning, religious organizations, religious leader etc. are generally grouped under sources of information available to broadcast stations. When the

broadcast stations transform and produce the information into broadcast contents, they transmit back to the society, who now are referred to as the audience.

By all standards, public service broadcasting articulates a high level of socialisation among the audience. This socialisation in turn gets to the broadcast media and impacts on the broadcasters as well. Thus, for the sake of professionalism and ethics, while strengthening synergy and socialisation in the society, the public broadcast journalist should:

- (i) not over socialise and acculturate with the public;
- (ii) avoid collecting freebies or gifts from the public who show interest in influencing broadcast contents;
- (iii) avoid conflict of interest in the cause of his/her work;
- (iv) Be in a good working relationship with both colleagues and the public;
- (v) Not lie or deliberately distort the truth;
- (vi) Understand the information needs of the public and work diligently towards supplying same through broadcast contents.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The broadcast media are fundamental sources of information available to government and the entire society. This being the case, public service broadcasting generally affects the society and the entire facets and people in the society. Broadcasters therefore have the duty of protecting the government and the society through quality and effective broadcast contents by exhibiting

professionalism, ethics, maturity, responsibility and rational judgement. This does not call for compromise or bias, but accountability and accuracy. By and large, it is concluded that public service broadcasters play a significant role in peace, order and unity in the society.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have so far learnt in this unit that public service broadcasting an important tool of bringing both the government and the people to a common front of understanding and mutual contribution to each other's growth and success. Activities of all the arms and departments of government need to be publicized to members of the society while members of the society in turn need to know the activities of government and their impact in the society. It is therefore the broadcast media that serve as the conduit in between the two.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the role of public service broadcasting in peace and order in the society.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2: PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING AND PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

Contents

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3.2 Technological Advancement and the Evolution of Public Service Broadcasting

3.3 Public Service Broadcasting: From Transmission to Communication

3.4 Convergence and the Public Service Media Ethos

3.5 Cross Media and Cross Genre Contents in Public Service Broadcasting

3.6 The public as Partners in Broadcasting

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7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

There is the decisive imperative of streamlining a defining tension between culture and communication as well a communication and commerce. There is usually, then, the obvious need for public concern and public interest in communication. This being the situation, public service broadcasting comes handy to rescue. As there is public service broadcasting to cater for the interest of the public over commerce (commercialization of broadcasting), there is also the need for certain mass media to be at hand to transmit contents of commendable degree of public interest to the audience.

The foregoing is therefore a strategic way of underscoring both the relationship between and the importance of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) and Public Service Media (PSM) in the contemporary mass media landscape in Nigeria. This is what this unit of the module is mainly about. One of the outstanding roles of the PSB and the PSM is to balance two interests and amicably bring our proficiency and professionalism in broadcasting. The two interests are the socio-economic interest of media owners and operators on one side, and the general interest and information needs of the public (media audience). This and many more related issues are discussed in this unit, so read it with rapt attention and meticulous concentration.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- understand the challenges of public service broadcasting and public service media;
- explain the evolution of public service broadcasting, especially from the era of technological evolution;
- understand the core message transmission process in public service broadcasting;
- understand the concept of convergence in public service broadcasting;
- identify the various partners in public service broadcasting.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING AND PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA: THE CORE CHALLENGE

According to Lowe & Bardoel (2007), the core challenge facing public service broadcasting (PSB) today is the transition to public service media (PSM). This is occasioned by the difficulty in migrating from message-media-transmission philosophy that preoccupied broadcasters' mind in the early days of broadcasting and later the concept of economics cum commerce in broadcasting. A key dimension that would salvage the situation is the necessity of moving beyond the transmission model that has deeply conditioned professional thought in broadcasting. In the multimedia, digitized environment, public service providers must possess a mature character and thought as additional privileges to arm them as effective public service communicators. This requires demand-oriented

approaches to service and content provision rather than the supply-orientation characteristic of the past. It also implies the pivotal importance of securing relations wherein audiences are partners rather than targets. Other dimensions that logically follow on include developing strategy and tactics for cross-media and cross-genre content that is popular but still distinctive when compared with the commercial offer, and ensuring efficiency and effectiveness as the twin requirements for success.

For policy makers, the core challenge strongly implies fairly balancing the frequently contrary interests of commerce and culture, which is a defining tension at international and domestic levels. The key expectation is effort at renewing the public service ethos and revitalising the public service mission for a multimedia and polymedia environment. This is vital to successful development of the public service enterprise in strategy and practice. This would deepen critical thinking about theoretical, strategic and operational aspects incumbent in the transition to Public Service Media (PSM) in a bid to take care of the dynamics, complications and challenges incumbent in policy development and strategy elaboration for the transition to PSM. The approach here would mainly focus on programme and content-related aspects of broadcasting. These are equally essential in the strategic realm and importantly tighten attention on tactical implications. This simply means public-inclined steps and processes in broadcasting that meet the information needs of the audience and focus on the conceptual roots for PSM, in order to revitalise the public service ethos.

Another challenge is that engendered by commerce versus culture tension in broadcasting. Commerce relates to commercialization while culture relates to sociological influence and interference on broadcasting. Broadcasters then need to favour the social shaping of technology as a governing perspective and consider convergence as the essential driver in a bid to resolve the challenge. A central theme hinges on the keen necessity for conceptual development to facilitate success in becoming public service focused on forging a partnership with audience as active agents.

3.2 TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT AND THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

The idea that technology drives its own development has rightly been rejected as rude technological determinism. Similarly, economic determinism is untenable because economic relations are social phenomena with contested normative emphases. In fact, there is no single factor or force driving media technology and development. Rather, there is a complex of factors that consistently demonstrate the “social shaping of technology” (Murdock & Golding, 1989). The drivers obviously not only economic and technological factors, but also political and military interests which are especially characteristic in the history of media technology the world over. Radio, satellites, computers and the Internet all began as military technologies, for example. It is also quite evident that cultural factors are powerful determinants when considering comparative differences in

how electronic media and when analysing the normative values of neo-liberal media philosophy and social values. Of course earlier technology steers the development of contemporary technology, but even then it does so primarily as the continuing effects of earlier social choices.

The obvious fact is that, early adoption of technologies can be built into what may become irreversible superiority over rivals because success tends to breed success and rejection can turn into neglect and therefore permanent inferiority. Thus the history of technology is a path-dependent history, one in which past events exercise continuing influences. Path-dependence means that local, short-term contingencies can exercise lasting effects. The way any media system is organised and the objectives for which it is responsible are determined by normative values. As McQuail (2007) asserts, there are at least six normative media theories. Two of the most pervasive are at the heart of the commerce/culture tension: the American libertarian approach and the European social responsibility approach. To a significant extent these are contrasting approaches because they prioritise different societal objectives keyed mainly to contradictory emphasis on advancing private and individual interests (personified by the American/Nigerian media systems) versus nurturing public and social interests (more characteristically European media system). Thus, the policies shaping technology and media are value-laden and each application is a socially-driven process.

It is mistaken to think of technology and society as separate spheres influencing each other whereas technology and society are mutually constitutive

and affective. Social imperatives are similarly primary in determining what is invented and diffused because what happens is a function of two essential drivers – supervening social necessity, which fuels the route of development, and the law of suppression which constrains possibilities. In both aspects, system properties and social dynamics are catalytic. Any idea that what is happening in today's media ecology is beyond our capacity to shape because economic or technological factors are in control or out of control is impossible to accept when social history and media analysis so clearly demonstrate that outcomes are primarily shaped by social values and cultural imperatives. Of course the social shaping of public service broadcasting has been institutionalized in different ways. One would expect that to be the case as the remit is directly keyed to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society. There is no uniform template for how public broadcasting is constructed because socio-cultural context varies. It is therefore not surprising to find a considerable difference in the degrees to which PSB development in new media is supported, restricted, or even mentioned at all in policy legislation. The uneven nature of how this is so far handled or neglected indicates the complexity and uncertainty that characterise media-society dynamics at this early stage in the transition. Much of the complexity is keyed to dimensions of convergence, and to the increasingly market-based complexion of the Nigerian media ecology associated with it.

3.3 PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING (PSB): FROM TRANSMISSION TO COMMUNICATION

The evolution from mere message transmission mode to a proper communication mode demands that public service broadcasters learn to be public service communicators. They should show greater concern for public safety, development and information needs of the society more than the socio-economic aspirations of the media. That is crucial because media-society relations are likely to be less about the information society than the interaction society (EBU, 2002). The combination of one-way media technologies and the Enlightenment-oriented paternalistic assignment of the last 80 years produced a supply-driven (or push) PSB culture. What is now needed is a demand-driven (or pull) PSM culture. This requires a rigorous mental and cultural shift in organisational arrangements and perceptions, as PSB strategy managers know. Since the late 1990s, public service broadcasters have been working to define and establish new relations with “the society they operate in and are mandated to serve” (Sondergaard, 1999, p. 22). They are increasingly doing that with an emphasis on the public as user and client. This change in mentality is of pivotal importance and is quite complicated. The broadcaster thinks in terms of transmission. The idea is to create a finished programme and transmit it to an audience, which is consigned a largely passive role: the primary activity is giving attention. The audience is typically defined as a “target” and success is evaluated on the basis of quantitative ratings. These concepts are inadequate to the wider social interests inherent in PSM. The core

challenge for practitioners is rooted in changing deeply conditioned understandings that have long been fundamental to professional identity in broadcasting. The challenge is compounded in the public service setting due to the paternalist heritage.

Another issue stems from the new media feature concept. Here the market is not described as an audience, rather the user. The difference in terminology indicates an active role. Multimedia are necessarily interactive; the channel is obligated to interact with users. Unlike audiences, users not only attend but also activate. In broadcasting the programme is a finished product, but in multimedia the programme is a software platform. Both code and contents are a constantly evolving chronicle of interests and activities in which users shape the narrative. Multimedia are more about process than product in the sense that its value is keyed to accumulation rather than closure. Thus, seizing the best possibilities requires a tight emphasis on the dynamics of mediation processes as social phenomena rather than media products as industrial material. Process is about roles rather than rights because no one owns a process but everyone can be affected by it. Multimedia are both a challenge and an opportunity because they are essentially about services more than products per se. A product depreciates but services appreciate. A product is a done deal; a process is a continuing saga. All of that dovetails with Rifkin's (2000) influential thesis that modern capitalism is shifting from the ownership of material properties to the leasing of access as service-oriented information age societies specialise in intellectual expertise and

design. In thinking about multimedia, broadcasters and policy makers are thus required to rethink broadcasting. High relevance and broad reach can produce an outcome for a PSM Internet site that is as much an exercise in 'broadcasting' as the transmission of a television or radio programme. But none of this means that linear transmission has no future. The new media of each era supplement rather than replace existing media. People use media in parallel forms according to the relative strengths and functionalities of each modality. We call this the 'singularity principle', which is complementary with 'functional equivalence' theory (Sondergaard, 1999, p. 48). It means that each medium occupies a niche, or some series of niches, in the social practice of everyday life that other media do not fill as well for a variety of reasons, usually technical and economic. It is easy to get carried away by the spice of newness and forget that ordinary radio and television broadcasting are popular media of everyday social life for quite practical reasons. It will continue to evolve so long as individuals and societies need the cohesion building and integrating function that only mass media can provide cost effectively, immediately and easily. These remain the most efficient platforms for a type of communication that creates a widely shared public forum. One should also observe that media are reflexive precisely because they are socially grounded. Companies adapt to popular trends and adopt competitor success strategies, and strategise to avoid observed mistakes. Moreover, in the converged organisation each company works to integrate products and services across its media platforms and consumer applications. Furthermore, newer media adapt familiar functions.

For instance, web sites have long utilised principles perfected in newspaper and magazine lay-out design, and are recently beginning to also mimic television as Flash technology develops. This reflexive character of media is especially evident in formatting. Linear viewing habits will not disappear, although the time devoted to television viewing, in particular, can grow only gradually at best and may suffer slow decline. To maintain a reasonable level of audience reach and popularity, broadcast managers must strategise a portfolio of platforms, channels, services and products to serve the public efficiently. This is required in both commercial and non-profit sectors. That is why we increasingly see production companies focusing on the development of cross-platform formats and investing to integrate linear and non-linear contents, especially interactive features.

For public service communicators effectively developing linear and non-linear media in the multimedia context requires rethinking their role beyond existing services and familiar modes. What is their role in public service provision and how can they develop a coordinated multimedia strategy (synergy) for that? PSM means that more services can be provided to more publics, with both services and publics handled in finer granularity, but the greatly expanded options are problematic in consideration of limited resources. A public service ethos is the touchstone for defensible decisions regarding development in and expansion of content and services in the PSM context.

SELF ASSESSMENT

What do you understand by Public Service Media (PSM) and how important are they in Public service Broadcasting (PSB)?

3.4 CONVERGENCE AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA ETHOS

Convergence means pooling many different media outfits and platforms together under one control in order to achieve a set communication mission. For political, economic and populist reasons, Public Service Media (PSM) must be positioned more explicitly than was the historic case for PSB. This has to be according to market-based sensibilities because marketisation is the governing context. These sensibilities privilege the ability to produce 'positive public service contents of commendable public value, to compensate for market failure. This implies rethinking the public service mission for a social context that requires connecting with citizens as users and producers under postmodern conditions in which economic and competition interests are very powerful. To be clear, we are not arguing against their importance – we are arguing for a policy understanding that is not confined to market-driven media contents only.

It has become increasingly clear that making the transition from PSB to PSM requires effectively renewing the public service ethos because it alone remains the ground for any convincing case. The number of commercial television channels far outnumbers public channels in dual markets and there has been growing disappointment about the impact because of commercialization and economic interest of media owners and operators.

Convergence, globalization and digitization legitimate the social importance of PSM. Convergence can increase the possibilities for media pluralism and discursive diversity. More channels of more types can be available in the digital stream. Greater choice and wider participation would characterise the ecology. That is, essentially, what the commercial lobbies claim we should expect. But experience to date has more often demonstrated the down side. Vertical and horizontal integration erect barriers by increasing the entry costs and narrowing the players. Synergy and economies of scale reduce market competition and transnational conglomerates unravel domestic media policy objectives. In that light, public service mediation offers a unique, beneficial resource providing a needed counterweight that stimulates robust competition not only between channels and in programming but as importantly between approaches to media forms. That is the pulse at the heart of the European dual system. Thus, competently serving the public interest in a commitment to media pluralism requires that convergence policy necessarily also be about divergence. This is recognised in most Western European countries as there remains considerable support for public broadcasting institutions (Green, 2005). But the commercial drive against PSM is at least as strong in many respects. The alternative of de-institutionalising PSB by creating a 'distributed public service system is a recent strand in the effort to undermine the enterprise. Many do not find the idea convincing because a certain scale and scope of operation is necessary to guarantee full and effective public service (Nissen, 2006a), as well as

competitiveness. This is a key aspect in the rationale commercial companies rely on to secure approval for consolidation, even while it is ironically denied to PSB in the strategy commercial lobbies are now using to weaken the likelihood of success in the transition to PSM. In fact the drivers challenging PSB and stimulating PSM are precisely the same as those pushing development trends in the commercial sector. These are two sectors in a common industry. The combined impact is producing our increasingly complex media ecology which prioritises convergence as the governing dynamic. The commercial lobbies strive to undermine public service in order to advance private capital interests. The key criticism from this group used to be that public broadcasters were operating inefficiently, misusing funds and only catering for the tastes of elitist minorities who provided the funding.

For PSB, competition is thus paradoxical because when public service broadcasting companies are successful the commercial sector calls that market distortion, but when public service broadcasters aren't successful enough the commercial sector says PSB lacks legitimacy and is a waste of public money. But PSB must compete and it is certainly needed for achieving a healthy societal balance in commerce versus culture. That is further demonstrated in another pressurising dimension of convergence in media – globalization. The commercial media sector is increasingly international, in contrast with PSM which is mainly domestic. The main actors on the media scene are now international corporations unrestricted by frontiers and national ties. They have no territorial allegiances nor do they have obligations to cultural heritage. The broad dynamics that enable this

are a combination of horizontal consolidation and vertical integration. Only PSB stands any fair chance of competing effectively but due diligence is certainly needed, given the internal and external threats in the transition to PSM. Internally there is the danger that commercialism and business logic will undermine the ethos on which its social legitimacy depends.

Externally there is the problem of PSM competitive success eroding commercial profits which stimulates complaints about market distortion. It is quite clear already, and socially problematic, that convergence-related trends are contributing to the development of a media ecology in which universally available, free-to-air mass media have an uncertain future. The push is for thematic channels alternative delivery platforms and personalised services. Thus, “the central questions [are] where does PSB go from here, how should it develop to fulfil its public purpose, and how is this development to be funded?” (Steemers, 1999, p.46). Unlike the 1990s, the issues today are less about PSB preservation than about PSM presence. The biggest need therefore is to determine the role of the public sector on the multichannel platforms which need to develop a public service ethos since the soul of the PSM ethos is communication in the public interest.

3.5 CROSS MEDIA AND CROSS GENRE CONTENTS IN PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

The core challenge in this direction hinges largely on generational changes, technological implications for broadcasting. The imbalance between large groups

of older Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) audiences and large groups of younger people not using PSB channels or services is an acknowledged problem. Young people are rapidly becoming some of the most nimble and prolific creators of digital content online. They are mastering inexpensive media tools to create content and publish it on the Internet. In essence, they are developing prosumer (producer-consumer) patterns. By this fact, it means that millions of those inspired to create have a big new platform with which they shape our culture. Public service broadcasters must therefore adapt to reach and satisfy an increasingly complex public (publics). Cross media strategies are crucial in this, as is developing new genres and formats. Again, there is the need to create distinctive popular public service formats, where the goal is to develop structures that are less media-specific and more content driven. Cross-media operations should improve results in performance, costing and production.

Among the biggest threats to the public service enterprise in this area of PSB development is the potential for blur in content profiles which make it increasingly difficult to draw clear distinctions with commercial competitors. Note that, “the perceived sense of blurring between the objectives and output of commercial and public media is crucial because it brings us back to the definition of PSB” (Steemers, 1999, p. 50). This blurring is a product of multiple threads which include the move into thematic content and niche channels and the provision of value-added services, as well as growth in the international format market along

with independent production via outsourcing both to fulfill quotas and to lower costs.

Moreover, one cannot ignore the need to compete aggressively for talent which today works across sectors for the highest bidder. Finally and directly relevant to change in mentality, there is threat in the adoption of commercial language, theory and practice evident in PSB business-oriented management. For public service media to fulfil their obligations they must be mass media regularly used by most citizens even while content and services must be distinctive. Being distinctive risks alienating the mass audience. That is a fundamental paradox. If the first prerequisite is not met public broadcasting might easily turn into a service without a public, and if the second condition is neglected the public is not served in a way that can substantiate the existence of public broadcasters and their public funding. The paradox is more complex in light of the complicating importance of taste and standards in a postmodern society condition. The crux of the problem here is that PSB regulation rightly respects enlightenment objectives, but these ideals are out of fashion in today's increasingly individualised and consumerist social context in broadcasting. This implies that Public broadcasting regulation is clearly based on the view that some cultural products are more valuable than others and that it is necessary to protect these through regulation and support. This value judgement is based on traditional taste and cultural hierarchies that may no longer be viable and that it is therefore not self-evident why these cultural forms should continue to be protected.

Moreover the influx of public sentiments also provides fertile ground for consumerist and neo-liberal claims that consumers are the only relevant arbiters of taste. This is clearly identified as general obligations of public service media:

- (i) The first is to promote social cohesion. The general trend towards globalization and internationalisation, regional integration of nation states and individualisation of citizens requires modern society to find mechanisms that counter this fragmentation and create social cohesion. Public broadcast media and services adapted to the new context of the information society can serve this role effectively.
- (ii) The second and subsequent to that is keeping a tight focus on fully serving needs related to cultural diversity and the demands of democratic process. Public service broadcasting is an 'island of trust' that is more important than ever in an increasingly commercial and fragmented media ecology. A crucial content challenge for PSM is keeping faith with excellence in the editorial function which is a unique component of the public service brand. Because trust builds and values the brand.
- (iii) The third obligation is to see to the needs of special groups and individual users of public media. Old divisions such as citizens versus consumers and high/elite versus low/popular culture are increasingly dysfunctional. One impact is that PSB has often lagged in achieving

innovation because product perspectives still focus on formats geared to and framed by such distinctions. Thus, it could be observed that sometimes public service media lag in producing hybrid programmes in part because they cleave to the classical division between information versus entertainment contents of the media. As a result commercial channels and production companies, such as Endemol, have the lead and are more innovative in successful formulas and formats.

From the foregoing, there are quite practical reasons for PSB to rethink its programme policy in relation to social and societal transformations because this is the crux of the service aspect in public service broadcasting.

3.6 THE PUBLIC AS PARTNERS IN BROADCASTING

The public are the audience and the core target of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB). This fact thus challenges public service broadcasters to produce contents that encapsulates the basic dynamics of contemporary media-society relations and satisfy the public, not only as partners but also as stakeholders. That is what simultaneously renders so exciting to the audience. How the relevant issues are decided will strongly influence the character and quality of social life in the contemporary society as the path dependency is being established via digital media practices. The social shaping perspective shows that outcomes are relevant to much more than concerns about broadcast media per se; they are directly

relevant to the relations that will characterise public life and private lives in our increasingly mediated social environment. PSM is a forum for renewed conceptualisation about the values, processes and practices that will ultimately affect everyone to an important degree because media and society are interdependent. Also, even in a social environment and media ecology so replete with technological change as a product of digitization, there will be continuing political support on the basis of essential interest in social and cultural priorities. That optimism is encouraging. But it must be interrogated alongside a competing view characterised by the concept of content, needs and demand in the public service media ecology. PSM must be legitimated more explicitly in order to insure its development, its continuing distinctiveness and competitive fairness in media markets. Production strategy should often be informed by genuine public interest objectives rather than institutional self-interest and owners' socio-economic aspiration. Strategic managers inside PSB must be careful to resist that character of thinking to the exclusion of public interest. Being public service communicators requires orienting away from the constant internal obsession to a consistent external obligation. Of course PSB institutions have already undergone considerable change, but in fairness much of that has mainly focused on internal dynamics: managerial competence, strategy and business theory, enhanced efficiency, better contracts and wiser agreements, outsourcing, the matrix organisation, etc. All of these are probably needed, but are not the core mandate.

For our purpose here, the PSM mission lies in rigorously honing an audience-centred view. This implies serving citizens in all the ways their public interest activities seek to fulfil social, cultural and democratic needs. The core challenge is in large part about succeeding in the mental transition from supply-oriented PSB thinking to demand-oriented PSM thinking. Ultimately that requires a focus on audiences. Achieving this demands voluntarily accepting vulnerability which is rarely painless. But it is the key to creating a relationship in which publics really are partners. The possibilities offered by non-linear media challenge everyone committed to the public interest to practise a variety of convergence of a superbly beneficial kind – collaboration.

Being the most dynamic, innovative and successful sector in media services development requires:

- (i) PSB to develop convincing arguments and practical instruments that make its public dimension more explicit and transparent;
- (ii) PSB and its service dimension more effective and efficient.

To be the best in media services for the public, PSM must not lose faith with the core public service ethos that is rooted in PSB, but neither can PSM succeed without developing that ethos to transcend PSB. Policy makers have a defining role as well in requirements for assessing and re-defining what the Nigerian media system ought to mean, and by establishing the parameters that shape its social presence. This will not be determined by economy or technology but by collective determination and effort of both policy makers and public media operators. In the

end it can only be decided on the basis of social imperatives and in partnership with the public. This calls for a vigorous debate about the society we ought to build and the values that must be defended and developed to public service broadcasting.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has clearly pointed out and explained the importance of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) and Public Service Media (PSM) as well as their significance in the contemporary age in Nigeria, in particular and the world as a whole. We can therefore conveniently conclude that PSB is a fundamental instrument of mass mobilisation and development in the society. It is through PSB that the information needs of the audience are met to the extent of assisting the public to arrive at a rational discernment on issues of significance in the state.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have learnt in this Unit that Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) is society-oriented, thus revolves around the interest and needs of members of the public. Also, we clearly understand that messages are transmitted through the Public Broadcasting Media (PBM) to the public for optimal effect and efficiency in goal attainment.

There is the compelling need for public service broadcasters to be public-oriented and have the wellbeing of the entire society at heart in the course of

discharging their professional duties. PSB is a necessary direction for broadcasters to tilt to since the public constitute the very crux of broadcast audience.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the major challenges of Public service Broadcasting (PSB) and suggest the policies that, if implemented, would address most of the problems facing PSB in Nigeria.

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MODULE 3 BROADCAST MEDIA AND THE WATCHDOG CONSTRUCT: WHO WATCHES THE WATCHDOG

UNIT 1 Public Service Broadcasting and the Watchdog Construct

UNIT 2 Public Service Broadcasting, Commercialism and Government Control

UNIT 1 Public Service Broadcasting and the Watchdog Construct

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- 1.0 Introduction
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 - 3.1 The Mass Media: An overview
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- 5.0 Summary
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The mass media are the channels through which mass communication messages are transmitted from the source to a heterogeneous audience who receive the messages virtually at the same time. In other words, they are the technologically driven devices through which ideas, knowledge, information, attitude and other categories of messages are transmitted simultaneously to a heterogeneous audience who are located at different places. Technology is

undoubtedly indispensable in mass communication. Apart from aiding the transmission of mass communication messages from the source to the receiver, technology strengthens mass communication and makes the media to be as powerful as they are at present. By reason of the strategic and powerful nature of the mass media, every facet of the society needs the mass media for survival and greater achievements.

The mass media occupy central positions in every sphere of social life. This makes the media a major source of human interaction and social mobilisation. It is an incontrovertible fact that the mass media cater, at various times and instances, for all the diverse and competing interests in the society. This makes it necessary for the mass media to be properly harnessed and controlled for the purpose of ensuring a peaceful and virile society. Control is the act, under the dictate of the person, organisation or institution, that exerts the force on the media.

There is so much competition in the society, and all the competitors know the importance of the mass media in the achievement of what they struggle to get. The desire to use the mass media for one's success, and even to the detriment of other competitors, is not strange in an environment shrouded with scarcity and competition. Those who abuse or control the mass media for selfish reasons may feel fulfilled but such act may be detrimental to the general well-being of the society as well as effectiveness of the media. This kind of control could be disastrous to any media system.

The mass media are not supposed to take sides but be neutral and mirror the society back to the society, so that societal ills can be clearly understood and tackled appropriately. Notwithstanding who owns the media, the important thing is for the media to serve as means of surveillance in the society so that undesired elements can be exposed for appropriate amends to be made. This is the whole gamut of the watchdog role of the mass media. Literally, a watchdog is usually entrusted with the responsibility of keeping vigilance over and securing things of high value. Placing the mass media in a position of a watchdog of the society means the media are a body of trustees who watch over activities in the society and report any form of anomaly promptly for appropriate redress.

In the contemporary society, technological innovations coupled with social complexities and conflicting forces can cause the media to either derail from their watchdog role or perform the role below reasonable expectation. In the face of this reality, if the media do not perform their watchdog role creditably, it becomes necessary to watch the watchdog.

Watching the watchdog in this case means the control of the mass media. Literally “control” means an act of causing something or someone to act the way it naturally would not have wanted to. Mass media control can be viewed from both the negative and the positive perspectives. When media control is inordinate and mooted with selfish intent and purposes, such a control is negative; it usually engenders negative effects. On the other hand, when the control is well co-

ordinated and aimed at greater efficiency and performance of the mass media, it is positive; it usually engenders positive effects.

In the light of socio-economic and political realities in the contemporary society where it is opined that the mass media sometimes fail to perform their watchdog role above board, certain salient issues are usually raised: Are the mass media really the watchdog? If the mass media are the watchdog, are they really watching? If the watchdog is watching, is it watching well? If the watchdog does not watch well, who watches the watchdog? These issues constitute the thrust of this paper.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Unit you would comfortably:

- ❖ Understand the basic nature and the social responsibility of the mass media in the society;
- ❖ Understand the mass media and the watchdog concept;
- ❖ Explain the basic issues in media control;
- ❖ Understand the major institutions and sources of media control in the society.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 THE MASS MEDIA: AN OVERVIEW

The mass media are the channels through which mass communication messages are transmitted to a heterogeneous audience virtually simultaneously. Mass communication, on the other hand, is a non-personal form of communication in which the message is intended for unidentified or specified receivers. For Udoakah (2017), the mass medium is the hardware through which the software (media contents/messages) are transmitted to a large audience existing in diverse locations. The mass media are indispensable institutions in mass communication. The word “mass” mainly predicates three things:

- (i) The non-personal nature of the communicator or source.
- (ii) The heterogeneity of the audience or receivers.
- (iii) The simultaneity of the message reception by the receiver or audience.

The mass media are the intermediaries between the mass communicator (source) and the audience (receivers). The media institution comprises an established media outfit or organisation that creates, produces, packages and transmits information or messages to the public, with or without the intention to make profits (Watson and Hill, 2006). The media institution is the generic name given to the various mass communication outlets (media). The Nigeria media institution is the totality of the various print and broadcast media operated in the country irrespective of ownership. They constitute an indispensable institution in the society. The mass media generally exert a great deal of influence in the society. On the other hand, the society has a special way of controlling the media or influencing the media content. The mass media have the power to cause panic or calmness, anxiety or assurance, loyalty or disloyalty, belief or disbelief etc, depending on how they are operated or manipulated (Senam, 2017). In any circumstance, the mass media are expected to trigger the better side of their potency in order to make for a virile and coherent society (Alvin, 2006).

As the mass media assume the status of watchdog, they automatically take some responsibility as a corporate citizen in the society, in line with the precepts

of the social responsibility theory. The theory was propounded by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in 1956. Its origin is traceable to the 1947 Hutchins Commission on the Freedom of the Press in the United States of America (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1963). The social responsibility theory stresses the view of media ownership and practice as a form of public trust or stewardship, rather than an unlimited private franchise or instrument for the oppression of press freedom or members of the public. That is why the watchdog must be watched. The thesis of this theory revolves around public interest since the freedom of expression and the free press are fundamental rights of mankind. This then calls for the mass media to maintain a state of neutrality and avoid sensationalism. Satisfying the interest of the public is a significant step towards safeguarding the functions of the press in the state; thus a legitimate checkmating process is necessary in order to realise the very best of media operation and practice. The watchdog needs to be watched. In order to streamline the philosophy of social responsibility to bring about a commendable satisfaction of public interest, it is necessary to unveil what constitutes public interest.

According to (McQuail, 2007, p. 165), “Whatever the argument about the concept of public interest, it is quite obvious that the mass media have everywhere been subject to extensive control and regulation by law and other formal and informal means with a view to getting them to do what the society wants” Public interest means the yearnings and aspirations of the general society aimed at engendering orderly and peaceful co-existence.

The actual control or means of control of the mass media is not universally the same. It varies from one country to another or from one media system to another. This underscores the relevance of the social responsibility theory in this paper which examines who watches the watchman within the milieu of the mass media and the watchdog construct.

3.2 MASS MEDIA AND THE WATCH-DOG CONSTRUCT

The mass media constitute a fundamental institution that breaches the gap between the various segments or spheres of the society. They connect the different institutions in the society through information thereby enlightening the people on the goings-on in the society. The society is naturally very vast and the daily events of public concern are multifarious; hence it is difficult for members of the public to be aware of everything that happens around them, even in their immediate neighbourhood. The seeming bleak nature of the barricades that prevent people from accessing information on their own calls for an intermediary, the mass media, to transmit information from the stock, source or centre point to the people. It is not only necessary to merely relate the information to the members of the public, but to also raise an alarm to alert people when dangers are imminent or the dangers are already at hand. The mass media are widely recognised and statutorily empowered to perform this roles. This is the whole gamut of the watchdog role of the mass media. According to Watson and Hill (2006, p. 303), “the mass media pride themselves on their role as watchdogs of justice, abuse and

corruption; champions of public interest ... the watchdog barks on behalf of the people, in their defence against the powerful, whether these are in government, business, industry or any work of life where the interest of the public can be affected”

Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, provides that: “The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people”. Therefore the watchdog role of the mass media is of two folds:

- (i) The responsibility of the media to alert the people of impending act that would be detrimental to the well-being of the society.
- (ii) The responsibility of the media to alert the people of malversation or occurrence of event or activity that is detrimental to the well being of the society or the system.

By these responsibilities and expectations, the mass media have the task of informing the people on the goings-on in the society. The media do this through various means such as interviewing public figures and challenging them with problems, concerns, expectations and aspirations of the people. The watchdog role of the mass media in information gathering and dissemination can manifest through:

- i. Cross-checking facts and statements of public officers and informing the public on the truth of every matter relating to such facts and statements.

- ii. Interviewing public officers to extract first-hand information to transmit to the audience.
- iii. Scooping information by way of beat reporting and packaging same for onward transmission to the audience.

In any circumstance, the watchdog construct in the milieu of mass media practice entails the mass media being the eye and the voice of the people. This dovetails into the mass media functioning as watchmen, agents of social control and pivot of moral guidance.

According to Hanson (2005) the watchdog construct was coined by Edmund Burke in the late 18th century in England to refer to the practical power of the mass media in influencing the general cause of the society in line with the aspiration and desires of the people. Initially the watchdog construct or metaphor related to the power and role of the media vis-à-vis the political sphere of the society. The term was mainly used to describe the role of the mass media in revealing the abuse of state authority as well as the protection of the democratic and constitutional rights of the citizens. In contemporary times, the watchdog role of the mass media covers all aspects and facets of life in the society. The watchdog here can now be likened to the proverbial dog in the manger and the red tilapia (fish). The dog in the manger guards or protects the meat from being preyed upon while the red tilapia (fish) stays by the entrance without entering the fish trap and at the same time prevents other fish from entering. Given this scenario, the mass media perform the watchdog role by gathering, processing, packaging and transmitting messages on

issues of public interest to the audience responsibly, with utmost truth and fairness according to the ideals of communication for the development and unity of the society. Anything less of this amounts to a breach of trust since, in the strictest sense, the mass media–society relationship is a fiduciary relationship. A fiduciary relationship is a relationship that is grounded in utmost trust and confidence.

Moreover, like the literal watchdog or guard dog that barks when it notices an intruder or enemy, the mass media, have the task of alerting the public when danger looms or when the actual problem is detected. Such dangers or problems include, but not limited to, wrong decision or policy by government, illegal activities in the society, immorality, social anomaly, environmental degradation, scandals, corruption, self-enrichment among public officers and other types of wrong-doings. The watchdog thus functions as an agent of transparency as well as means of checks and balances.

The mass media, as the fourth estate in the realm, perform the watchdog role by supplying the citizens with information that they need in order to prevent the abuse of power and to warn citizens against those doing them social harms. To play these roles creditably, the mass media need to bridge the psychological and attitudinal gulf between them and those in position of authorities, especially those who abuse such authorities. Thus, as watchdogs, the media need not be agents or instruments of propaganda. Inordinate loyalty and conformity is undesirable if the mass media must perform their watchdog roles and remain champions of order and impartiality. The mass media must be a detached

watchdog which inversely means a detached observer. A detached watchdog is naturally not interventionist but uninvolved. This quality is therefore used to explain the position of objectivity, neutrality and impartiality as the weapons of a watchdog. Also, as watchdogs, the mass media help in holding the society's power brokers and rule-makers to account and work towards the collective needs of the society. For Malemi (2009), the press is a watchman or monitor of government. But who watches the watchman? It is necessary to watch the watchman or the watchdog so that it can effectively perform its constitutional role and live up to its responsibility.

3.3 THE BROADCAST MASS MEDIA CONTROL

In any media system in the world, the activities and operations of the media need to be checked so that the media institution is not too influential to the detriment of all other institutions in the society. This applies also in the case of the mass media in the milieu of the Nigeria legal system and other sociological institutions. The term "Watchdog" is used metaphorically to mean the mass media, especially given their surveillance function in the society. Mass media control here does not necessarily mean oppression or suppression but regulation that prevents excesses. This then raises the question "Who watches the watchdog?" The answer lies in the Nigerian legal system vis-à-vis the operation of the Nigerian mass media.

Taking a narrow approach, media control relates to the regulation of the editorial contents of the media in line with the normative imperatives of the society.

In the broadcast sense of it, media control implies a holistic regulation of the activities and operation of roadcasting.

According to Umechukwu (2001), media control involves any form of intervention on the operation of the mass media in the areas of economic, legal, social or cultural life in line with the political norms of the state. This is an indication of sociological approach to the assessment of media control. In the reasoning of Rodman (2006), the control of the mass media is the use of any means to check and regulate the media based of legal demands, influence of proprietors, restrictions on what to publish, policies of regulatory bodies etc. The dynamics of the mechanics of media control now makes both control and regulation to be used interchangeably in so many situations.

In Nigeria, media control may be administered directly by the government, as it was the case in the era of military regime in the country, mainly before 1992 when the broadcast media were deregulated and liberalised. Regulation could also be through statutory agencies that enjoy some degree of independence from government. This does not apply to Nigeria only but to the various media systems in the world; typical examples are the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) of Nigeria, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) of the USA, the Independent Television Commission (ITC) of Britain, etc. This corroborates the assertion by Senam (2017) that government control of broadcasting has always involved more than ownership. Even in advanced democracies, broadcasting is subjected to government regulation which, however, varies from one media system

to another (Akpan, 2017). The basic level of control of broadcasting involves the issuance of operating license. In Nigeria, the broadcast license is very costly to acquire. The lowest license for private station goes for N15m while at least N10m goes for public broadcast station (NBC, 2010).

Generally, mass media control in Nigeria can be internal or external. Internal means of control stems from within the mass media circle or a congregation of media professionals identified by whatever name. Internal control mechanism usually comes by way of editorial policy and other administrative policies of the media organisation, proprietary interest, code of practice or professional ethics. On the other hand, external control stems from outside the media circle. It is usually the order or policy or practise process mooted mainly by those who are not media professionals. The most outstanding and influential mechanism of external control of the mass media is the law, government policy or regulation. It usually comes with stiff sanctions in case of any breach.

3.4 WHO WATCHES THE WATCHDOG?

The issue of who watches the watchdog raises the concern as to the several means of controlling the mass media. In view of this, there are many mechanisms and for the control of the mass media. The various mechanisms constitute the crux of those watching the watchdog. They are elucidated as follows:

3.4.1 Institutional Control: This kind of media control implies that a statutory or corporate

body, whether government, private or professional body outlines means of regulating the

media and exerts control over them. There are many institutions that may belong here, but

only three of such are discussed hereunder:

(a) The National Broadcasting Commission: The National Broadcasting Commission

(NBC) is the corporate body saddled with the responsibility of regulating and controlling the establishment and operation of broadcasting generally in Nigeria.

The NBC was established by Decree No.38 of 1992 – The National Broadcasting Commission Decree – by the Federal Military Government of General Ibrahim Babangida. On establishment, the NBC was vested with the responsibility of regulating broadcasting. According to Section 2(i) of the NBC Decree (1992), as amended, the responsibilities of NBC include:

- (i) Receiving, processing and considering applications for the ownership of radio and television services, direct satellite broadcast and any other medium of broadcasting.
- (ii) Recommending applications through the minister to the president for the grant of radio and television licenses.

- (iii) Regulating and controlling the broadcast industry, receiving and investigating complaints from individuals and corporate bodies regarding the contents of a broadcast and the conduct of a broadcasting station; upholding the principles of equity and fairness in broadcasting.

Like the USA's broadcast regulation, which borrowed some leave from the US constitution, Nigeria's broadcast regulation also borrows from the nation's constitution. The regulation in Nigeria is fashioned to uphold what the parliament intends; that is, the protection of the interest of the nation. The 1999 constitution, as amended, provides for the Right to Freedom of Expression and the Free Press. Section 39(i) provides that "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinion and to receive and impart ideas and information without inference". It goes further in subsection 2 to give right for ownership and operation of broadcast outfits, subject however without prejudice to authorisation process by the government or its agency. This is one of the ways of "watching the watchdog".

Subsection 3 of Section 39 of the 1999 Constitution goes further to provide that: "Nothing in this section shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic idea". This proviso is in contradistinction to what obtains in the USA constitution. It gives an ample room for government to turn around through its agency and collect back the right to own, manage and operate broadcast station. This is yet another means of regulating controlling or watching the watchdog. Media control unfolds in a dramatic way under the aforesaid subsection 1 of

Section 39. The climax is at subsection 2 which gives condition for exhibiting the freedom. The denouement is in subsection 3 which subtly withdraws the freedom through an omnibus proviso which says:

Nothing in this section shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justified in a democratic society;

(a) for the purpose of preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, maintaining the authority and independence of courts, or regulating telephone, wireless broadcasting, television or the exhibition of cinematograph films; or

(b) imposing restrictions upon persons holding office under Government of the Federation or of a State, members of the armed forces of the Federation or member of the Nigeria Police Force or other Government security services or agencies established by law.

This implies that the authorisation process and granting of broadcast license constitute one of the major means of controlling or watching the watchdog. Thus government agencies or institutions constitute part of the retinue of those who watch the watchdog. No wonder the African Independent Television (AIT) was closed down for three days in 2006 by government security operatives. The station (AIT) had presented a live broadcast of the National Assembly's debate on tenure elongation proposed by then President Olusegun Obasanjo. May be the

government thought the live coverage helped to scuttle the planned tenure elongation and so government showed that the watchdog can also be watched.

(b) The Nigerian Press Council: The Nigerian Press Council was established by Decree No. 85 of 1993 – The Nigerian Press Council Decree. The Council is supposed to be an autonomous body set up to promote high professional standards for the Nigerian press and to deal with complaints emanating from members of the public or the press about the conduct of journalists in their official capacity. Being established, constituted and funded by the government, the press council has over the years become the eyes of the government of the day. Thus, the Press Council has now become a veritable outfit that watches the mass media in the milieu of the watchdog construct. Udoakah (2014) is of the view that the constitution (membership) of the press council is itself a suspect because it is dominated by government representatives. This makes the Council a government tool of media control. Since the press council's funding comes from the government, independence and impartiality cannot be guaranteed. The concern for now is not who owns or who controls the Nigerian press council, but to establish the fact that the council is one of the institutions that watch (control) the watchdog (media) in the milieu of the mass media as the watchdog.

(c) The Nigerian Copyright Commission: The Nigerian Copyright Commission was established in 1989. It is an off-shoot of the Nigerian Copyright Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria. The primary function of the commission is to protect the copyright in all its ramifications. In terms of mass media control, the

main role of the copyright commission is to ensure that mass media do not infringe upon the copyright of individuals or organisations vis-a-vis mass media contents. The Nigerian Copyright Commission now acts as a watch on the watchdog to the extent of ensuring that mass media contents do not constitute an infringement of copyright works or intellectual rights, as such infringement is wrongful and attracts appropriate sanctions under the Copyright Law as currently codified in the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.

3.4.2 The Government

Government is one of the major sources of control of the mass media. Direct government control of the mass media is usually objectionable except in case where the government is the proprietor. Where the government is the owner of the medium, it may dictate the tune which the medium may play. In most cases, the medium usually becomes the mouthpiece of the government. The government may exercise control over the media through the laws by which the media were established, for example the Nigerian Television Authority Act 2004 and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria Act 2004.

Government control of the media is in two folds: as the owner or proprietor of the media and as the manager of all forms of activity in the state. This means that whether a mass medium is government-owned or not, the government still has a means of controlling or regulating the medium. In any case, government still serves as a watch to the watchdog. Direct government control of the media is often

a feature of dictatorship and oppressive regime which is not good for democracy. In the case of the medium not being owned by the government, the role of government is limited to enacting of laws and policies which are reasonably justifiable in a democracy and leaving the courts to interpret and apply the laws in regulating the media as may be necessary. This would mean a legitimate means of government watching the watchdog. In a situation where the government itself feels aggrieved by the publication of any medium, the government should sue the medium and then leave the court to be the arbiter of the matter in line with the applicable laws as stated in the case of *State v. Ivory Trumpet Publishing Co. & Ors* (1984), *Arthur Nwankwo v. State* (1985) etc. By so doing, the excesses of the watchdog would be watched.

3.4.3 Legal Control of the Media

The law is another instrument of the control of the media. Law helps a lot in checking the excesses of the media, especially within a democratic society. Media laws are the enactments made to regulate the activities and operation of the mass media. In other words, media law is an “object” in the “hand” of government used by the government to control or regulate the media. The laws and policies could be through Acts of the parliament, official gazette and executive declarations or orders. Ewelukwa (2004) is of the view that government uses the law to strike a balance between the need to protect the interest of government and that of the

ordinary citizens. This does not only check excesses but also brings about peace, order and understanding in the society.

3.4.4 Audience Control of the Media

The audience are the people who receive the mass media contents or messages. Thus the people who patronise media contents or services are a fundamental source of control of the mass media. A medium that lacks credibility does not enjoy the patronage of its audience. In other words, where the medium is associated with lies, fraud, incompetence or it fails to perform its role properly, its patronage dwindles. Also a medium may eventually be out of the business because of low revenue cum profit. To avoid such an unpleasant situation, the medium has to strive as much as possible to satisfy its audience. This scenario paints the picture of the audience constituting a significant watch on the watchdog.

3.4.5 Advertisers' Control

Advertisement is a major source of income to any mass medium, hence the interest of advertisers is usually held in high esteem by media operators. This makes advertisers a significant means of media control. As the mass media organisations need money from advertisers to sustain the media, the advertisers directly or indirectly exert potent control on the media. The media yield to such control, sometimes inadvertently, in order to retain patronage(Akpan, 2017). Mass media give a lot of preference to advertisers, even to the detriment of other

stakeholders in the media industry, all in a bid to secure the advertisers' patronage and generate revenue from them (Belch and Belch, 2007). Ultimately, advertisers constitute an entity that watches the watchdog.

3.4.6 Owners' Control

Owner means the proprietor, founder or funder of the mass media. The adage, "He who pays the piper calls the tune" is almost becoming a cliché, yet frequently and aptly used to explain the framework of mass media control vis-à-vis mass media ownership. Ownership plays an influential role in the editorial policy, contents and operation of mass media, especially in Africa. According to McQuail (2010, p. 421), "there is no doubt that owners in market-based media have ultimate power over content and can ask for what they want to be included or left". This usually poses a serious ethical dilemma to media professionals.

The worst scenario arises where the media owner has strong yearnings, aspirations and interests that are overtly at variance with media professionalism. In most media systems in Africa, especially where either the law or its enforcement is too weak to protect the media and media professionals from the jaws of owners' interest, media workers and the media contents become obviously unethical. The influence of media ownership on media control is felt most in government-owned media in Nigeria, at both the federal and the state levels. From all angles of consideration, no matter the strength and professional positive of the media ownership constitutes a strong watch on the watchdog.

3.4.7 Socio-Cultural Control

The social environment in which the mass media operate also exerts some control over the media. Socio-cultural control refers to all the various elements, mainly of collective application or relating to collective interests, in the society that regulate mass media operation or contents. Such elements include people's attitude, social values, belief system, culture, customs, norms and mores that are prevalent in a particular locality where the mass medium operates. Dominick (2009) affirms view that the social environment sometimes exerts some unprecedented control over the mass media and their contents depending on the rate of acculturation by the media professionals. Acculturation is the tendency of media workers to imbibe the ideas, attitude and opinions of the group they cover or with whom they interact over time. It is a common phenomenon for human beings to adjust themselves and adapt to the environment or group that they find themselves or interact with. This is referred to as acculturation.

The result of socio-cultural control of the mass media is inevitable because in the fact that mass media messages are culture-related and to some extent affected by time, season, environment and social circumstance (Senam, 2017). Socio-cultural variables greatly contribute to the whole activity of the mass media and their contents as the mass media constitute a sub-set of the macro society (Miller, 2002).

3.4.8 Ethics and Professional Bodies

Ethics and professional bodies are another set of control mechanisms in the media system. Ethics is the standard of good or bad conduct in a given situation or profession using norms and morality as the bases for the valuation of human conduct or behaviour. Every profession has its ethics. The class of ethics that governs mass media practice is media ethics. It deals with specific ethical principles and standard of media professionalism. Prasad (2014) asserts that the ethical principles are the basis for the judgement of the rightness or otherwise of the practice and behaviour of journalists. They are usually encapsulated in the journalism code of practice of every media system. Apart from truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, objectivity and editorial independence, other topics covered by journalistic ethics include news manipulation, truth and value, truth and fantasy, truth and public interest, privacy, taste and conflict with the law. These and professional bodies (e.g. Unions of Journalists, Guild of Editors, media proprietors' association etc) constitute an important framework of control, regulation or watch on the watchdog.

3.4.9 International Standard and Media Philosophy

Although there may be some slight difference in operational trends of media organisations, depending on the media system, the Nigerian media do not operate as an isolated institution; they are part of the global media system. According to Malemi (2009, p.46), "The world press has general standards and there are

international laws and conventions which any medium that wishes to excel usually aspires to comply with". By reason of this, world best practices inversely constitute a means of control of the mass media.

Also, media philosophy has a way of controlling the mass media. Media philosophy is the underlying reason, attitude and conventions that govern media content selection and the operation of the mass media generally and journalism practice in particular. News is the most important content of the mass media. It is a product of production process. Certainly, "mass media news, like other commodities, is an output from a combination of factors of production, namely: land, labour, capital and an entrepreneur" (Udoakah, 2014, p.26). In other words, "news is a concise account on recent event of significance broadcast or published by the mass media within an allotted airtime or stipulated space" (Senam, 2008, p. 52). Udoakah (2017) assert that, while mass media news is a software, the mass media themselves are the hardware and the combined effect of the mass media and mass media laws strengthens the political economy of the nation as well as economics of the mass media practice and media system. Journalists and other gate-keepers usually select a few of the myriad of events that happen daily to be carried as news. In determining what event is newsworthy, the gate-keepers' decisions are influenced by tradition, organisational policy, economics as well as digital revolution. The news determinants (timeliness, proximity, consequences, prominence and human interest) and news writing conventions (5W1H – Who? What? When? Where? Why and How?) are product of Western media philosophy

and they constitute a formidable source of media control. It follows that the watchdog is also under the watch of international standard and media philosophy.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We examined the various legitimate means of control and regulation of the broadcast media in the milieu of the media and the watchdog metaphor. From the discourse, it is reasonable to conclude that, the mass media (the broadcast media inclusive), as the fourth estate of the realm function as a watchdog in the society. They occupy the position of a trustee to the society. The media are the eyes, the ears and voice of the members of the society. They alert on malversation and other ills in the society. Again, although the mass media are powerful and function as a watchdog in the society, the society does not consider them as saints or institutions that need no monitoring.

5.0 SUMMARY

The broadcast media, like other mass media, does not operate in isolation, neither does it serve the people without its being checked, regulated or controlled. The society fashions out instruments, institutions and modalities of checking the activities of the broadcast media for the betterment of the society. By and large, from the appraisal of public service broadcasting in Nigeria, it is obvious that the legitimate control and regulation of the broadcast media make for effectiveness of services and commendable professionalism in the media system. This makes

public service broadcasting be central in the society and work hard to extract confidence from the society and ensure that the broadcast media function as a trustee to the society.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain the concept of watchdog in the context of public service broadcasting and outline the mechanisms that constitute a watchdog to public service media.

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UNIT 2 PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING, COMMERCIALISM AND GOVERNMENT CONTROL

CONTENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Authoritarianism and permissivism are two basic broadcast orientations that have internally regulated the principles and practice of broadcasting in Nigeria. The former principally caters for government interest while the latter is driven by the profit motive. These two factors dominate the system and dictate how broadcasting operates in Nigeria with little or no concern to public interest (Akpan, 2012). In this Unit, our discourse articulates the fact that a broadcast system that does not give priority to audience information needs cannot provide genuine service to the public, hence the need for a Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) that is neither profit-driven nor is subject to the whims of government dictatorship.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Unit, you would clearly:

- ❖ understand the concept of commercialism and government control of broadcasting;
- ❖ understand the role of the National broadcasting commission in the regulation of public service broadcasting in Nigeria;
- ❖ be familiar with how uncontrolled commercialisation can stifle the aim of public service broadcasting.

3.1 COMMERCIALISM AND GOVERNMENT CONTROL

Commercialism and government control are two forces that have become deeply entrenched in broadcasting in Nigeria. Of truth, they dominate broadcasting in the country. At the inception of broadcasting, the government funded the system exclusively, and viewed advertising money as an unnecessary distraction and negative influence on the smooth operation of the system as well as threat to the ideals of broadcasting as a tool of development and national unity. Broadcasting was regarded as purely a social service; hence the federal government did not allow its stations to accept advertisements. State-owned stations that accepted commercials did it not with modern-day aggression, but with reservations in hunting and scouting for advertising revenue. To say the least, the influence of commercials was at its barest minimum. That left broadcast stations to grapple with the major challenge of total government control of the system which, interestingly, persisted until the National Broadcasting Commission Decree No. 38 of 1992. To some extent, the decree loosened the grip of government on the ownership and operation of broadcast stations to include, for the first time, private individuals and organisations other than government (Otu, 2006; Udejah, 2004).

The deregulation of broadcasting – removing its ownership and control from the exclusive list of government – opened a new chapter in commercialism in broadcasting. *Ab initio*, the private stations coming on board had no other source of revenue than advertising revenue, and thus explored and pursued it with aggression and creativity. With the private and so-called public stations combing

the nooks and crannies of the nation for advertising revenue, and stations sometimes engaging in excessive (dog-eat-dog) competition (Head, 1985), Nigeria had its full plunge into commercialism in broadcasting with the attendant implications for broadcasting in particular and the nation in general.

Today, two major forces, centrifugal in nature, appear to be pulling broadcasting in a typical tug-of-war: the force of government control and the force of commercialism. Sometimes in combination, sometimes with no relation to each other, these two forces have tended to colour and define the path of broadcast operations in Nigeria. In this article, commercialism and commercialisation are used interchangeably to mean the principle or practice of being more concerned with making money from buying and selling media content for profit than being concerned about the quality, especially in a situation such content would not usually be sold. Government-controlled and government-owned stations are also used interchangeably to mean broadcast outfits that are financed from the public purse as controlled by government.

This article disagrees from the outset that government-controlled stations are stations for the public, but argues that they are for the clique in power and do not, in any way, operate in the public interest. Their operations, in spite of public finding and rhetorics by government and the operatives themselves, are guided solely by the interest of those in government. Hence, they cannot be classified, in the true sense, as public service stations. This raises the question: between

government control of most of the broadcast stations in Nigeria and the drive for advertising revenue, who services the public?

3.2 BROADCASTING AND THE GULAG OF GOVERNMENT CONTROL

At the promulgation of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree No. 38 of 1992 (effective August 24, 1992), stakeholders in the broadcast industry were upbeat that the deregulation of the industry would reduce the stranglehold of government on broadcast ownership and control, a situation that had stretched from 1932 when broadcasting was first introduced in Nigeria through the BBC Empire Service. Yet, nearly two decades after private participation was allowed a bite on the cake of owning and operating broadcasting, government, at the state and federal levels, is still on the driving seat of broadcasting. Together, they control more than 95% of broadcast channels in Nigeria. The federal government in particular has flooded the nation with FRCN-FM stations, with every state and the Federal Capital Territory having at least one each. This is in addition to the national stations in Lagos, Kaduna, Enugu, Ibadan and Abuja. The Nigerian Television Authority, NTA, has about 99 stations across the country, some of which are yet to be operational. Similarly, all the states of the federation have radio and television stations (Udejah, 2004).

No doubt, the establishment of radio and TV stations by the federal government has enlarged the coast of broadcasting in Nigeria. However, this multiplication of stations does not in any way suggest a diversity of voices. Rather,

it is a multiplication of channels for a single, mighty dominating voice – government – that is often mistaken to represent the people (public).

Many factors account for these mistaken assumptions:

- (i) the public sector funding of government controlled stations;
- (ii) the enabling laws for the operation of such stations which mandated them to serve as a platform for the public to participate in the communication process; and
- (iii) arising from the two points above, operatives engage in self-adulation that they are the mouthpiece of the public.

For the uncritical mind, these reasons appear real and overwhelming. However, to the student of broadcasting, the above reasons, coupled with the unprecedented multiplication of government channels, are parallel to the very existence of government-controlled channels. From the beginning of broadcasting in Nigeria, politicians have used it as a tool to achieve their political interest. Right from the time that the late sage, Obafemi Awolowo, was denied the right of reply on federal radio (NBC), consequent upon which he established the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in 1959 to canvas his political viewpoints, broadcasting in the hands of government has maintained that distinctive character of being a political weapon wielded by government to maintain the status quo and possibly decimate its opponents. The federal government uses the NTA and FRCN in this

manner. However, it is worse with broadcast outfits controlled by state governments.

As an unwritten rule, the FRCN and NTA turn back at their news gates contents that are critical of the federal government. But they may open the gates to contents that do not support the government, when the operatives feel no harm is implied. This is discretionary, and is intended to give a semblance of balance. Thus, when the opposition is within tolerable limits, NTA and FRCN would accommodate such views. But state government-controlled stations go a step deeper in denying access to the people. As the experiences during the 2011 general election showed, there are some voices who, because of their socio-political association and background, are permanently adjudged enemies of government who should not be granted access to the airwaves, their viewpoints notwithstanding. It is not only politicians that are shut out of the channels but other members of the public too.

For example, in Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation, which is controlled by the Akwa Ibom State Government, a simple, harmless complaint by the citizens over flood or bad roads in Akwa Ibom State which should, ordinarily, spur the relevant government agencies to action, is regarded as an affront on government and contradiction of the *Akwa Ibom Ado Ok* campaign (Akwa Ibom is okay) which government has portrayed. A report on any negative occurrence in the state such as kidnapping or electoral fraud is viewed in this light. The question arises: how

often do government-controlled stations become a voice to the citizens on issues which touch on government failings?

It is important to note that the survival of a TV or radio station controlled by the government is guaranteed to the extent that it caters for and protects the interest of government elites. It is indisputable, but regrettably so, that the interest of the government elites are assumed by both the elites and the broadcast operatives to be synonymous with public interest and, by extension, the interest of the station, such that the various broadcast channels are but a mere megaphone of the government. When critical voices are shut out, when broadcasting is used to disparage and prosecute dissenting citizens, it is reasonable to posit that broadcasting and its operatives are in fetters, an ineluctable gulag. A media channel in fetters is in tatters, always disseminating a version of reality that agrees with and supports or services the structures of power. Under these circumstances, public service, though claimed by the government and broadcast operatives alike, becomes an illusion.

3.3 BROADCASTING AND THE JAWS OF COMMERCIALISM

Commercialism, according to McQuail (2005, p. 550), is a “process by which media structures and contents come to reflect the profit-seeking goals of media industries and are too much governed by market considerations.” The

commercialisation of media operations stems from the laissez-faire model of the economy “where producers compete with one another to sell their products to consumers. Thus, media corporations are seen as having to compete for the attention and loyalty of their consumers, the audience” (Watson and Hill, 2006, p. 47). Under commercialisation, the consumer is sovereign, and media organisations tailor their products in line with audience desires, tastes and preferences.

In commercialism, news contents are commodified. McQuail (2005, p. 550) explains two aspects of commodification:

One is the treatment of all media messages as ‘products’ to be brought or sold in the media market, without reference to other criteria of value. The other is that the audience can be treated as a commodity to be sold by media to advertisers at so much per head, according to ratings and other market criteria.

Watson and Hill (2006, p. 49) further explain commercialism as “the notion that information is something upon which the possessor can put a price; thus information is brought and sold because it is a commodity rather than a public service.” The argument by Watson and Hill is apt, because in any situation that media content is given a commercial value, it ceases to be a public service but some product to be bought and sold for profits to the investor.

Commercialism, just like government control of the media, operates within clearly defined principles. As McQuail as well as Watson and Hill already cited have alluded to, media operators within the laissez-faire system place premium on the expected profits from the products to be put in the market for would-be consumers. Public service takes a back seat or disappears completely. References to public service by the operators are a mere cloak to disguise their profit motive.

Profit motive drives both the private broadcast operators and their counterparts who are publicly funded. Once a broadcast station is driven by the profit motive, it must, of necessity, operate in line with the principles of a laissez-faire economy. This, undoubtedly, affects the operations and output of such stations. Advertisers and other corporate sponsors, without coming out in the open, surreptitiously dictate the contents to be put on the public sphere as well as the timing of such publication. They also dictate the relationship between a media organisation and their (advertisers' and sponsors') rivals.

While media organisations do compete in terms of creativity in content, there seems to be more and stiffer competition in wooing advertisers. Oftentimes, broadcast organisations, both government-controlled and privately owned, have engaged in excessive competition:

A dog-eat-dog competition which occurs when a market contains more competitors than its economy can readily support. Failing stations or services, struggling

desperately to survive, begin to cut corners and resort to substandard (if not downright illegal) practices in order to keep from going under. Even the more successful stations in the market may be forced to lower their standards simply to meet the competition (Head, 1985, p. 94).

The free enterprise system dictates that if this downward spiral occurs, its end result will be the elimination of the weak and the survival of the strong.

The 'in-fighting' within the broadcast industry in Nigeria for advertisements and sponsorship of programmes has provoked the unending demand by private broadcast operators that government-funded broadcast outfits should not 'struggle' against them for the little advertising revenue, given the fact that those government-controlled stations already enjoy the largesse of public funds. This article is neither concerned with the competition for advertising revenue and sponsorship among Nigerian broadcast stations, nor the necessity or centrality of commercialisation to the survival of the broadcast industry. The concern here is that to the extent that players in the industry actively seek and secure advertising and programme sponsorship, to that extent can they not lay claim to genuine public service in their operations. Profit motive and public interest, in most cases, run parallel to each other. In the contest of importance and priority between profit motive and public service, the former often wins. Just as government control of broadcasting compels the affected stations to serve as both a megaphone for the official structures and instrument of affliction for the 'off-the-line' citizens, commercial broadcasting subjugates the benefiting station to the dictatorship of its

corporate sponsors. It makes broadcast organisations to pander to needs of advertisers. In these circumstances, the major causality is always public service.

It is sometimes argued that broadcast stations do produce programmes that educate, entertain and inform the public; programmes that are a must-watch or must-listen. The truth which is varnished by the education, entertainment and information functions is that the stations are doing so, not for the love of the public, but to attract a large, reasonable audience which would be sold to the advertiser. Hence, the audience, as noted earlier, becomes a product, just as the content of a media programme. And the advertisers and programme sponsors are ruthless: once they conclude that the audience of a particular channel is shrinking, the advertisement and programme sponsorship go elsewhere!

There is no denying the fact that keen competition among broadcasters for endorsement often leads to creativity and higher programme quality in order to impress and capture the advertisers and programme sponsors. However, as Ehrenberg and Barwise (1983, p. 13) have noted:

When television programming is determined by an unregulated market, it does not in practice give people the degree of choice they want. The market place is not that simple. Other factors are involved...Market forces and competition can be in the consumer's interest. But they are not synonymous.

It is undeniable that market forces do lead to competition, enlargement of the coast of operation, creativity, freedom of choice to the audience and freedom of employment to speakers, musicians, writers, actors and all who seek their chance on the air (Head, 1985). Yet the consumer's interest cannot be said to be synonymous with a *lasses-faire* system whose primary motive is not the audience *per se*, but the satisfaction of the audience as a means to economic success.

While private broadcast operators are explicit in their motive – profit – government – controlled outfits sometimes find themselves at crossroads – whether to pander to the needs of government with the power to hire and fire at will, or to commercial interest for self-sustenance in the face of dwindling subvention from government. Government – controlled stations have, on many occasions, sacrificed commercial interests for the 'good' of government officials. Like a bat that confounds classification either as a bird or mammal, government-controlled stations roam between commercialism which is a permissive broadcast orientation and government-control which is the authoritarian orientation. Quite often, news with commercial contents is turned back at the news gate because the content may be considered by the media operatives as 'harmful' to government.

Broadcasting in Nigeria roams between the merciless gulag of government control and the sharp, incisive jaws of commercialism, each system with the principles which define its operation. Some of the principles may overlap, though. The meeting point for government control and commercialism is that each seeks

to make its influence to be overbearing. The difference lies in the fact that while government may be brazen in its attempt to influence content, commercialism is subtle and less direct, but, nevertheless, effective in limiting content, and, in the long run, jeopardizing and making a casualty of the interest of the public that the broadcast organisation claims to serve. Since government-control serves government, and commercialism caters for profit, it is imperative that the public who has become a whipping boy in the hands of broadcast operators be actually served. This is where public service broadcasting becomes a necessity.

3.4 PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING: WEDGING THE GULAG AND THE JAW

Public service broadcasting is predominantly European (Eastman and Ferguson, 2008), and owes its roots to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) which gave the world a model of broadcasting at its debut as a public corporation in 1927. Since then, the BBC has been a major influence on the landscape of broadcasting across the world (Branston and Stafford, 2008). Nigeria, as a former colonial territory of Britain, the home of the BBC, adopted the BBC model on April 1, 1957, when the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation was created. According to Otu (2006, p. 4):

The prospects that broadcasting could serve as a veritable instrument for fostering national unity and

development was to be explored and exploited to the full. Consequently, Government began to think of forming a corporation to superintend over the development of a truly Nigerian Broadcasting Service. The corporation was to be modelled after the BBC but adapted to the exigencies of the regional political arrangement of the Nigerian nation...The NBC in the fashion of the BBC was given a freehand to perform its functions...

Otu (2006, p. 4) further states that the NBC which began operation on April 1, 1957, after the Nigerian Broadcasting Service signed off the previous day, “was the first public service broadcasting corporation of its kind in any colonial territory. Government specifically desired the NBC to be modeled after the BBC as reflected in the document containing the proposals for the NBC.” Otu (2006, p. 5) states that to underline its public service nature, the NBC:

By its conception...was not to be an arm of government, it was designed to have some form of public ownership, operation and control. The essential role of the corporation...was to reflect the strength and diversity of Nigerian thought, satisfying the differing interests and tastes, fostering ethical values, providing the impetus and creating a conclusive climate for development.

Although broadcasting in Nigeria has undergone some metamorphosis, it is glaring that at its beginning, broadcasting was in principle and in practice meant to be a public service. According to Eastman and Ferguson (2009), public service broadcasting is non commercial, and should not compete for commercials. On the basis of this, “it means that the public station programmer is relieved of one of the

most relentless constraints inhibiting a commercial programmer's freedom of choice" (2009, p. 222).

Rodman (2006) states that public service stations should, apart from their non commercial status, provide alternative programming that may not be available on commercial radio and television. As Eastman and Ferguson (2009, p. 222) have stated: "Public TV programming need not pursue the largest possible audience...public broadcasting has a special mission to serve the audiences that would otherwise be neglected because they are too small to interest commercial broadcasting." McQuail (2005, p. 566) corroborates that public service broadcasting:

Is publicly funded and operated in a non profit way in order to meet the various public communication needs of all citizens... Survives on public interest and because it can meet certain communication needs that tend to be neglected in commercial systems because they are unprofitable.

In Nigeria today, all broadcast outfits are either government-controlled or solely profit-driven, and therefore fall sort of the basic ingredients of public service broadcasting. And they seem to also fall short of the point by McQuail (2005) that public service stations are under obligation to be neutral and balanced – holding the middle ground and acting as a broker between disputants rather than being a participant.

Branston and Stafford (2008, p.134) state that the purposes of public service broadcasting require the provision of:

- (i) programmes dealing with a wide range of subject-matters;
- (ii) broadcasting services that are likely to meet the needs and satisfy the interests of as many different audiences as possible;
- (iii) a proper balancing of programming; and
- (iv) services which maintain general standards of programme-making.

The authors also identify four core components of public service broadcasting:

- (i) range and balance (range of genres and sub-genres, balance for genres, availability);
- (ii) quality (decency, production values, challenging and innovatory programming);
- (iii) diversity (of audiences, producers, values and opinions); and
- (iv) social values (cultural diversity, informed democracy and education citizenry).

For a station to achieve these public service objectives, it is necessary to state, as McQuail (2005, p. 179) has, that public service broadcasting is:

A system that is set up by law and generally financed by public funds...and given a large degree of editorial and operating independence...The rationale for such systems is that they should serve the public interest by meeting the important communication needs of society and its citizens, as decided and reviewed by way of the democratic political system.

Left to it, free market cannot satisfy these goals because it might be unprofitable to do so. Therefore, for the system to be effective, it must meet certain structural conditions: a founding charter or mission; public financing; independence from government; mechanisms of accountability to the society and the general public (McQuail, 2005). Rodman (2006, p. 229) sums it all: "Broadcasting should operate in the public interest, convenience and necessity."

Interestingly, it is these structural conditions, modified as the need may arise, that have sustained the BBC as the leading public service broadcaster in the world. The BBC is founded on a charter that defines the organisation's administrative structure and its relationship with the government and politicians as a whole. Although much of its funding comes from the government, there are many insulators that prevent government from using its "financial prerogatives to influence or control the BBC's programme policies and output" (Head, 1985, p. 73). That the BBC has, with admirable success, been able to maintain its independence over the years should inspire Nigeria to give room to a system that comes between the extremes of predominantly government control and predominantly profit-driven.

A causal look at the laws establishing government-controlled stations in Nigeria would indicate that, really, they are fashioned according to the BBC. This has been so since NBC days. Yet as the hood alone does not make the monk, legal structure alone does not make the broadcasting system a public service outfit. Quite interestingly, the realities on ground are contrary to the spirit and letter of the establishing laws. Government stations falsely assume that being public corporations they belong to the people. The FRCN, for example, claims to uplift the people and unite the nation. Yet one asks, uniting under whose terms and under whose version of reality? The answer is simply government.

The key to public service broadcasting is service which comes in as a wedge between the goals of profit and the goals of government control of broadcasting, and according to Watson and Hill (2006), the first duty of public service broadcasting is to cater for the information needs of the public within a democracy; serving to inform, educate and entertain, and to regard audience as constituting citizens, members of communities and individuals rather than merely consumer. PSB is essentially the creation of government in the first instance, though for this reason safeguards are built into the system so that its operation is (relatively) free of government control and influence.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Since the Privatisation and Commercialisation Decree of 1992 and the National Broadcasting Commission of the same year, the broadcasting landscape has not been the same again. Government (state and federal) and private operators seem to know no bounds in sourcing for advertisements, while government-controlled stations struggle with the additional weight of government control. It is sad that the tyranny of government-control and the silent dictatorship of commercialism have left the audience dissatisfied. To be an effective participant in the communication process as both sender and receiver under the prevailing system, one would have to be part of a clique or have a pocket with contents that can readily pay to have a voice. While the existing broadcasting structures need not be dismantled, there is need, however, to have an additional broadcast model – a public service model – that is free from advertisers and government control and modeled after the BBC. The BBC itself has occasionally come under the pressure of government to compromise, but the institutional safeguards within the system have enabled the corporation to weather the storm and maintain its credibility of non partisanship.

5.0 SUMMARY

That the Nigerian Broadcasting Service and later the NBC were created in this model underlines the fact that Nigerians, from the beginning, were interested in and willing to have a system whose voices are not dictated by the size and contents of the pockets or by being part of the royal choir, but by having

something of genuine interest for all. Even the operators of the present system are not shy to accept that in spite of their claims to public service or public interest, their motivation lies elsewhere as a result of the political and economic foundations of such stations.

If broadcasting is to contribute effectively to the attainment of genuine democracy, there is need to address public interest and allow it to co-exist with other interests (government and commercial). By so doing, we would liberate broadcasting, at least to some extent, from the gulag of government control and the jaws of commercialism.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the role of the NBC in the regulation of public service broadcasting in Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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