

Exploring Editors' Assessment of the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes of Journalism Trainees in Newspaper Organisations in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explored newspaper editors' assessment of journalism trainees on media attachment in their organisations. Adopting the metrics in the 2013 Poynter's *State of Journalism* survey, a 23-item questionnaire was administered to 30 newspaper editors who were selected through a multi-stage sampling process. Findings from the study showed that journalism trainees in the assessment of the editors, performed averagely in terms of knowledge and skills. However, in terms of their general attitude and personal attributes, the trainees are above average in their performances with over 60% of the editors agreeing that the trainees are willing to learn. Thus, it was recommended that journalism/mass communication training institutions should provide avenue for more practical application through mini newspapers and magazine productions with an effective supervision so that the students can hone their skills. In addition, journalism schools should make special arrangements with professional journalists to periodically deliver special lectures and interact with the students so they can share their practical experiences with the students.

Keywords: Editors, Assessment, Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Journalism Trainees, Newspapers, Media internship, Nigeria.

Introduction

Journalism education in Nigeria has come a long way. Several efforts have been made to ensure Nigeria produce some of the best journalists that are familiar with global practice. This however meant that standards be put in place to ensure some conformity with such global standards, particularly in view of advanced technologies that are shaping the profession. Geoffrey Nyarota, a Laureate of the UNESCO in 2002 agreed that while press freedom is the cornerstone of democracy and development, a well trained and professional cadre of journalists is in turn the foundation of that press freedom. Without the skills and expertise of the professional

journalist, the press cannot effectively campaign for economic development, democracy, accountability, transparency and for an end to the abuse of citizen's rights (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, (UNESCO, n.d).

This call to action has not gone unnoticed among education administrators in Nigeria. For instance, the draft Nigerian National University Commission's (NUC) Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) (2014) states that the philosophy and objectives of mass communication education in Nigerian universities, is to offer a professionally oriented programme for the aspiring Nigerian journalists. The objectives include training or retraining Nigerian journalists for leadership positions in the mass media organisations in Nigeria and the world; to raise and sustain the professional status of journalism in Nigeria; and bridge the divergent perspectives of newsgathering and dissemination.

In effect, the mass communication curriculum is to provide mass communication students with the opportunity to master the art of communicating and writing which may involve working under strict deadlines. To ensure the students live up to these expectations, they are to be trained on effective communication, which requires ability to think quickly, creatively, research and develop concise materials that will appeal to the mass audience. Within these contexts, the students are to be trained to be socially responsible, accurate, balanced and fair in their reportage of societal issues as members of the fourth estate of the realm. It is expected that the graduate should be equipped enough to establish his/her own Newspapers, Magazines, Public Relations and Advertising Agencies, or even his/her own radio and/or television stations

These competencies are consistent with the submissions in the *Poynter State of Journalism* (2013) Report. The Poynter journalism framework emphasises (1) knowledge, attitude and personal features; (2) news gathering skills; (3) news production; and (4) technical/multimedia skills. The report indicates that journalism education will undergo fundamental shifts in how journalism is taught and who teaches it. The report also states that “those who do not innovate in the classroom will be left behind just like those who choose not to innovate in the newsroom”. Invariably, communication and journalism graduates are expected to be competent in combining the theories with the practical along the lines of cognitive skills and behavioural attitudes.

Specifically, the students are expected to develop competencies in areas such as studio operations, computer literacy, and photo reporting and camera operations. It should also include the mastery of effective communications skills and public relations. The cognitive skills require that the students develop: an ability to quickly identify news and news values; an ability to recognise and respond to the social responsibilities of the press; and the capability to manage people under pressure both in the newsrooms and on the news beats. It also includes the ability to demonstrate commitment to professional excellence right from the media attachment programmes

and activities for the award of the degree (NUC-BMAS, 2014).

The behavioural attributes requires that the students should understand and appreciate the socio-cultural, and socio-political settings of the communities they serve and be able to set agenda for public discourse in their reportage. The students are expected to see the truth as the corner stone of good and responsive journalism; should be able to uncover rather than cover-up corruption in the society; and understand the psychology of human behaviour to be able to write logically about them while they serve as a voice for the voiceless in the community they serve (NUC-BMAS, 2014).

An opportunity to express and demonstrate these knowledge, attitudes and skills usually presents itself during the media attachment programme for the students. The media attachment programmes is also synonymous with media industrial training or media internship. Students on this programme are referred to as journalism trainees or interns. They are also commonly referred to as “IT students”. For instance, several of the polytechnics do at least six months internships and in many cases eight or twelve months, whereas the universities do three months for most of the times (Ojomo, 2015). During the programme, the students understudy the operations of the media organization they are attached to under a carefully monitored arrangement between the mass communication departments and the media organization. After the programme, the students submit a report of their experiences.

Industrial training or internship programme in tertiary institutions came into existence following Decree No. 47 of October 8, 1971 and as amended in 1990 to help students apply theoretical knowledge and school-based skills to practice and prepare them for the workplace as graduates. The decree resulted into the establishment of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1973, which in turn led to the establishment of the Student Industrial Work Experience scheme (SIWES) (Eyo, 2013). By the nature of their training and curriculum, mass communication students are also required to go through this industrial training by way of media attachment as basic requirement for graduation (NUC-BMAS, 2014).

In addition, Ojomo (2015) agreed that based on the vital need for practical, hands-on experience in journalism training, coupled with the near-total absence of appropriate equipment and environment to enable students gain the required experience, internships provide an important means in journalism curricula and training programme to plug the gaps created by deficiencies in the training system. The importance of internship is better appreciated in the light of the criticisms by professionals about the quality of journalism and mass communication graduates, especially the extreme tilt towards theory rather than practical in the students' knowledge of the field. However, gaining this experience is hinged on a well-planned internship programme.

In the scheme of things, editors in newspaper organisations are critical part of a well-planned media attachment programme. Newspaper editors review and modify the content provided by writers and other contributors. They verify facts, ensure

readability and understanding of the content for the reader and check for grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. Newspaper editors are often tasked with developing content ideas that fit well with the publication and sorting through submissions to decide what should be published. They may work with writers to help them develop or research a story. The editors are usually very experienced in the field of journalism (usually with over ten years experience) having graduated from the position of a reporter, correspondent, senior correspondent and assistant editors. Depending on their place of work, newspaper editors may also help manage space in the paper for photos, text and charts for stories. Typically, the newspaper editors give the final approval on a written piece prior to publication of the paper (“What are the Duties”, 2018).

Although in Nigeria, there is no uniform editorial organogram that operates across all the newspaper organisations, a four-level editorial organogram may be assumed and articulated based on the editorial team structure published on the editorial pages of the national newspapers. The newspapers include: *The Nation, The Sun, Business Day, Daily Independent, Vanguard, This Day, Daily Independent, Leadership and New Telegraph*. The first level is the managerial/executive editors, which include the managing editors, editor-in-chief, chairman editorial board, executive director/controllers (editorial). The second level include the title editors which may include the daily editor (Monday-Friday), Mid-week editor, Friday editor, Saturday editor and Sunday editor and Online editor. In some instances, Saturday and Sunday editors are referred to as Weekend editors. The third level is the desk/line editors, which may include Bureau chiefs who coordinate the outstations. The desk/line editors include: news editor, business editor, features editor, sports editor, health editor, special project editors, political editor, editorial/opinion page editor, arts and entertainment editor and photo editor.

The fourth level of editors is commonly referred to as the Page editors. In some organisations, they are referred to as Heads of page. This group of editors are directly responsible for producing pages for a specific beat under the main desk. For instance, the business desk may have the: brands and marketing editor, travel and tourism editor, Communication/e-business and ICT editor, Capital market editor, Maritime editor, Oil and Gas editor, Real Estate editor, Energy editor, Finance editor, Industry and Agriculture editor etc. (Olawunmi, 2014). The arts and entertainment desk may have the Life and Style editor, Glitz editor etc. The features desk may have the law and human rights editor, women and children editor, education editor etc. The editors are responsible for assigning the trainees to different beats, supervise their activities and sign their logbooks.

Importantly, to attain a degree in mass communication, the NUC-BMAS (2014) states that the student must satisfy, participate and complete the media attachment with high pass and must show his/her portfolios to that effect. In effect, because the editors at different levels are very crucial to the success of this programme

particularly due to their personal work experience with the trainees, an insight into their assessment of the trainees in line with the philosophy and objectives of journalism education in Nigeria makes this paper of a national interest.

The Problem

The 2013 Poynter's *State of Journalism* report indicates that journalism education will undergo fundamental shifts in how journalism is taught and who teaches it. The report states that those who do not innovate in the classroom will be left behind; just like those who choose not to innovate in the newsroom. In Nigeria, as part of innovation on how journalism is taught, the media attachment/internship programme has been recommended for journalism students to serve as a mini-practice field to express their knowledge and skills and gain invaluable experiences from their supervising editors and the media organisation as a whole. It is assumed that the students would have been taught the basics, enough for them to adapt to the tutelage they will receive and fully express themselves while on the internship.

During the programme, the editors in the media institutions are responsible for the supervision of the trainees, assess their level of knowledge and skills and provide guidance as it may be necessary. However, as essential as the newspaper editors are in the training of budding journalists, little is known about their assessment of the trainees' knowledge and skills vis-a-vis the influence of the media attachment programme on the trainees' readiness for the journalism profession. Beyond the reports filled in the students' log-book, the editors' assessment of the trainees in line with international metrics such as those established by in the 2013 Poynter's *State of Journalism* report will provide insight, close to a true reflection, on the performance of the trainees. Suggestions and areas of improvement may be formulated to advance discussions for an improved journalism-training programme. These among others are the issues this paper seeks to address.

Research Objectives

The overriding objective of this paper is to assess the perception of newspaper editors about the skills, attitude and knowledge of journalism trainees in newspaper organisations in Nigeria. It also hopes to identify challenges and make recommendations for the improvement of internship programmes for the students.

Research Questions

To address these objectives, the following research questions have been postulated:

1. What is the editors' level of awareness of media attachment programme for journalism students in Nigeria?
2. What is the editors' assessment of the general knowledge of journalism trainees in newspaper organisation in Nigeria?
3. What is the editors' assessment of the journalism skills of journalism trainees

- in newspaper organisations in Nigeria?
4. What is the editors' assessment of the attitudes and personal features of journalism trainees in newspaper organisations in Nigeria?
 5. What is the editors' assessment of the challenges faced by journalism trainees while on media attachment in newspaper organisations in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

The Instructional Theory of education provides a framework for this study. The instructional theory is a theory that provides clear guidance on how to better help people learn and develop. It focuses on how to arrange materials for promoting the education of people especially the youth (Reigeluth, 1999, Reigeluth, 2012). In this instance, these materials may include the contents of the curricula for journalism education or any other form of education.

The instructional theory originated from the United States of America in the 1970s, heavily influenced by the 1956 work of Benjamin Bloom, a University of Chicago professor, and the results of his Taxonomy of Education Objectives, one of the first modern codifications of the learning process. One of the first instructional theorists was Robert M. Gagne, who in 1965 published *Conditions of Learning* for the Florida State University's Department of Educational Research.

The theory was influenced by three basic theories in education. The theories are the Behaviourism Theory - that helps us understand how people conform to predetermined standards (learning as response acquisition); the Cognitivism Theory - which states that learning occurs through mental associations (learning as knowledge acquisition); and the Constructivism Theory - which explores the value of human activity as a critical function of gaining knowledge (learning as knowledge construction). Thus, instructional theory helps us create conditions that increase the probability of learning (Mayer, 1992; Bowden, 2008).

Instructional theories are adapted based on the educational content and more importantly the learning style of the students. They are used as teaching guidelines/tools by teachers/trainers to facilitate learning. Instructional theories encompass different instructional methods, models and strategies (Reigeluth, 2012). Merrill (cited in Reigeluth, 2012) argues the universal methods of instruction, situational methods and core ideas of the post-industrial paradigm of instruction. According to him, the **universal methods of instruction are:**

1. Task-Centred Principle – which states that instruction should use a progression of increasingly complex whole tasks;
2. Demonstration Principle – which states that instruction should guide learners through a skill and engage peer discussion/demonstration;
3. Application Principle – which states that instruction should provide intrinsic or corrective feedback and engage peer-collaboration.
4. Activation Principle – which states that instruction should build upon prior

knowledge and encourage learners to acquire a structure for organizing new knowledge; and

5. Integration Principle – which states that instruction should engage learners in peer-critiques and synthesizing newly acquired knowledge.

Based on the different approaches to learning, the situational methods in instructional theory may include role-play, synectics, mastery learning, direct instruction, discussion, and conflict resolution. Others may include peer learning, experiential learning, problem-based learning and simulation-based learning. The learning outcomes of these approaches could be for knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, affective development and integrated learning. Generally, Merrill & Jones (1992) state that the four tasks of Instructional theory are: Knowledge selection; Knowledge sequence; Interaction management and setting of interaction environment.

Policy documents on journalism education in Nigeria such as the National University Commission's Benchmark Standards (NUC-BMAS) have basic guidelines on the content of journalism and mass communication curriculum in Nigeria. The schools are to provide instructions and guidelines within the scope of knowledge and skills required for the students to become professionals. Part of the strategy to achieve results based on the universal methods principles in the instructional theory is the media attachments/internship programmes during which the students have an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and interact with the media personnel exhibiting the right attitude. Effectively, the thrust of the instructional theory is to provide clear guidance on how to better help people learn and develop particularly the youth. Herein lies the relevance to this theory to this study.

Literature Review

Trajectory of Journalism Education and Training

Knowledge is not only power but also the source of the good life and most of the things we treasure as we live in the Information Age. As the quality of the information needed to navigate the complex society we live in, the competence of those responsible for these providing the information particularly the journalists needed to be enhanced and trusted. According to Raudsepp (1989), such an insight was partially at the root of Joseph Pulitzer's proposal in 1892 to the trustees of Columbia University in New York City that he endowed a university program in journalism education. Pulitzer, who knew from experience how market considerations could easily dominate news judgment, hoped that a university education in journalism would be the antidote. However, equally important to him was raising the status of the journalism profession. Pulitzer's idea is that journalism ought to be one of the great and intellectual professions; hence the need to encourage, elevate and educate in a practical way the present and the future members of the profession.

Eventually, following Pulitzer's prompt for standardization and professionalism in journalism, the desire to improve journalism education became the concern of both the practitioners and the academia. This movement was also felt in the Nigeria journalism education system. Akinfeleye (cited in Maikaba, 2017) reviewing the Nigerian Board of Technical Education (NBTE) and National University Commissions provisions noted that the overall objective of journalism and mass communication education is to:

1. Produce graduates who are able to meet the middle-and-higher level manpower communication requirement of Nigeria;
2. Produce qualified communication/journalism teachers for the universities, polytechnics and other similar institutions;
3. Produce technically qualified graduates who can be self-employed upon graduation; and
4. Produce socially responsible journalists and communicators.

The argument about what should be the right approach to journalism education is of particular importance to how the profession develops. Odunlami (2014) in his review notes that journalism education is a reflexive process and one that has a close relationship with the industry and the society that the products work in. Therefore, the relationship demands a constant interaction between media institutions and the industry to fashion out the nature of acceptable exchanges in terms of both output (personnel) and the effect on the media content.

A laudable attempt to harmonise journalism education to achieve excellence was articulated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) with the introduction of model curricula for journalism education. The UNESCO in its preamble noted that journalism and the educational programmes that enable individuals to practice and upgrade their journalistic skills, are essential tools for the underpinning of key democratic principles that are fundamental to the development of every country. The model proposed the honing of competencies and skills that are core for the development of the journalism profession. These include:

1. Competencies of general knowledge and intellectual ability; professional techniques of research, writing (and other forms of presentation), editing, design and production.
2. The ability to use the tools of journalism and adapt to new technologies and innovative practices.
3. Professional understanding, including ethics.
4. Knowledge of journalism's role in society, including journalism's history, the organisation of the news media and laws circumscribing journalism practice and
5. Knowledge of best practices in journalism (Odunlami, 2014; Maikaba, 2017).

Although these competencies were proposed, it is still the prerogative of every country to adapt to the specifics of what their individual societies require to excel using the available media and communication apparatus.

Drawing from the UNESCO recommendations, Odunlami (2014) distilled three categories of competencies that are discernable. These include competencies in professional standards; competences in journalism and society; and competencies in accurate knowledge of the context in which the profession is been practiced within and outside the journalists' immediate environment.

Competencies in professional standards comprise research skills indicating ability to comprehend, analyse, synthesize and evaluate unfamiliar material quickly (critical thinking). It also includes good news judgement that deals with a thoughtful understanding of what makes a good story and what makes a story newsworthy; observational skills which involves ability to quickly and efficiently gather, understand and select relevant information through interviewing from published and Internet sources and using investigative techniques. Other skills in the professional standards category include ability to take accurate notes, techniques for checking and corroborating information writing skills, numerical skills and a basic knowledge of statistics and survey methods.

In the second category, which involves journalism and society competences, Odunlami (2014) said this involves knowledge of the role of journalism in the society, particularly in relation with development and securing democracy. It includes understanding how information is collated and managed by political, commercial and civil organisations within a society. The third level, which is the knowledge category, requires that journalism students must be competent in the basic understanding of their countries' systems of government, their constitutions and systems of justice, political processes, economies, social and cultural organisations and their relations with other countries.

The process of inculcating these competencies in the aspiring journalists has not gone without some debates. For instance, there have been arguments about whether journalism education should be industry-centric or academic-centric. For instance, in India, Murthy (cited in Maikaba, 2017) avers that journalism training is dominated by academics although practitioners do occasionally give lectures. In his analysis, Murthy notes that not all practitioners are capable of translating their skills into theoretical application which journalism as an academic subject often demands. Conversely, journalism teachers also lack hands-on media experience although they may have a theoretical understanding of the discipline. Hence, the debate to tow the academic, professional or both lines in journalism training becomes imperative. This situation apparently may be responsible for Odunlami's (2014) observation that the usual witticism made to young journalism and mass communication graduates upon employment in newsroom is 'forget what you learned in J-school'. The idea is for the students to jettison or purge themselves of the theories; rule and idealistic concepts

taught in school, which is believed, may limit them from experimenting or innovating.

In view of these, experts in journalism and mass communication training are examining areas of convergence that may contribute to the development of quality journalism education in Nigeria and indeed other parts of the world. Tabuwe & Tangjong (cited in Adaja, 2012), agrees that “journalism education should do more than teaching the students how to write. Rather, it should teach them to think, to verify, to acclaim, to criticise and to synthesise”.

To address these concerns, experts (Finberg, 2013; Picard, 2015) have advocated an integrated training programme that synergises the classroom with the field particularly for integrating the students with handling the technologies that have shaped journalism practice. Picard (2015) referred to this integration as the 'hospital model', an intermixture of book oriented and practice oriented training needed to train employable journalists in this digital age. Finberg (2013) notes that “journalism education will undergo fundamental shifts in how journalism is taught and who teaches it. Those who do not innovate in the classroom will be left behind -- just like those who chose not to innovate in the newsroom”. Finberg's statement justified the need for a symbiotic relationship between the town and gown to achieve quality journalism training. Such symbiotic relation exists within the ambiance of a media attachment/internship programme for upcoming journalists.

Ojomo (2015) notes that what precisely constitutes an internship vary and it depends on the programme, which also affects their methods of assessment. Journalism and mass communication internships have tripartite beneficiaries namely the student, the training institution and the employer, which made it a “win-win-win”. In effect, during internship, the students learn valuable skills, which might not come easily within the classroom setting; the institution enhances its reputation for training people who can function effectively in the workplace; and the employer is provided with a pool of talent from which to draw temporary or permanent staff.

Getz cited in Ojomo (2015) agrees that internships give students a chance to see what realities await them before they find themselves competing for jobs in areas in which they have little or no practical understanding or experience. He described internship as a microcosm of actual world of work experience as they allow the intern to link theory with practice and assess their readiness for full paid employment. The programme allow students to put theory into practice, permit faculty members to observe students' actual performances and to judge the students' learning by means other than written tests and examination.

Whitlow (1992) states that internships permit students to step out of the academic cocoon and into a professional arena where they refine knowledge and skill and learn new perspectives and different ways of doing things. They also ensure that students get a taste of no excuse – entertained deadlines and allow students bump into the delicacies of maintaining healthy work relationships. The media institutions

professionals such as newspaper editors get into the role of field supervisors, giving them opportunity to provide instruction, monitoring, and judgment on the quality of the students' work.

Significantly, Emmanuel (n.d) who noted that journalism is undergoing tremendous and radical transformations particularly in four major areas captured the value of a well-articulated internship programme. The areas are in the nature of news content, the way journalists do their work in a world of emerging new media technology, and the impact of the digital age. The other two changes are the structure of the newsroom and news industry, which are undergoing a fundamental transformation; and the redefinition in the relationship between and among media organisations, journalists, members of the public, audiences, advertisers and other stakeholders within the media circles.

Finberg (2013) agrees that what journalism schools or programmes do in the coming years to address the impact of technology on the practice will be critical. Finberg reasons that the innovation will disrupt the creation and distribution of information on the new platforms resulting into journalism outside the traditional business model of mass media. In view of this development, it is essential that journalism institutions innovate inside the classroom with new forms of [journalism] teaching. Journalism educators need to rethink how programs are constructed and how teaching is delivered. He submitted that journalism educator and students must be willing to adapt by moving out of the classroom comfort zone to explore available technology although not at the detriment of the core values of journalism.

In view of this trend, Rosenstiel (2013) proposed four areas that must be reviewed and reinforced in journalism education. They are:

1. Teaching of technical skills (how to use different platforms and technology) - A critical dimension of this teaching is computer science, so journalists can invent new ways of reporting. However, given the pace of technology change, technology and platform skill of the students must be enhanced to enable them master the tools for effective utilization.
2. Journalistic responsibility (including history, values, ethics, community, material that always made journalists better)- Now that journalism is more than whatever journalists do, knowing what the public requires of a responsible journalism is now more important.
3. Understanding of business (how to understand audience metrics, revenue, entrepreneurship)- Journalists are constrained if they are illiterate on matters that affects the society in which they operate. These include the social, economic and political activities which to some extent defines how the journalists carryout their activities.
4. The intellectual discipline of verification, (referred to as evidence and inference, or social empiricism)- It is a more conscious, disciplined and clinical approach to knowing how to report, think and write. At its best,

journalistic inquiry is a rigorous, numerically literate, sceptical and independent way of thinking. These skills will help journalists be critical and make reasonable decisions in the course of their activities.

To achieve Rosenstiel's (2013) proposal, Ojomo (2007) suggests that there must be a symbiotic relationship, which is mutually beneficial to the town and gown. His suggestion was because no journalism training institution can evolve a curriculum that will sufficiently provide its students a successful school-to-work tuition. Daniels (2012) agrees that because of state budget cuts, journalism programs must rely increasingly on media companies to sustain the training of their students for experience, future contacts, and an impressive resume. Internship therefore helps the institution in its curriculum development, test and validates the university's curriculum implementation in a real world environment. Especially for mass communication, with an extremely practical-based curriculum, internship provides an opportunity for the students to hone their practical skills through interaction with modern equipment, which most often are not available in various departments of mass communication training in Nigeria.

Ojomo's counsel is consistent with Eric Newtons of Knight Foundation's position that "to teach journalism in the digital age you have to teach both journalism and the digital age -- and use modern tools to do it. That is why the schools that are serious about this are getting bigger, not smaller" (Finberg, 2013, para.20).

To conclude this section, experts (Ojomo, 2007; Daniels, 2012; Rosenstiel, 2013; Finberg, 2013) agree that a well thought-through internship programme gives the students a rare opportunity to have a foretaste of the challenges of the world of work and knowledge of the industry as it relates to their career paths. In today's highly competitive job market where a qualification may not be sufficient to secure a job, internship programmes can provide students with that essential experience.

Empirical Reviews

Some studies have been conducted on general perception, approaches and challenges facing journalism education and efforts been made to address them. A study conducted by John S. and James L. Knight Foundation (2011) on reinvigorating journalism education shows that news leaders (media directors) perceived the quality of leadership in journalism schools as the main factor in determining whether the school produce graduates with transformative ideas to evolve newsroom. This presumption was based on what the media directors referred to as the challenge of teaching both new and timeless skills at the journalism schools. Thus, they suggested that the schools should focus on the teaching and application of the digital skills and the fundamentals of journalism practice to rekindle the interest of students in the profession.

A need for such reinvigorated move was noticed in the annual survey on journalism and mass communication enrolment in the United States conducted by

Vlad, Becker, Simpson & Kalpen (2013). The study revealed that overall enrolments in journalism and mass communication programmes declined 2.9% in the fall of 2012 from a year earlier. At the undergraduate level, enrolment dropped to 2.9%, following a decrease of 0.5% one year earlier. The number of journalism and mass communication programmes that were active in 2012 was 485, down from 491 a year earlier. Despite the decline, they found that journalism and mass communication programmes continued to engage in a number of strategies to update their curricula to reflect changes in the media landscape. Nearly nine in 10 administrators surveyed reported that their programmes taught skills such as using social media, using video and still photos on the web, using video in reporting, and editing and writing for the web. More than 90% of the administrators said their programmes had formal assessments of the curricula impact on students. In addition, more than half of the administrators reported that they have encountered obstacles to curricular change at their institutions, but they are working on overcoming the challenges.

Similar study conducted on journalism education curriculum in Malaysia by Aripina, Ismaila, Yusofa, Ismailb & Mohamada (2014) established the same trend. Using the *Poynter Journalism Education development framework* for journalism knowledge and skills, the study revealed that despite the enthusiasm noticed in the journalism students, inadequate training facilities is a major factor that is affecting journalism learning and education in the country. Thus, young journalists perceived engagement with professional journalists to be very essential for their learning experiences and development.

Comparatively, studies conducted on journalism education in Nigeria also reflect a trajectory of the same experiences. Assessing trends in journalism practice and education in Nigeria within the context of the *mediamorphosis* theory, Emmanuel (2017) found that there is a gap between journalism practice and journalism education in Nigeria, as the newsroom is believed to be ahead of classroom. The study therefore recommends that for an effective journalism training and sustainability of the journalism profession, journalism education must involve professionals from the industry to teach in journalism and mass communication institutions. This is because the potency of the next generation of journalism education can be measured by its ability to maximise opportunities and minimise the challenges associated with digital technologies.

Emmanuel's (2017) findings and recommendations is consistent with that of Ojomo (2015) when he studied editors' perception on how best to improve journalism education in Nigeria. The editors agreed that there is a need to constantly update journalism curriculum to ensure students are properly trained and become 'well-rounded' journalism graduates. They opined that the curriculum should be widened to ensure versatility, allowing mass communication undergraduates to offer elective courses in different areas, even beyond their faculty. The editors also suggested that mass communication students and their tutors should attend and take courses at the Nigerian Institute of Journalism, a school specially established for that purpose. They

believe that will solve the problems of capacity building for the students particularly in the areas of news reporting and investigative writing. On internship, the editors were unanimous (94%) that well-articulated and streamlined journalism internship programmes, which may also involve the trainers, should be emphasised.

The review so far reflects the challenges and efforts made at enhancing journalism education in different countries across the continents. Although few studies sought the views of the editors on media attachment and internship programmes, little is known about their assessment of the students' performances in terms of their application of the basic journalism knowledge they might have during their internship. Such assessment will be of immense benefit to journalism educators, as it will provide insights into areas of improvement in the training of young journalists. This gap in literature on journalism education is what this study seeks to fill.

Method

The population for this study are editors in national newspaper organisations in Nigeria. This study adopted a survey method using a 23-item questionnaire with open and closed ended questions as the research instrument. The metrics in the three thematic areas of competencies for journalism education stated in the *Poynter 2013 future of journalism education competencies survey*, which were also established in the literatures reviewed, were used to develop the questionnaire. The thematic areas are: knowledge; attitude and personal attributes; and newsgathering skills. The thematic areas and metrics also captured the objectives as stated in journalism education policy document such as the NUC-BMAS, hence their adaptation in the research instrument.

Using the list of an estimated fifteen (15) national newspapers in Nigeria that was provided by the Newspaper Distribution Association of Nigeria (NDAN) (2016), ten (10) newspapers were randomly selected using a ballot system to allow for an equal chance of selection. The newspapers selected were: *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, *The Punch*, *The Sun*, *New Telegraph*, *Vanguard*, *Business Day*, *This Day*, *Leadership and Daily Independent* newspapers. From the available pages (beats) that were featured in these papers as observed and recorded within a one-week period, three beats were randomly selected. The selected beats are the ICT beat, the Education beat and the Brands and Marketing beat. The 23-item questionnaire was administered to the editors of the selected pages (beats). In effect, across the selected newspapers, 10 ICT editors, 10 Brands and Marketing editors and 10 Education editors making 30 respondents were sampled.

Data Analysis

The data in this study were analysed based on the 30 copies of the questionnaire that were appropriately filled representing a 100% return rate. The analysis has been presented in line with the research questions earlier postulated for this study.

Demographic Analysis

The table below represents the demographic distribution of the respondents

Table 1: Educational qualification of respondents

Qualification	F	%
B. Sc/B.A/H.ND - Mass Communication	15	50%
B.A English	1	3.3%
PGD	3	10%
M.Sc./M.A- Mass Communication	9	30%
MBA	1	3.3%
PhD- Education Management	1	3.3%
Total	30	100%

Table 1 above reflects the qualification of the editors. Majority of the respondents (80%) have a background in mass communication. In addition, their average years of experience in journalism are 15.4 years while the average age is 41.5 years. Thus, it may be inferred that majority of the respondents have a background in journalism/mass communication.

Research Question 1: What is the editors' level of awareness of media attachment programmes for journalism students in Nigeria?

All of the editors (100%) sampled acknowledged that they are aware of the media attachment and internship programmes for journalism students in Nigeria. They also indicated that they have worked with journalism trainees from both universities and polytechnics offering mass communication programmes in the course of their practice. Thus, it may be concluded that the level of awareness of the internship programme is high among newspaper editors in Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the editors' assessment of the general knowledge of journalism trainees in newspaper organisations in Nigeria?

Table 2: Assessment of the Knowledge Of The Journalism Trainees

S/No	Knowledge		Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	Total
1	Knowledge of other cultures	Freq	0	15	9	5	1	30
		%	0	50	30	17	3	100
2	Knowledge of government affairs	Freq	5	12	3	8	2	30
		%	17	40	10	27	7	100
3	Knowledge of media landscape/business	Freq	5	9	10	5	1	30
		%	17	30	33	17	3	100
4	Knowledge of current affairs and general issues	Freq	3	12	11	3	1	30
		%	10	40	37	10	3	100
5	Knowledge of journalism laws and ethics	Freq	6	6	7	8	3	30
		%	20	20	23	27	10	100

By training, the trainees/interns are expected to have appreciable competences along the line of the identified knowledge areas in Table 1 as enumerated and gathered from the literatures reviewed. On the average, the trainees' knowledge of the cultures around them is good. Cumulatively, 57% of the editors agreed that the level of knowledge about government affairs among the trainees is well above average although a significant percentage (27%) stated that their knowledge in this area is poor. The editors' assessment of the trainees' knowledge of the media landscape presents a mix of opinions. 33% of the editors believe it is just fair but a cumulative 47% said it is above average. This trend was also noticed in the assessment of the trainees' knowledge of current affairs and general issues. Expectedly, the knowledge of the media landscape is critical as a required competence for upcoming journalists. An appreciable knowledge of the current affairs will also support their news decision-making process. Hence, reasons for this low assessment, which was hitherto expected to be very significant, may become an area of further studies. In addition, regarding the trainees' knowledge of journalism law and ethics, the editors' assessment showed that the level of knowledge is significantly low as a cumulative 60% of the respondents said the knowledge is either poor or just fair.

Table 3: Assessment of the journalism skills of the trainees

	News gathering skills and techniques		Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	Total
6	News judgement skill	Freq	6	6	11	4	3	30
		%	20	20	37	13	10	100
7	Data Analysis and Interpretation skill	Freq	3	8	8	6	5	30
		%	10	27	27	20	17	100
8	Source generation and networking skill	Freq	3	9	10	4	4	30
		%	10	30	33	13	13	100
9	Multimedia/ICT skill	Freq	5	16	7	1	1	30
		%	17	53	23	3	3	100
10	Interviewing skill	Freq	5	7	11	7	0	30
		%	17	23	37	23	0	100
11	News reporting and writing skill	Freq	5	7	11	3	4	30
		%	17	23	37	10	13	100
12	News source and idea generation skill	Freq	1	13	8	5	3	30
		%	3	43	27	17	10	100
13	Features Writing skill	Freq	4	8	8	4	6	30
		%	13	27	27	13	20	100
14	Speaking/Presentation skill	Freq	1	16	10	1	2	30
		%	3	53	33	3	7	100
15	Photo identification and editing skill	Freq	4	6	12	2	6	30
		%	13	20	40	7	20	100

Except in the areas of multimedia/ICT and speaking and presentation skills, the editors' assessment of the journalism skills of the trainees is generally barely average. Mostly affected are the data interpretation skills, networking skills, photo identification/editing skills and idea generation skills where cumulatively, a quarter (25% and above) of the respondents perceive the performance of the trainees as poor. Cumulatively, only 40% believe that the news judgment skills of the trainees are good while the rest stated that it is only fair or far below expectation.

Research Question 4: What is the editors' assessment of the attitudes and personal features of journalism trainees in newspaper organisations in Nigeria?
Table 4: Assessment of Attitudes and Personal Features of the Journalism Trainees

	Attitudes and Personal Features		Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	Total
16	Curiosity for information	Freq	4	13	10	3	0	30
		%	13	43	33	10	0	100
17	Deadline management	Freq	3	12	5	10	0	30
		%	10	40	17	33	0	100
18	Criticism/Feedback Management	Freq	3	11	11	4	1	30
		%	10	37	37	13	3	100
19	Social skills	Freq	7	16	6	1	0	30
		%	23	53	20	3	0	100
20	Team work ethics	Freq	7	10	9	4	0	30
		%	23	33	30	13	0	100
21	Adoption/adaptation to change and innovation	Freq	6	13	8	3	0	30
		%	20	43	27	10	0	100
22	Willingness to learn/flexibility	Freq	8	11	9	2	0	30
		%	27	37	30	7	0	100

Despite the gaps noticed in the competencies of the journalism trainees regarding their knowledge and skills in some critical areas of the profession, the editors' assessment of the trainees' attitude and personal features reflects an encouraging disposition. Cumulatively, 64% of the editors agreed that the trainees are willing to learn. Another cumulative 63% agreed that the trainees are willing to adapt to change while a significant 76% cumulatively also agreed that the trainees are good with their social skills. In terms of curiosity for information, deadline management and team work ethics, the editors agreed that the trainees are slightly above average while their feedback management is barely average with a significant 33% stating that it is poor.

Research Question 5: What is the editors' assessment of the challenges and limitations of journalism trainees in newspaper organisations in Nigeria?

In an open-ended question, which allowed the editors to express themselves, they all identified one form of challenge or limitation experienced by journalism trainees when they are on media attachment in their newspaper organisations. A summary of the challenges and limitations are:

1. The trainees' inability to express themselves grammatically;
2. Inability to adapt quickly to work terrain in the office;
3. Short internship period for the trainees, particularly university students who use only three months;
4. Lack of clear vision when some of the students are choosing their course of study;

5. Financial constraint experienced by the trainees who sometime may not have money to transport themselves to the office;
6. Lack of practical sessions like demo production of newspapers or magazines to help grow the knowledge and skills of the students;
7. Poor attitude among some of the trainees towards conforming to the newsroom standards; and
8. Social media distraction among the trainees, which affects their concentration, while on duty or in the newsroom.

Discussion

The assessment of journalism trainees among newspaper editors is very essential to the quest to improve journalism education and training in Nigeria. Due to their years of experience and having grown through the ranks, their assessment may provide insights into how to improve the media attachment and internship programme as stated in the Nigerian journalism education curriculum.

Findings from the study generally reflect an average performance among journalism trainees in newspaper organisations. While it may be argued that the students are still undergraduates, they are required to demonstrate an appreciable understanding of the basics. In terms of the trainees' knowledge of government affairs and journalism ethics and law, there may be a need for journalism educators to reiterate the essentials of this among their students because over a quarter of the editors believe this is poor among the trainees. Regarding their journalism skills, the assessment reflects a high level of competence in the area of multimedia/ICT skills among the journalism trainees. This may be a reflection of the fact that majority of these trainees belong to the millennial age characterised by a high use of technology. This finding is consistent with the assumptions of Enahoro (2009), that youths all over the world constitute the majority of Internet users. Encouraged by parents and teachers to take advantage of the Internet's incredibly educational and recreational opportunities, nearly 30 million children and youth go online each year to research homework assignments and to learn about the world they live in. Youths also use the Internet to play games and meet friends.

However, the editors' assessment of some other relevant journalism skills like interviewing skill, news writing skill, news judgement skill among others reflects barely an average performance among the trainees. A significant percentage of them believe the trainees' performance is just fair. Deductively, this may be ascribed to some of the limitations identified by the editors, which include the limited exposure of some of the students to some practical sessions in their schools. Such practical session includes production of demo newspaper (or what is usually referred to as 'student newspaper/magazine'). The editors also noted that the situation is better with journalism students from polytechnics as against their university counterpart because the polytechnic students have an opportunity of a longer internship period.

Although the trainees are challenged in the aforementioned areas, the editors' assessment of their attitude and personal features showed a significantly above average performance except in the area of deadline management where 33% of the editors said it is poor. Thus, it may be inferred that despite the challenges and limitations facing journalism trainees, they still show and demonstrate good attitude, which may help them to learn. This composure may be alluded to the fact that the students are relatively matured in their understanding of the theories since most of them go for their media attachment when they are in 300 or 400 levels. For the polytechnic students, they usually embark on their industrial training after completing their Ordinary National Diploma (OND) programme which is run for two years.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The success or failure of the media attachment/internship programme can only be determined with the use of appropriate evaluation mechanisms. It is appropriate that an appropriate officer at the internship location must evaluate the interns' performance. Somerick (cited in Ojomo, 2007) observed that "with appropriate standards and accountability in place, internship can be valuable. Without appropriate standards and accountability, the internship experience could be detrimental to a student, to a student's academic programme or to an organisation that accepts an intern's assistance". The fundamental motivation for internship in journalism and mass communication education is the creation of a platform for assessing the readiness of the trainee for the world of work. Internship aims to help the student hone relevant skills on practical aspects of their training hence, the need to constantly appraise the execution of the programme among journalism students.

In view of the foregoing and findings from this study, the following are recommended:

1. Journalism/Mass communication training institutions should endeavour to provide enough practical sessions for the students before they go on internship. This will help them assimilate and practice largely what they have been taught. Such experience will assist them to adapt and comprehend faster whatever they encounter in the newsroom. In view of the economic challenges which may influence this recommendation, the students may be asked to do these practical sessions in groups.
2. Journalism schools should emphasis skills development through practical. The trainers should also endeavour to appropriately assess and score such practical rather than just treating them as regular exercise. This will help the students to know their areas of weakness and improve on them.
3. To address the issue of finance for the trainees, the schools should work at accessing funds from the Industrial Training Funds to cater for the required stipends for the trainees during their internship as provided by the law

establishing the fund. The institutions should diligently work at accessing these funds no matter how small the subventions may be in view of the challenges facing the administration of the Fund in Nigeria. The institutions should however judiciously administer whatever amount they receive to accomplish the objectives of the training programme to the extent achievable.

4. Special English language classes may be organized to cater for good writing skills among the students.
5. To address the issue of lack of interest in the profession as noticed among some of the trainees, journalism schools should utilize the services of course advisors to counsel and quickly detect students that may not really be interested in journalism but accepted the course because of circumstance. Such students may be counselled to take up other courses in which they may excel.
6. Since the findings revealed that the trainees exhibit good attitudes towards learning during internship, journalism schools should take advantage of this attribute to better hone the skills of the students.
7. More time, at least one year of media attachment/internship programme should be encouraged in journalism education in Nigeria. This is essentially important for the universities offering these courses. This longer period will afford the trainees an opportunity to learn enough to complement the theories as the editors noted that shorter period may not be enough for the students to learn or demonstrate their skills and competences.
8. Journalism schools should make special arrangements with professionals to occasional lecture and interact with the students so they can share their experiences.

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