Media Stakeholders' Perspectives and Policy Integrity

Oladokun Omojola

Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria

Objectivity in media practice is the journalist's ability to give every segment of the audience an equal right to be heard and seen, to read or to react. Disappointingly, that objectivity does not extend to the policies that regulate that practice. This concern is demonstrated in the incoherence and lack of judgment that exist in media policy domains where journalism is confined to a deal between only the journalist and his or her audience. This linear process conspicuously excludes those crucial stakeholders whose interests tremendously affect the destiny of journalists and their audience. The development has adversely affected policy rationality in some developing countries as media policies lack interactive planning, robust policy discourses and stakeholder dialogue, thereby undermining policy integrity. This paper attempts to argue that for a media policy to be truly in public interest, formulators have to expand their horizon beyond government, journalists and their audience to other stakeholders. Newsmakers, who fall into a category of such stakeholders, can make the journalist's pen run dry if they go on strike! Others include media users, media owners and media scholars. The paper recommends the process of harnessing the perspectives of these stakeholders in a manner that can make analysts consider drafting a fresh all-encompassing media policy for developing countries, especially those of Africa.

Keywords: audience, media policy, media stakeholders, policy integrity

Introduction

On Tuesday, September 29, 2009, Reuters reported on its website that the Chinese state-owned oil and gas company, China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC), was in talks with the government of Nigeria to buy large stakes in some of the world's richest oil blocks located in the Niger Delta region of the West African country. The potential deal was about six billion barrels of oil that could fetch Nigeria some $30 billion. The *Financial Times* (FT) had published the story the previous day and the Reuters reporter had requested the president of CNOOC Limited, YANG Hua, to confirm if he was aware of the FT's report. Hua's response was swift: "You know my standard answer: no comment".

Hua's response, whether no or yes, was highly anticipated by stakeholders in oil and gas business around the world, especially those in the upstream sector. Anticipation rose because, if the deal sailed through, it would lend credence to the growing profile of China as an active force in Africa. Besides that, it is a deal that could signal the declining influence of Western oil giants like Shell, Chevron, Exxon Mobil, Agip and the like, who had been the traditional African partners. Moreover, many Nigerians also eagerly expected CNOOC's official response as the huge cash involved would go a long way in making their country achieve her official dream of becoming one of the 20 world's biggest economies in the year 2020—a big leap from its status, which hovers around 40th currently.

Oladokun Omojola, Ph.D., Department of Mass Communication, Covenant University.

Hua's no-comment response succeeded in heightening the anticipation of Reuter's audience, especially those who would need to factor in whatever his response might be into their plans and budget for the year ahead. Hua's response brought to the fore the crucial importance of the newsmaker to the entire media system and journalism practice. It is an example of the great power that the newsmaker wields. The magnitude of this power is aptly demonstrated in a worst-case scenario where he goes on an industrial action. The Reuters reporter is the *Journalist* while Hua is the *Newsmaker,* in the following rehashed conversation:

> Journalist: Hello Sir, I work with Reuters News Agency.
> Newsmaker: It's a pleasure meeting you.
> Journalist: I have a question for you: The Financial Times published a story that your company is cooking a deal with Nigeria that would see it lift some six billion barrels of oil and generate some $30 billion in revenues. Are you aware of this story?
> Newsmaker: Well, Journalist, I cannot answer your question.
> Journalist: Why?
> Newsmaker: I am on strike right now. I cannot talk to you. You know, as a newsmaker, my job is to supply the raw material, which you will process and sell as news to your audience. I cannot supply you that right now. When I call off my strike, please call back, I should be able to answer you then!

This scenario looks preposterous but it is a possibility. This possibility is explainable. Assuming a group that calls itself British Newsmakers Association announces its formation and makes known its commitment to enforce the interests of newsmakers. There is no law, convention or custom that can stop or prevent such a group from being formed, which means its existence will not be illegal. What is not illegal has potentials, a future and a hope.

Paradoxically, newsmakers, in spite of the crucial role they play as news sources, have not been accorded the honor due to them. One way this is made manifest is the manner in which journalists have unilaterally taken decisions that concern both parties, by taking advantage of the absence of an umbrella organization for newsmakers. Pitifully, this neglect extends to the domain of media policies (especially in Africa) where policy formulators tend to zero in on what the journalist can do for his audience and vice versa and hardly what newsmakers have got to offer.

Media Policy Structure and the Problem in Context

It is not only the newsmakers that have not been accorded the dignity due to them in terms of their continual contribution to the sustenance of the journalism profession. Much attention is paid to journalists and their audience to the neglect of other stakeholders who contribute immensely to the news flow process. In this paper, it is argued that one major reason why media policies are not performing up to expectation, especially in many developing countries, is that policy formulators construct their contents around a linear system. This system reduces the media business to a deal between journalist and her audience, where audience means news content consumers whether paying or consuming free.

The irony here is that while such policies aggressively pursue objectivity by ensuring that the journalist accords equal opportunities to her audience, it disappointingly neglects those critical stakeholders who ensure that the journalist survives and does not die. This linearity implies that the formation of knowledge and attitudes, which ultimately shape development in a democratic setting, is presented as the sole responsibility of the journalist. This wrong impression has shut out other media stakeholders as critical enhancers of the

journalism profession.

The circumstances in which contemporary journalists find themselves are proof that forces outside their territory determine the survival and sustenance of their job. For instance, to get "raw materials" which they run through the mill and process as news, they rely solely on the newsmakers. If, after packaging the information and the news content consumers refuse to buy, read, watch, listen or browse, their work becomes inconsequential and illegitimate because the availability of an audience legitimizes a journalist and his profession. If media scholars who teach journalists their work refuse to impart knowledge, journalists become stagnant and start smelling.

Moreover, journalists also rely and depend heavily on commercials from advertising agencies and public relations officers who daily receive requests from the management of news producers for a share of their ad spend. Whenever the journalist's interests need to be protected or furthered, he turns to his association or some non-government organizations whose job is to do that. Most journalists are employees of media owners who are not into journalism but for business. Crafters of media policies that only take cognizance of government, the journalist and his audience will have to do a rethink and do the right thing by coming up with an all-embracing system that works on an all-inclusive principle.

It is not only in the area of media policies that the linearity is a disease. The search of global ethics for journalists has also become a cause for concern because searchers seem to be working on a theory that all that is to a journalist is her audience. Crafters of media ethics are drumming it into the ears of journalists to always strive hard to satisfy their audience in some simplistic expectation categories (Williams, 2004). These include fundamental expectation, which is the capacity and ability of the audience to understand the language of the mass medium. The training dimension is indicated when the medium is presented to the audience in a way that increases its knowledge and skill. Personal expectations have to do with particular benefits that are available to different parts or constituents of the mass audience. The journalist performs these responsibilities within the ambit of the law, constitution and some regulations of both local and international dimensions.

However, it is becoming clear by the day and has been demonstrated through research (Bruce, 1994, pp. 245-251) that laws, regulations and conventions constitute only a partial guaranty for ethical behavior. Brumback (1991, p. 354) corroborates this:

> A program that does nothing more than keep behavior legal… would not be a *bona fide* ethics program. It would be more of a law enforcement program. Laws and regulations are not the answer to keeping [journalists'] behavior above the bottom line of ethics.
> The universality that characterizes the eventual moral system makes important the contributions of individuals ozer institutions that have close connections and deep affinity with the contents of the media. (Omojola, 2008, p. 175)

In this paper, it is predicted that these unappreciated stakeholders—newsmakers, media scholars, media owners, media users and non-governmental organizations will, in a matter of time, step up acts in order to leverage the media business to their advantage. This process has already started and is demonstrated in reactions during interactions with journalists. One of such reactions is the no-comment regime by which newsmakers deny journalists crucial answers to pressing questions and leave them with unimpressive reporting of substance. YANG Hua's answer is an example of that. Moreover, citizen journalism practice, especially by those who are doing it on the Internet, is a way of telling the professional communicator that there are alternatives to professional performance.

Media Stakeholders and Their Consequentiality

Newsmakers

Regular procurement of raw materials is germane to any manufacturing process and it is a critical factor in the inventory of the factory's inputs. For instance, a steelmaker needs a combination of iron ore and other metals as raw materials before he can make steel after running them through the mill. Statisticians need data from the field as raw materials in order to carry out an analysis. In the same manner, newsmakers are the sources who supply the "raw materials" that journalists run through their editorial mill before they are packaged as "finished goods" in the form of print, broadcast and web contents to their audience. "Journalists rely on newsworthy sources for information and opinion" (Roth, 2002, p. 355) and at the level of reliance one is in the state of need in order to survive.

Suppliers of raw materials do get paid for their supplies. The steelmaker pays the iron ore supplier. Even if he gets it on credit, he is merely postponing payment, but he must pay. Unfortunately, the newsmaker supplies the raw materials the journalists need for their news mill but he never gets paid. Besides that, when issues that border on the journalist crop up, especially with her social responsibilities, the newsmaker is hardly regarded as a stakeholder, let alone a business partner.

Many journalists are fond of the cliché—"according to our reliable source"—which suggests that their source has made their story worthy of trust. Reliability, in whatever circumstance, situation, or guise, has a price tied to it that someone has paid. In this case, either the journalist or the source must have paid. If it is the journalist who paid, her compensation in terms of salary and wages, was guaranteed. If it is the news source who secured the reliability, how would he get paid?

The newsmaker is a victim of the curse of casual relationship. A journalist, in the course of her duties, does a lot buying and paying. When placing a call to the newsroom, she pays the telephone service provider. When driving to or from the same newsroom, she pays the filling station that fueled her car. Her laptop computer and the Internet service on it are both running on her bill. However, after getting her "raw material" from the news source, she discontinues the payment. "Hey, Mr. Newsmaker, though you supply the raw material for my news mill, you aren't gonna get a penny from me!"

Most ethical codes caution journalists against paying their sources for information and many professional bodies urge people to be wary of sources wanting to let out information for financial favors. The import of this argument is that paying sources for information could compromise the credibility of a news report. Journalists agree that this is a proper decision but it is crucial to stress that it is a decision made without the input of newsmakers who are the center of attraction in this matter and who supply the biggest input that journalists need to keep their engine running.

The morality issue that arises at this point as to whether newsmakers should be paid for keeping the journalists pen running is indicated on both sides here. The issue has been resolved on the journalists' side that they should not pay. For the other side, the issue is not for journalists to resolve but for newsmakers to decide. The question is: what if newsmakers are insisting they are paid for releasing information, the same way journalists are insisting they cannot pay, who will suffer the consequences? This paper does not support pecuniary agitation on the part of news sources but it is expedient to stress that it is unethical for journalists to usurp the power of newsmakers by exercising finality on a decision they should not have unilaterally taken.

Some reasons may be adduced to support the perspective of journalists with regard to not wanting the

newsmaker to be paid. Two of them are as fowllows: Firstly, the responsibility of the journalist is guaranteed by the constitution in a democratic environment, and newsmakers asking for money would be an abortion of that responsibility; Secondly, sometimes, news sources are not humans or non-living things who can reason enough to demand pay.

These two points are subject to challenge. In most advanced countries, existing laws and to some extent, constitutions help guarantee the right of the journalist to perform her responsibility but the same laws do not forbid newsmakers from making claims for what rightly belongs to them. Secondly, even if news sources are not human, in one way or another, persons will ultimately be behind such sources and often are the ones who give credibility to such news sources. If a lion is making waves in a zoo, the lion is truly a newsmaker but the journalist's report may not be complete until the zookeeper or a zoologist has something to say about the lion. A reverse press conference is a good forum to have insight into the potentialities of the newsmaker as well as his feelings towards the journalist.

It is in policymaking that the newsmaker's inconsequentiality is carried to a head. If journalists induce this inconsequentiality, then policymakers rub it in. Media policymakers hardly reckon with newsmakers and where they are reckoned with, it is limited to consultation and never extended to engagement. Journalists are agenda setters and central to the formation of knowledge and attitude but that centrality is hinged on the cooperation of the newsmakers.

Media Scholars/Educators

Media scholars are the ones who teach and train people to become journalists. Their job also involves research and social construction of media contents and in performing these roles, they are constrained to be the custodians of the secrets and principles that drive the business. However, their visibility in the media policy domain is low when compared with government and journalists who treat the media audience as all there is. Their low visibility is attributable to the belief that media scholars and educators are supposed to remain neutral (Stark & Kelly, 2006, pp. 13-14) as the "fathers" of the industry and should allow their "children"—journalists—to stand in for them since they, the journalists, are the eyes through which the world sees them.

This reasoning is defective because in the policymaking domain, it is not that media scholars are not engaged as co-policymakers. The problem is that they are not properly engaged. Media policy in some African countries has proof of consultation with media scholars and educators but this had been done at either the informal or personal level. In most of the policies considered below, media scholars are hardly engaged as an institution. This has drastically underestimated the potential of the contributions they could make in order to make a media policy a success story. Most associations of media literacy that exist even in advanced countries have limited themselves to influencing school curricula, organizing conferences and training sessions for members rather than finding ways to making the authorities and policymakers aware of the benefits that their contributions will make to any eventual policy framework.

Media Owners

The performance of media owners in terms of making themselves relevant in policymaking is not significant. Media owners have been engaged as part of media policy formulators in many advanced and developing countries but their engagement has been limited. For instance, the Newspaper Proprietors Organization (NPO) of Nigeria was part of the formulation of a code of ethics for Nigerian journalists. The

structural problem here is that newspaper media owners are left to draft policies for broadcast journalists not minding the idiosyncrasies of that category. Moreover, recommendations made often do not include the nature of the relationship between journalists and their employers but are always limited to the way journalists should behave in the course of their duties. This is clearly demonstrated in the Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists, which was formulated in 1998 (NPO, 1998).

When this matter became an issue during one of our departmental seminars few months ago, one discussant argued that government or policy formulators might be justified in ignoring media owners when it comes to policymaking. The argument is that these owners (especially those who emerged from mergers and have become gargantuan) already wield so much power; that asking them to be part of policymaking gives them a solid opportunity to further foist their opinion and "greedy" lifestyle on the nation. This argument is not new. Miller (2002), while quoting the founding editor of *Texas Observer* (USA) Ronnie Dugger (2000, p. 49) says:

> … keep in mind how the structure of corporate journalism works. The owner of the corporation appoints the CEO who appoints the manager who appoints the editors. Those [dependent]… editors hire and fire the reporters and decide what stories the reporters are assigned to write, what stories they are not assigned to write, what the stories that are published say and how they say it, and what stories get killed.

This argument is probably tenable in developed countries. However, mergers are not common in many African countries and non-existent in some. Media owners have not grown beyond being useful. Besides that, government, which has always been the most potent force in policy formulation in African countries is always on hand to checkmate whatever excesses media owners are prone to. The gargantuan posture of a media owner cannot match up with often dictatorial tendencies of government, which has been a recurrent decimal in some developing countries in Africa and elsewhere.

Media Users

Media organizations depend on several sources of income, chief of which is advertising. In most media houses, the revenue earned has become one of the yardsticks for measuring performance (Kumar, 2003, p. 2179) and for survival. The peanuts that media houses get from subscription is nothing compared to advertising gross. Media and advertising have a symbiotic relationship in which media enhance the effectiveness of advertising (Hirschman & Thompson, 1997, p. 44). The media involved is a major intervening variable in the audience appraisal of advertising influence. It is impossible to do an assessment of the persuasive influence of advertising without the media through which the advertisement is exposed. When a media house is not run as social service but as a business system, then advertisers and media operators have a common domain where they meet. Therefore, advertising researchers who are fond of treating advertising as a separate domain would have to do a rethink.

Since advertising is the lifeblood of the media, which translates as wages for the journalist, profit for the media owner and consumers' access to media contents, it is in place to carry advertising along wherever the media go, especially when the issue at stake is the establishment of an institutional framework. While a media establishment would normally have its distinct advert executives to scout for business, journalists in Nigeria and many other African countries have also been the avenues through which adverts flow into the media. Some advertisements even place insertions in some newspapers simply as a result of good performance of the associated journalists. For instance, Lagos-based *The Guardian*, which has become one of the most respected

newspapers in Nigeria and the West African sub region, excels in property advertisements because it has a record of excellent reporting in that subsector. Unfortunately, most media policy formulators do not reckon with advertisers and their agents in policymaking as the policy reviews in this paper show.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

In Nigeria, the Media Rights Agenda (MRA) has been active in advancing the cause of journalists while in Ghana, the Media Foundation for West Africa has been an oasis for many journalists who suffer persecution or harassment. But a critical look at the activities of some of these NGOs would show that they do not justify the name that they bear. For instance, in the case of MRA, it claims to work for the "media" but in fact, it only works in the interest of the journalist as an individual. Journalists are not only the people or professionals who work in the media. The vagueness in some NGOs' objectives is exacerbated by their posture as government opposition rather than partners in progress. This has made government become scary of involving them in policy planning. Shedding the posture of antagonists will go a long way in giving a place to NGOs in media policy formulation.

Public Interest and Media Policy

The assertion in this paper is that for a media policy to be truly in the public interest and functional, policy formulators and analysts must think beyond journalism practice as a deal between the journalist and her audience. They should let their policy-drafting radar cover other stakeholders who contribute effectively to the sustenance of the business.

The concept of public interest in this case is multidimensional and highly variegated. For a journalist, public interest assumes the majoritarian perspective, which means her ability to appeal to the values and attitudes that are commonly shared by the multifarious segments of her audience. Therefore, journalists' ability to satisfy the majority of her audience is a determinant of the survival and sustenance of democracy, since she is dealing with the "sum of individual interests" that is paramount (McQuail, 1992, p. 22). In this case, some minor interests may not be covered but as long as the journalist's practice is in tune with the general will, she is believed to be working in the public interest. Public interest here, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, is "if the general will wills it" (cited in Benditt, 1973. p. 293).

The perspective of the media owner about public interest might not be the same as that of the journalist. The media owner is not in business to practice journalism but to make profit. Media giants who employ hundreds of journalists can claim that if they do not break even and make profit, journalists will lose their jobs, thereby putting pressure on government social security. Here, public interest becomes a wise and superior interest, unlike the majoritarian perspective that promotes the general will. According to Sorauf (1957, p. 621), these advocates "all seek to equate a particular interest with the public interest by attaching a priority to that interest. They perceive in it a special wisdom or advantage that gives the interest a prior claim to the support of public policy". Owing to the fact that this perspective rests on the hypothesis of superior wisdom and not on the reality of mass acceptance, pubic interest is subject to abuse as the public sector can become nothing more than a "clearing house" (Rauser & Zusman, 1992, p. 247) for these powerful special interests who have the will to make the government less autonomous.

For non-governmental organizations that are interested in the media, public interest would be a moral imperative. This relates to some absolute principles, which, according to Held (1970), are derivatives of some

larger social theory or ideology. It would be about promoting the happiness of practitioners in the media industry in the line of thinking of the English philosopher Bentham (2005), who asserts that mankind is under the control of pain and pleasure and that finding out the greatest happiness for the greatest people is imperative. The problem with this approach is finding what truly constitutes happiness.

From the foregoing, it is clear that each stakeholder has a different perspective of the public with concomitant limitations. It therefore becomes obvious that media policy crafters and analysts should take these divergent views into full cognizance before they can claim that their policies are in the public interest. The best way probably would be to see public interests as the equilibrium of perspectives. What emerges is a process of mutual adjustment and compromise between the conflicting or competing interests in the society. Any media public policy should be an indicator of such a compromise and that is in line with the democratic process.

The Linearity Problem and Effects on Public Media Policies

Good media policymaking is a function of practical reasoning and the reasoning is practical when government and journalists who dominate the process cultivate the altruistic habit and realize that other interests also exist that should be aggregated. According to Manzer (1984, p. 580), "The model of practical reasoning is… when, within the limits of reasonable foresight and care and appropriate regard for interpersonal differences, all wants of all persons are included in the decision-maker's calculus". Public policymaking process is carried out in phases which are conceptually distinct. It starts with determining the public problems that need solving, determining priorities for collective action, developing optional courses for action for resolving those problems, implementing the collective actions and then evaluating their impacts.

Regrettably, this collective action is not indicated in media policies emanating from many developing countries. The rationality that characterizes such policies is one-sided because the criteria for evaluating options and making decisions among them are not universal but based on the knowledge of a privileged few. A concrete model of public policy should incorporate not simply the journalist, but also the strategic behavior of the various interest groups (Rausser & Foster, 1990, p. 642). Implementation of policies in these countries has always been an issue in spite of appeal to emotion or reason, material incentives and force, simply because it lacks those values that are common to all stakeholders.

There have been debates regarding the influence that interest groups wield in the construction of public policies. Some argue that interest groups are very powerful and can have their way even if it is not consistent with the general will (Wright, 1996; Domhoff, 1998). This is the case when such interest groups are instrumental to the installation of the regime in power, which in turn formulates and implements policies that are convergent with these groups. Others, however, have argued that the influence of interest groups is only consequential when it is not at variance with public opinion (Kollman, 1998), and that since politicians depend on the public majority for election victories, it is doubtful if they would ever respond to the political demands of these interest groups.

The second argument is sound when examined in the context of the developed world where democracy is on a sound footing. In the case of Nigeria where democracy is at its infancy, the argument is fragile. Nigeria has had a string of intermittent democratic rules and the current democratic dispensation is only about ten years old. Most electoral verdicts do not carry the general will but exemplify the views and interest of powerful groups who wield enormous economic power and perpetrate anti-democratic acts. Therefore, not factoring the interests of such powerful interest groups in media public policies in such a political setting has been a major

challenge in the implementation of such policies, especially when the number of such interest groups is significant.

When a policy is not working, buck-passing ensues between the policymaker and policy analysts as regards where things went wrong. An area of disagreement is often that a critical sector of the population has been missed out. The continual prioritization of the journalist and her audience by policymakers elicits constant error, "which is a consistent pattern that marginalizes or overemphasizes certain sections of the population (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1992, p. 42) especially when those sections are vital to the overall population.

Media Policy Examples in Africa

Nigeria

Media policy has been a contentious issue in Nigeria since independence in 1960, it started as antagonism between the colonialists and the press (Mgbejume, 1991, p. 49). The postcolonial administration did not see the *media as agents of development*, a concept which McQuail (1987, pp. 109-134; 1994, p. 69) preached but later abandoned. The matter came to a head in 1975 when the government nationalized all the television and radio networks as well as the major newspapers, which had hitherto been under the control of regional governments. The military regime took the fight to the constitution when it refused to visualize the media as development partners, as the original draft of the 1989 constitution did not define the role of journalists and their freedom. It took a fight back by the press before a vague and lean amendment was done to correct the deliberate error. While government was spending money to upgrade facilities in the acquired media organizations, it did not come up with any clear cut media policy because it felt it was not the duty of the Nigerian government to formulate such. Rather, "Nigerians can flirt with any ideology of their choosing" (West Africa, 1977, p. 408).

The seven or eight military regimes (one had a military president and civilian governors) which dominated the polity between 1966 and 1999 regulated the media through decrees. The decrees were designed basically to protect the military rulers from false accusation and punish journalists who dared the government through their pens. One of these decrees, the Nigerian Press Council Decree of 1978, established an 18-member council which did not recognize the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ)—the country's umbrella body for all journalists—as a trade union, which meant NUJ could not be allowed to register or delist members as well as declare trade disputes with government. Out of the 18 members, four could form a quorum and take decisions, which was undemocratic. This heightened tension between the government and stakeholders.

However, since 1999 when Nigeria changed to a civilian regime, Nigeria's economy has massively expanded with a corresponding expansion of private media establishments. There are more functional and prosperous privately owned newspapers than government-owned while the same feat is set to be achieved in the broadcast sector. The government exercises little or least control over the Internet while Nigeria's private sector-driven movie industry is the world's second largest, according to United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) rating.

The expanding opportunities seemed to have helped in drastically reducing the friction between government and the media, as the government has begun to appreciate the need to respect the rule of law and make itself accountable to the citizenry. The Nigerian Press Organization (NPO), which is the private sector arm of the Nigerian media industry, has three visible member associations—The Nigerian Union of Journalists

(NUJ), Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) and Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE). This organization has met with the government representatives—the Nigerian Press Council (NPC)—on a number of occasions to fashion out a Mass communication policy for the country, which would be in alignment with the Nigerian Press Law.

In most meetings that were held, other stakeholders who sustain the livelihood of journalists were never or hardly given a voice. It is hard to see the group meet with the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) from where the media in all categories get their adverts and commercials. Likewise, there were not at the meetings representatives of newsmakers and news content consumers whose interests the government and journalists claim to be protecting. It was a case of cutting somebody's hair in his absence. Furthermore, media scholars (as a group) and media NGOs did not have a voice there.

The constant target population, indexed by the absence of these crucial stakeholders where they matter most, reflects in the contents of both the Nigerian Press Law and *NPO's Code of Practice* (1998). Common to these two documents were themes such as journalists' relationship with their audience, registration, editorial independence, objectivity, public interest and so on. The two documents do not address the oneness or harmony that should exist in order to have a better media industry; neither do they give any insight into the relationship of journalists with these crucial stakeholders. It is ironic that while government keeps seeking ways to make the media an agent of the country's unity, it refuses to appreciate the harmony that must drive the industry in order to achieve that unity.

Kenya

It is not only in Nigeria that the role of the media is indistinctly defined. Section 79 of the Kenyan Constitution "defines the right to freedom of expression, without specific reference to the media. The formulation is convoluted and vague, which allows for the violations of the right" (Moggi & Tessier, 2001, p. 4). This constitution as well as a couple of civil and criminal law statutes that formed the basis of administering the media in Kenya, proved incapable of making the media centers of excellence.

In 1992, when the political space widened with a multi-party system, government proposed the introduction of press laws. But the mistrust of the government by journalists led some top editors to make a preventative move by saying they preferred a self-regulatory system that puts them in charge. To demonstrate this, they set up a task force to address a range of contents for an eventual press law. Unlike the case of Nigeria, the Kenyan task force was more open. Besides the mainstream media practitioners, it consulted with several interest groups including media owners associations, political parties, some NGOs, advertising associations and went as far as media practitioners in Tanzania, Uganda and a few other countries. The task force submitted its report to the country's Attorney General who transposed the document into Kenya Communication Act, which set up the Kenyan Communication Commission to do the regulation. In addition to this, the *Code of Conduct for Journalists and the Mass Media* was also crafted in 2001 to complement previous efforts.

It, however, turned out that the various consultations carried out to ensure that the controls systems have universal appeal, did not reflect in the eventual document. A public media policy should not be a mere reflection of the stakeholders' interests but a demonstration of those interests. The contents of both documents zero in on journalists and their peculiarities—information access and dissemination, ethical and professional standards for journalists and their enforcement etc.. The documents did not spell out or detail the nature of the relationship between the stakeholders in the media industry.

Malawi

Malawi became independent from Britain in 1964 and did not have any visible media policy for about 30 years. The one party state structure blurred the boundary between the political party and government both of whom are convergent with regard to the tight control of the media. After these turbulent years for the media, political pluralism was given a chance and that birthed the quest for media policy whose main objectives were the freedom to practice journalism and to safeguard the rights of media audience.

A list of the objectives of the policy shows similarity with what obtains in Nigeria, Kenya or Tanzania. This includes the facilitation of free flow of information, sustenance of an atmosphere free of censorship and arbitrary controls on the flow of information; and the promotion of the existence of free and pluralistic media, which reflects a diversity of ideas and opinions and so on. It does not spell out what is in it for stakeholders, on whom whose journalists rely for smooth practice.

Egypt

Under the Egyptian constitution, freedom of the press and the mass media is guaranteed in normal circumstances. Nevertheless, this is subject to some form of censorship in case the government is not comfortable with what is being published or broadcasted, especially when the matters at issue involve public safety, national security or state of emergency. Besides the constitution, Egypt also engages the Penal Code, Publications Law, Press Law, Emergency Law and Public Records Law to control the press. According to Ibrahim, Lachant, Nahas (2003, p. 4) one of these laws "allowed for the detention of journalists pending criminal investigations for breaking censorship laws, together with a stiffening of the fines and prison sentences imposed for relaying 'false news', deemed harmful to the state, public officials or the economy".

The constant visible personalities in the application of these laws are audience, journalists and government. The laws do not reckon with media scholars while advertisers do not have a say. NGOs have not been seen to be relevant in the scheme of things. The only visible organization that played an active role in media policy review, the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate (EJS), is not included in the list of NGOs operating in Egypt, and was in fact, part of the review as friends of government and could rather be described as one of the "GONGOs, or government- organized NGOs" (Carapico, 2000, p.15).

Recommendations and Conclusion

It is ironic that many governments in Africa are vigorously pursuing policies that would make the media in their countries agents of unity and development but are failing to harness the possibilities that harmonious operations among the stakeholders in the media industry can offer. An all-embracing framework, in the form of a comprehensive media policy, enables the platform to define how these stakeholders can relate with another and troubleshoot in the case of face-off. A vibrant media industry that appreciates its stakeholders will enhance the performance of journalists' responsibility to their audience.

A typical government in Africa seems to be carried away by the manner in which the journalists present their news to their audience in order to safeguard the position of the authorities against any reaction from the citizens. The same governments, however, seem to be oblivious of the fact that journalists do not depend on the peanuts they generate as income from subscribers and news content consumers, many of whom even have access to these contents free of charge. Without the contributions of advertisers and their agents, as well as other media users, the media industry cannot survive.

Likewise, media scholars have vital contributions to make with regard to the destiny of professional communicators. One of the qualifications of the contemporary journalist is that he or she must be a graduate of some tertiary institutions of journalism or communication. Scholars are those who make that possible. It is also a fact that without newsmakers, there will be no news. Practical, sound reasoning then dictates that whenever journalists and their audience become an issue, all these stakeholders should be carried along especially in the formulation of a functional media policy. To bring about such a document, the following points are recommended:

Government must regard the media industry as an agglomeration of stakeholders, all of whom are important to the business. It is improper to assume that all that is important to the formulation of media policies are government, journalists and their audience.

Before media policies are constructed, formulators should hold stakeholders' conferences, seminars and workshops where representatives come together and share their experiences and the organizers then articulate each stakeholder's position with a view to making it available for policymaking.

There is a note of caution here. At these meetings, no stakeholder is expected to display any preponderance, arrogance or superciliousness. All the stakeholders are appearing as equal partners who are meeting for the common good. Government agents or representatives should not see themselves as masters but as servant leaders. Journalists should bring under control "their proclivity for assigning blame" and extend their "limited range of their temporal interest" (Ungerleider, 2006, p. 71).

A sense of urgency is indicated in this initiative. Alternatively, do we wait until newsmakers wake up, get conscious of their immense influence, go on strike and let the journalists' pen run dry?

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