

# **Investigative & Interpretative Journalism**

**AN INSIGHT INTO CRITICAL AND REVIEW WRITING**



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**&**  
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## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to God who has been there for us all through our struggles and those who have supported our academic pursuits.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The task of putting this book together did not come by chance; it is a product of learning on the job and interaction with senior colleagues, friends and students. We would like to acknowledge our teachers who instilled the urge for excellence in us. We salute our journalism teachers in the persons of Mr Elo Ekeli who edited and wrote the foreword, Dr Emmanuel Ufuophu-Biri, Madam Julie Ogbeni and Madam Edith Ohaja-Okujeni. Special mention is made of Dr Ray Udeajah and Dr Boniface Anyanwu who have encouraged us in no small measure in this journey.

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Finally, we appreciate Messrs Francis Igata and F.U. Nwanze who granted us permission to use their previous works on interpretative journalism. May God bless you all.

## FOREWORD

The most interesting thing about this new entry into the corps of indigenous books on investigative and interpretative journalism is that, it is a great work done by three young enterprising academics in the area of mass communication and media studies in this country.

Coming at the time when there is a growing need for investigative and interpretative journalism, this book, *investigative and interpretative journalism: An Insight into Critical and Review Writing* is poised to open up new areas in the genre of reportorial journalism especially in this era where the new and social media are trying to redefine the scope, culture, and ethics of responsible journalism in Nigeria. It is therefore in anticipation of the remodelling of the ideas and practice of investigative and interpretative journalism and its objectives in a country where reportorial duties, anchored on personality and events reporting had hitherto held sway, that I intend to put a voice behind this book which have been cautiously and expertly written by Dr. Daniel Ekhareafo, Ferdinand Okoro, and Dr Wilfred Olley.

In this fifteen-chapter book, the authors discuss the professional and down-to-earth essential principles, elements and processes of investigative and interpretative journalism from its minutes step to its greatest detail. In chapter one, the book discusses the concept, basic principles, elements, kinds and tips for effective journalistic writing affording the neophyte in journalism to have a clear idea of the profession.

Chapter two sheds light on what investigative journalism is. In detail, the chapter also explains the functions, the traits of an investigative reporter and the features of investigative journalism. While chapter three articulates on how to handle

investigative stories, chapter four in plain, vivid and valid examples, deals with the sources of investigative stories.

Writing investigative stories or reports is the concern of chapter five. In handling this chapter, the book goes into detail to discuss the types of leads which are appropriate for the reporter to present his or her report. The authors in order to make this chapter easily understandable provide relevant examples from Nigerian newspapers. Following closely, chapter six and seven deals with the challenges of investigative journalism and how the freedom of information act could assist in addressing the challenges. In these chapters also, the book takes time to examine these challenges in the Nigerian context.

Chapter eight and nine also in treating interpretative writing, deal with the concept of news interpretation, its relevance, functions and how it is done. Also treated in these chapters are the criticisms of interpretative writing and reporting, the strategies for gathering information for interpretative reports.

Chapter ten revolves around the legal aspects of investigative and interpretative journalism. The chapter is a careful and masterly summation of Nigerian Media Law in its simplistic form, and conjure an interesting lecture on media law with living examples from epics of important mass media law cases in the history of the nation.

The ethics of investigative and interpretative journalism occupies the pages of chapter eleven. Diligently and professionally presented, the chapter goes down the memory lane to explore the need for ethics and professionalism in investigative and interpretative reporting pointing out the essential works. Apart from the general talks

on ethics, the chapter also incisively discusses the ethical tenets or standards of journalism, and the ethical issues in investigative and interpretative reporting.

Chapter twelve deals with critical writing. In the chapter, the book discusses communication skills for critical writing. With painstaking precision, the book pontificates on how a critical writer should go about his or her writing without boring his or her reader.

Chapter thirteen dwells on the column, the columnist and the style of delivery. Starting with what the column and columnist are, the chapter discusses the relevance, the forms and the guidelines for writing columns in newspapers and magazines.

With vivid and real examples, chapter fourteen of the book deals with communication criticism. Drawing from experience from great philosophers and works like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the book paints an understandable and clear picture, about analysis, interpretation, judgement and criticism. With far reaching examples, the chapter ends with the tips for writing interpretative and critical articles.

In the last chapter, the book dwells on the issue of review writing. Beginning with the essence of review writing, the book sets the scene by explaining what a review is and proceeds in detail to list the functions of a review writer, the qualities of a review writer and the difference between review and critical writing. With convincing and appropriate examples, the authors go on to cement the piece with the guidelines for review writing.

This book is my humble estimation as a teacher of journalism and as a reporter of a long-standing experience in the profession, can be said to have the objective of putting more and extra light into the field of investigative and

interpretative journalism in Nigeria which is its first point of call. To willing working journalists interested in investigative and interpretative reporting the work forms a working handbook. To the students of mass communication in the universities and the polytechnics the book plays the role of companion. The book also will remind teachers of mass communication in the tertiary institutions in this country to form the habit of drawing their examples from experiences in the country, so that their students will be at home in whatever they teach them.

As parting words, the *Investigative and Interpretative Journalism: an insight into critical and review writing* is a book which will open up new vista in the area of news reporting and search journalism in Nigeria.

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*Observer* and *Pointer* Newspapers and

Currently Senior Lecturer,

Benson Idahosa University, Benin City

## **PREFACE**

This book is a contribution to the growing body of literature on journalism, investigative and interpretative journalism, critical and review writing. It exposes the students to the nuances of writing and the basic skills needed to write these genres of journalism. It covers the fundamentals of news writing and reporting, techniques for investigative writing, the ethical codes of journalism and how the Freedom of Information Act can assist the writer or investigator in a given task. The book also covers the basic skills which are fundamental to critical and review writing.

Apart from the skills and techniques, the book introduces the reader to journalistic styles and how they can be developed and applied in column writing. This fifteen-chapter book is laced with numerous examples which we believe could assist the student in writing exercises.

**Dr Daniel Ekharefo,  
Ferdinand Elope Okoro and  
Dr Wilfred Olley**

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**PART I**  
**FUNDAMENTALS OF JOURNALISM**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION TO JOURNALISM**

#### **Introduction**

When we talk about journalism, what easily comes to mind is the idea of reporting or writing a timely event or stories that is of importance to society. This means that not all writing, qualifies for journalistic writing or reporting because; in journalism, there are basic cannons for news selection. Where the elements are present, such a story therefore qualifies for selection as a news story.

Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2013) observe that journalism is a form of communication based on asking and answering the questions: who? What? Where? When? Why? How? If we are to expand the frontiers of these questions, the who refers to the individuals, persons or people affected by an effect, or who cause an event to happen. For instance, the who in a road accident that claimed lives are the individuals who died in the accident. The question of ‘what’ deals with the object of the news i.e. what happened? Example, the process of dualization of the Benin – Auchu highway has commenced with the award of the contract by the federal government to Messrs RCC and Dantata and Sawoe. The ‘what’ in this example is the award of the contract. Where! Answers the question of place/venue. It seeks to locate the place where an event or accident took place. E.g. 20 more bodies have been recovered from the scene of the blast that occurred at Gombe motor park yesterday. In journalism, when is concerned with date and sometimes the time an event occurred. While the print media is mostly concerned with date, the electronic media bothers about time because of the sense of immediacy. Why in the question

gives insight into the reason or circumstances for the occurrence. E.g. the World Bank has donated the sum of 1 billion dollars to Edo State Government to combat the gully erosion site at Ogbeson, Benin City. The 'how' explains the process of the occurrence.

News reporting and news writing are all journalistic writing. As an occupation, journalism refers generally to writing for journals, but in particular for newspapers and magazines. However, journalism has expanded in meaning and scope, to become the means by which you disseminate news and views, and by so doing formed itself into a nexus of social awareness; assuming an ethical dimension and to some extent, requires legal accountability for its performance. The journalist, in the performance of his or her duties, has to contend with various legal and ethical issues.

In other words, journalism involves a great deal of care, intelligence and effort. This is because not all events or happenings qualify for journalistic reporting. Journalism therefore, is a timely reportage of an event that is of relevance to a greater majority of the members of a society. Individuals involved in this act are called journalist. The business of journalism goes beyond events that are obvious to everyone in the society. There are times certain event needs to be interpreted to the understanding of the common man. At other times, proper investigations need to be conducted to certain happenings to know their root causes or the secrets behind them. They all constitute journalism and this suggests that journalistic writings can take different formats. Whatever, the form, the society becomes informed about the event through a medium of communication that has a mass audience which is widely

dispersed and anonymous. The goal of journalism is feeding the society with daily doses of information that continuously shape the society and redefines its essence.

The power of journalism in modern society lies in its capacity to transform society or even debase it, depending on how it is used. When journalism is deployed to promote the cause of society, it can become adversarial to individuals and systems resistant to change. When it loses its power of transformation and critical thinking it becomes an instrument of propaganda and praise singing.

In essence, Nwabueze (2011) citing Ngwo in Nwabueze (2005) summarises the concept of journalism, from the perspective of news reporting thus:

Reporting is the process of giving account of news events through a medium to an audience. It consists of gathering facts about an event, occasion or people through careful observation, reasoning and verification and organizing them into a news story with a view to giving mass media audience a good idea of what transpired.

The value of journalism in society is so enormous that a day without news information poses a big threat to the existence of the society. In a functional democratic system, journalism helps to accentuate Ngoa (2010) essential requisites of a democracy – a well-informed citizenry, freedom of participation in the decision-making process and accountability to the citizens by those who on their behalf exercise power. In other words, the information citizens need about the activities of government, policy direction, challenges in governance, development plans amongst others rest with journalism. Correspondingly, citizens can participate in the process of governance when the press provides the needed information. The accountability

which the citizens can demand from their government and which the government give also rest with a sound journalism culture. In other spheres, of human endeavours, a robust journalism provides society with information on the cultural life of the people, social entertainment and places of relaxation. It places the business community at alert in terms of price movements in the stock exchange, inflation rate, government monetary policies, foreign reserve, the buying power of the wage situation and the youth forecast of the nation.

Journalism is therefore the hub around which news happening in the society revolves. There are various perspective to news, Moemeka (1991) after careful observation of different authors, provides these three definitions.

- a. News may be defined as an accurate, unbiased account of the significant facts of a timely happening that is of interest to the readers of a newspaper that prints that account or to the listeners to a radio station that broadcasts the account, or to the viewers of a television station that telecasts the account.
- b. News is an account of actual events which disrupts the status quo or which have the potential to cause such disruption.
- c. News is what the people want to know, what the people want to know, that the media have made available to them.

Although news has varied definitions, what is of importance to us is that it a recent occurrence, which have interest for a large number of people who get such report through a medium of communication. As noted earlier, there are different happenings around the society, the people responsible for reporting the events are called journalists, they select the reported events based on some tangibilities. The

reporter is that important individual that helps journalism to fulfil its role in the society. An event cannot be said to be news if it is not reported. As such, there is no way we can talk about journalism in the society without first looking at the reporter and his functions.

The journalist performs certain functions which are germane to the smooth functioning of society. Some of these functions are: Information function; This function refers to the collection and distribution of information about events within in and out of the society. To instruct: This function refers to the ability of the reporter to design messages aimed at teaching skills, change behaviour and explain procedures. To entertain: Messages published or broadcast with the intent to amuse and help readers to relax. To merchandise: The reporter performs this function through persuasion and marketing skills. These functions are realized through the creative dexterity of the reporter who goes out to get stories for the news, and stories behind the news. (Alao: 1992) contends that the reporter does these when he or she attends press meetings, conferences, scenes of disasters or accidents, demonstrations and other happenings or developments, which either make or explain the news.

The reporter occupies an enviable place in journalism. He is the one that records and reports the events of the day. It must however be pointed out that in modern day journalism there is no reporter who can report on all areas of interest. Each reporter now has his or her area of specialization. He/she covers that beat regularly and by doing so, becomes an expert on issues concerning the beat.

### **News Values/Selection in Journalism**

The question that readily comes to mind is, why are certain stories selected above others? What criteria did such stories meet to qualify reportage? Journalism scholars refer to the criteria as news value. They are;

- i. Timeliness
- ii. Prominence
- iii. Oddity
- iv. Conflict
- v. Proximity
- vi. Consequence
- vii. Human interest
- viii. Magnitude

**Timeliness:** This refers to the time an event occurred. Moemeka (1991) noted that the difference in time between the occurrence of the event and the publication of the news is a crucial factor in news selection. The less the time difference, the higher the quality of timeliness. An event that happened four months ago is already stale. Other events have overtaken it. The audience like the currency of an event. Technology has made timelines an important aspect of news value, this is why many media organizations break news story as they unfold. There is exception to this, if the consequence of an event is significant, the time factor becomes less important. Again, certain events may not have accompanied facts until years later. Therefore, the fact that the unfolding facts came into limelight years later makes it worth reporting.

**Personality/prominence:** It is the importance attached to a story or the personality involved in a story. News is centred around personalities; their words and actions convey stories to their followers. Many Nigerians will not easily forget the mantra “there is God o! attributed to Patience Jonathan the wife of President Goodluck Jonathan. As a matter of fact, ‘there is God’ is an everyday expression to warn man he is not the one in charge of life, or God is not incapable to act. Unfortunately, when she said this in the heart of the Chibok girls abduction saga, it became virile in every media house and social media platforms. The question is, are many Nigerian not use to the saying? Why was so much interest attached to the statement? The reason is attributed to Ufuophu – Biri (2006) citing Jeremy (1983 p. 142) said, news is mostly built around personalities. According to him

News values are explicitly hierarchical – people at the top of governments, organizations, trade unions, or football teams are assured to have more interesting things to say, and this receive more attention than do mere voters, employees, union members or reserve players.

Apart from the personality involved in a story, prominence also derives from the importance a story holds for a people. Such importance could emanate from the Celebration of yearly events e.g. Independence Day, Good Friday, amongst others. Other events may happen within the period, there will be a greater attachment to the days than any other considerations.

**Oddity:** This news value is referred to as strangeness or novelty. It refers to those things that make people wonder such as ‘eeeh’, na wa o’ ‘wonders will never end’. Sometime in March 2015, around the Sakponba area of Benin, a man was found on

top of a roof top in the early hours of the morning. He confessed to being a wizard. It became a frontline news during the period. Stories of a man sleeping with his mother, an old woman who gives birth at 60 years. Therefore, all happenings that make people wonder constitute oddity, particularly when they are seen to be rare.

**Conflict:** They are those disagreements, tensions, crises which have implications for a group, society and even the process of governance. In Nigeria, there are many conflict situations which had made news, e.g. the 2014 invasion of the National Assembly and the tear gasing of some principals on the ground that the then Speaker, Hon. Aminu Tanbuwal decamped from PDP to APC, the fight between the APC faction of the Edo State House of Assembly led by Hon. Uyi Igbe and the PDP faction led by Hon. Festus Ebea was in the news for a long time. The conflict emanated from the suspension of five members of the house, following their inability to use the courts to stop their suspension. Lawyers on both sides gave diverse interpretation to the development and this perpetuated the conflict. The Boko Haram insurgency occupied prominent place in newspapers headlines because, conflict generate news interest.

**Proximity:** There are events happening in different parts of the world which we often feel detached from. This is because we consider them not to be in our environment. Proximity therefore means the closeness or nearness of an event or happenings to a media audience. This is why many events in other parts of the world may not get prominent coverage by the media. The proximity of an event gives the event a sense of relevance to the people.

There are three ways of looking at proximity – time, space and psychological.

**Proximity of time:** Refers to how recent an event occurred. For instance, a fire outbreak in a nearby street will put you on edge because of the fear that if nothing is done to quench the fire, the rampaging effect could spread to your area. Therefore, proximity of time has to do with how fresh an event is and its closeness to the people.

**Proximity of space;** it is also called spatial proximity. It is the geographical distance between the audience and the source of the news. If you live in Benin, and there is a riot in a part of the city, you certainly will feel a sense of concern. The news media situate the news within your environment to bring you into it. In other words, a local station will emphasis events in the environment than dwelling on issues that are remote from the people.

**Psychological proximity;** It is the emotional feelings we attach to an event that is remote. The news of the xenophobic attacks in south African in February 2015, drew spontaneous reaction from many Nigerians who felt the likely impact of such attacks on many Nigerians in that part of the world. In heart of the Boko Haram insurgency, the streaming headlines of death compelled many families to ask their beloved ones to leave that part of the country. Again, when an HIV/AIDS sufferer hears about the vaccines that can cure HIV/AIDS, it gives the individual a sense of hope that something positive is coming. Although the discovery may be far, the news will however bring the sufferer into a state of hope and commendation for the breakthrough in research.

**Consequence;** It is the likely impact of an event on the society. For instance, when the Niger Delta militants resumed hostilities against oil workers, it generated so much interest because Nigeria runs a monolithic economy. The continuous shut

down of flow stations and oil facilities led to the decline in oil revenue, such that many State Governments could not pay salaries. News makers are always interested in the impact of an event on society. Therefore, issues about strikes, fuel price hikes, conflicts etc have implications for inflation, job cut or loss, insecurity amongst others.

**Human interest:** This means the extent to which an event touches human emotions. The type of stories that spur people to pity, anger, fear, hope, disappointment, celebration constitute human interest. Remember the story of a purported mad man around Ajao – estate bridge in Lagos by the name Clifford Orji who eats human beings? Perhaps you followed the story of a maid who kidnapped three children from the Orekoya’s family in Lagos? They generated serious interest from the public.

Human interest stories generate personal identification. It is the degree of human interest that makes it news worthy. The usual reaction from human interest story could be by way of tears, sorrow, smiles, dancing, shouting etc.

**Magnitude;** It is the scale or degree of the occurrence or event. When something happens, you want to know how many people were involved, the extent of damage and the cost implications. In other words, it is the scale of the event. For example, when there is an accident, the likely questions that may be asked are, hope there is no death? If yes, how many? What are the degrees of injuries, is the bus beyond repair?

There are other factors which affect news selection. Gatekeepers consider them also important in news value. Ufuophu-Biri (2006) refers to them as minor conventional news values. He suggested the following

- Policy and philosophy of the organization
- The audience factors
- Discretion of the journalist
- Availability of news
- Ownership influence
- Commercial/advertisers influence
- Influence of technology
- Economic factor

We will also add the following

- Ideological/religious orientation of the owners
- Logistics

### **Principles of Journalism**

Journalism does not thrive on assumptions. There are principles which have been developed overtime that quite the practice. Some scholars call them the theory of journalism, ethnical principles, canons of journalism etc. these are the principles

1. **Truth:** truth is what we know to be based on facts and honesty. Every journalistic writing is obligated to the truth. It is the deliberate efforts to gather materials for a journalistic writing using concrete facts and figures to buttress the point. The sources of such facts should be reliable and can be verified by independent sources. In drawing facts to buttress a piece, such

reportage must be accurately reported. Whatever interpretation and opinion that are expressed, they must flow substantially from facts. The essence of upholding the truth is to keep the dignity of the profession and save it from the functionality of the writer. The thrust of truth as a principle is well captured by Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2013, p. 6). According to them:

Truth demonstrates a respect for people. Truth builds relationship of trust between the media and the public – truth involves basing a story on solid evidence. Any doubt should be disclosed in the story. Accuracy in this case is thus, one underlying concept of truth. Another basic concept of the notion of truth is promotion of understanding.

2. **Public interest:** The Nigerian constitution provides in Chapter II section 22 of the 1999 constitution as amended that “the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objective contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people. This provision should be the guiding light in journalism. Although, there a number of factors which can impede a writer’s sense of judgment, his or her commitment to the public interest should stand above all other interest. The public has the right to information; they have a right to be heard. A growing trend in media business is media commercialization. Nevertheless, media owners most strike a balance between public interest and economic interest. It is this perceived failure on the part of some media organizations that the citizens consider them to be anti-people or pro-this and that. Strict pursuit of economic interest to

the neglect of the vital aspect of citizen's interest negates the very essence of the media enterprise.

3. **Independence:** The Kernel of this principle is that practitioners must not inject themselves in the news. It is the capacity of the professional to maintain an independent mind in an event. The ability to stay calm, and avoid been swayed by certain loyalties and cleavages. While it is ethical for a journalist to keep in touch with sources, such relationship must not undermine the public right to fair and accurate reporting. Maintaining an independent stand gives the journalistic the locus standing, to periscope events and present same to the audience from a detached perspective. The capacity of a practitioner in fulfilling his obligations to the citizens will stem from his sense as a watchdog of the society.
4. **Objectivity:** This is very close to the principle of independence. It means avoiding bias in reporting. In other words, it is the ability of the writer to drop his or her personal prejudices in favour of what the evidence in a case or story adduce. Going beyond a one-sided perspective in a case to a broad-based witnesses account of an event. The input of different witnesses by way of questioning prevents a one-sided view or position to an issue. Therefore, when confronted by a scenario that needs different perspective, strive to check a variety of facts and opinions in order to strike a balance.
5. **Significance and relevance:** The volume of information flying around is so high. Every story cannot be taken to mean public interest. The principle of significance therefore advocates the need to emphasise information that has

significant value for the citizens. Ohaja (2005, p.33) noted that the writer needs to answer questions like: “How good is this event? Is it an epoch-making event or just a routine affair? Is it a serious or high-hearted matter? Is it a local, national or international event or issue? How should the reader react to it? Can he afford to ignore it?” Nigeria is presently confronted by three dominant issues, corruption, insecurity and unemployment, any emphasis on other issues that down grade these aspects may appear trivial to the citizen.

6. **Comprehensiveness and Proportionateness:** The notion of comprehensiveness has as its basic goal the inclusion of every segments of the society in news coverage. Media houses achieve this by segmenting their news stories into city and local news. Some call it community, metro-file, rural reports etc. the essence is to promote a comprehensive news report that incorporates at least to a certain degree the various segments of the society. Proportionateness advocates keeping important stories in proper perspective without neglecting them. There may be a tendency for media organization to pursue comprehensiveness while neglecting the important ones. The principle helps to pursue a broad-based journalism while placing emphasis on significant events.
7. **Personal conscience:** Sometimes the newsroom presents a ‘mad house’ of some sorts. Editors and reporters fire words at each other owing to perceives neglect or disregard for some house principles or personal wellbeing. The principle of personal conscience has as its focus the right of a journalist to

speak his or her mind on issue. Everyone must not necessarily toe the same line of thinking. Personal conscience enables the individual to take a stand on principles which he or she believes to be true. A journalist can stand against news slant by his editor. An editor can stand against editorializing by a reporter. The principle of conscience promotes ethical practice without mortgaging the conscience on the altar of monetary gains or the tendency to curry favour.

8. **Transparency/ attribution:** A reporter could sometimes be confronted by conflict of interest. For instance, war between two communities in which he may be required to cover even though he is from one of the communities. The principle of transparency and openness on the part of the reporter to own up or disclose his/her personal interest in a matter which might make him subjective.

Attribution simply means acknowledging your source (s) of information (s). It shields the reporter from plagiarism or non-attribution. Many reporters often hide under the anonymity of sources to hide the source of their information. Except, where such disclosure can harm the source, Journalists need to disclose their sources of information. This will reduce the volume of 'beer parlour' Journalism that has taken over Journalism practice.

9. **Sensitivity:** If you work in a broadcast media house, and you are asked to cover a live event, A commentator, you are not expected to report a major incident like fire outbreak, stadium collapse, fight etc. The essence is to minimize the likely effects of such comments or reportage on listeners or

viewers. A military Governor's wife in the then Oyo State went to the stadium to watch a football match, in the process, the home fans were protesting the penalty awarded by the referee. The commentator went ahead to describe the state and level of the protest. Unfortunately, the military Governor was listening to the match proceedings on radio. Immediately the commentator described the scenario, out of fear for his wife, he ordered soldiers to go and chase everyone out of the stadium in order to rescue his wife. You could well imagine the pandemonium, fear and injuries that resulted from such development.

Apart from live events, your choice of words in an interview especially with families that are bereaved and traumatized must be that of empathy. The journalist must be sensitive to what the bereaved want to say or without. The journalist sense of discretion will help him or help apply caution when necessary.

10. **Ethics versus laws:** There is a close link between ethics and law because both seek for the betterment of a society and also make for responsible citizenship. In every society certain laws guide members of the society including journalist. However, A journalist quest for a better society can lead him or her into searching documents which the laws frown at. In journalism, it becomes ethical if the information disclosed will be for public good. A celebrated case was between Tony Momoh and the National Assembly, in this case, Momoh was summoned by the House to disclose the source of a report that claimed that members of the National Assembly were lobbying

for constituency projects. The believe of the Assembly members was that the official secrets Acts forbids anyone from divulging official secret. The case ended in court, of which Tony Momoh won the case based on the ethical principle of protection of the sources of information.

11. **Forum for public criticisms:** There is what we call right of reply in journalism. It is the right of individuals to respond to an allegation or criticism levelled against an individual by the media. Media organizations strive to respond to this principle. The principle also gives citizens access to the media to express their views about what is happening in the society through letters to the editor or mails sent to a particular programme producer. The news and currents present by citizens in their varied forms and placed in particular context to sustain ongoing debates in that area. The avenue provided for citizens to ventilate news place the media in a privilege position and as moulders of society. When the media help to shape debates, the critical thinking necessary to transform society became reality available.

### **Kinds of Journalism Practices**

Journalism is concerned with the business of writing or telling interesting stories about happenings in a society in a timely manner. The way a story is written fits into a particular genre of journalism. Thus, there are different kinds of journalism, each shaped by peculiar development or interest in the society. The following have been observed to be the different ways it is practiced, apart from its print, broadcast and online forms.

1. **Development Journalism:** It started as a remonstrance against the way advance nations were reporting Third world nations. The leaders of developing nations called for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and a new world information and communication order (NWICO) to facilitate easy flow of information.

Essentially development journalism focuses on gathering, analysing and dissemination of development related news and information using multiple channels of communication that have direct relevance to the people. Soola (2003, p. 159) defines development journalism as a pragmatic, skilful, dialectal, composite and purposive process – product coverage of socially desirable programmes and projects, designed to enhance the living conditions of the people. It must provide a bi-directional flow of information between rural and urban sectors of the economy, speak and write the language of the people and cover, environment, health, agriculture, population growth, food shelter, unemployment, poverty, inequality, human rights (including those of women and children.)

2. **Precision Journalism:** Today information society demands journalism practice that goes beyond the straight news report to a more robust and well researched story which has implication for the society. Precision journalism according to Ukonu (2005, p. 68) is a new effort in reporting in which professional communicators use social research methods to gather, interpret and vividly present information to their target audience... it provides lucid and vigorous pieces of information in a context that makes them easily meaningful and useful. Information is simply based on demonstrable facts

and empirical evidence. Precision journalism, therefore, incorporates surveys (opinion polls), content analysis, experimentation and statistical tool. According to him the idea is to use quantitative methods to convert events, characteristics, behaviour or attitudes to numbers that can be analysed.

3. **Civic Journalism:** This genre of journalism emanated from the perceived feeling of alienation of the citizens on issues. It aims at improving the quality of civic life through participation and debate on national issues. Schaffer (2001), cited by Okunna (2005, p. 94) captures the notion as “a broad label put on efforts by editors and news directors to try to do their jobs as journalists in ways that help to overcome people’s sense of powerlessness and alienation. It aims to educate citizens about issues and current events so they can make decisions, engage in civic dialogue and action, and generally, exercise their responsibilities in a democracy.

In a country where citizens have apathy to the political process, civic journalism helps the citizens to break away from the state of lukewarmness to a vibrant citizen capable of engaging the government on how best the society can be governed or improved upon, while playing roles as citizens by paying their taxes and participating in the political processes common in a democratic society.

4. **Yellow Journalism:** This kind of journalism practice grew out of the work of William Hearst’s of New York Journal and Joseph Pulitzer’s of the New York world around 1897. They used yellow journalism to exaggerate and misguide the American public on happenings in Cuba. The strategy used in

yellow journalism is to sensationalize and satirize, falsify headlines to attract public attention. The major characteristics of yellow journalism includes; multi-column headlines, multicolumn illustrations, big or flamboyant headlines. Yellow journalism according to Strout (2003) is a term used for the negligent and flamboyant newspaper reporting, without regards to facts. With yellow journalism the truth is usually misrepresented or concealed, more often than not, there may be no truth to the story at all.

5. **Investigative Journalism:** Investigative journalism has grown over the years with different nomenclatures. Randolph Holhut calls it alternative journalism, President Theodore Roosevelt called it ‘muckraking’ journalism. Essentially, Holhut (N.D) noted that it came to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. It is the kind of journalism that digs up what some people would wish to be buried. It focuses on the truth and help in building the common person while pursuing the public good. It advocates social change and value re-orientation. Investigative journalism, according to John Ullman cited in World Bank (2003), is the kind of reporting on matters of importance which some person or organizations wish to keep secret. Nwabueze (2005, p. 12) sees it as the type of reporting concerned with revealing, uncovering, unearthing, exposing and digging facts, it provides more than is seen in straight news reports. It makes a story more factual, more intriguing, more revealing, more complete, more credible, more controversial, more far-reaching, more result – oriented, more informative, more persuasive, among other moves it provides.

What must be noted therefore is that investigative reports uncover unethical actions of individuals who abuse the official privileges or failed to meeting the minimum standards required to perform certain tasks.

6. **Online Journalism:** It is a product of technological advancement. It provides opportunity for individuals to do the job of journalism using internet platform to reach the audience. This brand of journalism has different names, ‘alternative journalism’, ‘new media reporting’ etc. Nwabueze (2001, p. 152) sees it as “the process of gathering and disseminating news through on-line news channels. It included conventional information gathering process which involves physically moving from place to place in search of news worthy information, conducting interviews, collating news from existing media and presenting such to an on-line audience, primarily through the internet.

The point to note is that new media or online journalism makes possible the appearance of news content online. It could be in form of blogs, alternative media platforms, share and discussion sites and even gossips sites. Apart from these, traditional media houses do create websites to give their wide audience an opportunity to access stories instead of hard copies or physical channels. There are others who have only web-presence without physical office space or content that can be read. Such media organizations appearing only online are called alternative media.

Ekhareafo and Uchenunu (2014) define online journalism as the collection or gathering, processing and distribution of news online. They noted six

categories of online journalism, drawing four from the work of Mark Deuze (2003); mainstream news sites, meta and index and category, comments, share and discussion sites, alternative media and citizen journalism.

7. **Citizen Journalism:** This brand of journalism appears to be the trend in modern journalism, its nomenclature includes; user generated content (UGC), ‘amateur journalism, accidental journalism etc. Ekhareafio and Uchenunu (2014, p. 206) define it “as the creation of news content by non-professionals who distribute such content to media houses or share it in blog sites, social media or other platforms which the news media offers. Channels television encourages viewers to send in pictures or videos about happenings in their area. CCN 1 – reporter presents classical cases of how citizens are involved in news creation from different parts of the world – what must be noted is that individuals involved in news content creation are non-professionals. It is this perspective that makes it citizen journalism.

What must be noted from our discussion so far is that the development of a particular genre of journalism is an interplay between development in the society and the journalists quest to break from the noun. These kinds of journalism are not exclusive, other forms will emerge as society matches on.

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**PART 11**  
**INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**

#### **Concept of Investigative Journalism**

In every society, there are people whose interest or primary concern is how to use underhand dealings to get financial enrichment, contracts, etc even when such acts run contrary to extant laws. In such a system, unless there is a conscientious whistle blower interested in building an ideal system such underhand activities may never get public attention. This type of unethical practice is what investigative reporting seeks to unearth. Investigative reporting means reports in the media which expose corruption, vices, irregularities, underhand dealings, mismanagement of public funds, absenteeism, and all manners of practices which violate the tenets of an ideal system or society. It has to do with inefficiency in government, political parties, companies, institutions, clubs, charity organizations, churches, professional bodies and even the mass media etc. Most investigated stories may appear in the media in form of scandals. Example: the first Speaker of the Third Republic Salisu Buhari, who was impeached following his false claim to a Toronto University degree, Richard Nixon of the United States who was involved in the Watergate scandal, Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky sexual escapades in the White House, the 550 million car purchase scam levelled against the then Speaker Dimeji Bankole, 17 billion police pension fund embezzled by Tafa Balogun, the National identity scam that led to the removal of the then minister of Internal Affairs Mr Sunday Afolabi, and a host of other reports that exposed corruption in high places. The recent Dasuki Gate

bordering on the use of state funds meant for arms purchase for political and personal use.

Every investigated story has implications for both the guilty, the accused, the reporter and even the law enforcement agents. Nwabueze (2005, p. 13) captures the possible impact of such reports. According to him “for every investigated report, somebody is crying, somebody is jubilating, somebody is in trouble, somebody is irritated, somebody is on the run, somebody will be freed, somebody will be jailed, somebody will be sentenced to death, somebody is unfortunate, somebody will be honoured, somebody will be sacked, somebody is ridiculed, among many other shades of outcome brought about by such reports.

What these suggest is that not every story qualify as being worthy of investigation. To identify a story worthy of investigation, there should be the presence of an issue of which the individuals involved are trying to hide something or cover a secret. The matter in question must be of public interest; it must also be significant and relevant to the society as a whole or the institution or organization where it happened. When such matter is exposed or made public, will it cause trouble? Bring changes in policies, governance, administration, accountability, probity, decorum and public order? If the answer is yes, then such a story qualifies as being worthy of investigation.

It is important to state here that stories or report from hearsay, crime report from police cannot constitute investigative reports, since the sources are known. Nevertheless, they can provide basis for the journalist to dig further. Therefore, an investigative report should emanate from the journalist, or the journalist acted on a

perceived lacuna in a system which need answers or from a tip-off provided by an insider. In whatever way the stories may arise, the reporter must do an independent investigation to establish the veracity of the claims and issues that generated the investigation.

### **Functions of Investigative Reporting**

Investigative reporting is an obligation of the press to the society. Such reports provide the following functions:

- 1      Helps to sanitize the society and bring about a morally conscious society.
- 2      Brings about accountability in government and public institutions.
- 3      To ridicule the evils of the society.
- 4      To help the citizens form informed opinion about public and social institutions in the society.
- 5      To bring about social justice and enforce discipline in public institutions.
- 6      Enhances media credibility.
7.     Fulfils the watchdog function of the media.
8.     Acts as the conscience of the society.
9.     Attracts readers and stimulate sales.
10.    Foster social change.
11.    Bring consciousness and order into the public life.
12.    Promotes professionalism in media practices

## **Traits of An Investigative Reporter**

Ogbeni (2002) highlighted some of the following traits of an investigative Journalist:

1. The ability to work under pressure, whether internal or external
2. Ability to work for long hours under stressful conditions
3. Nose for news: A reporter lives on news, he must have an instinct for news, and that is, he should be able to identify a newsworthy event. He should be able to generate news from anyone no matter how important or insignificant that person is.
4. Aggressiveness with caution. This is an emotional outburst against individuals who flout rules or make the system unworkable.
5. Extraordinary patience; that is, persistence in your approach. As a reporter you need to persevere and go the extra— mile while pursuing a story. Remember that there is a wide variety of people, while some may have news to offer, others may have, but may not be willing to divulge it. As such, if you are in undue haste, it may damage your investigation by causing you to miss the vital part of the news.
6. High level of integrity. Those who go to equity, must go with clean hands. If a reporter has no moral character or integrity, he cannot probe into shady deals since himself is a product of such activities. Uprightness is a virtue the reporter must wear at all times.
7. Accuracy. It is the ability of the reporter to quote the facts, figures, names, time, number etc the way they are without distortion.

8. Ethical sense of judgment (fairness, balance, objectivity) Every profession regulates the conduct of its practitioners in terms of duty and ethical behaviour. Journalism involves the kind of trust that imposes strong obligations on all those who practice it. You should keep abreast of the ethics of the journalism profession and also obey its tenets. Journalism is more than knowing how to write news. To be a reporter calls for certain innate traits that must be mixed with the acquired ones. The attributes highlighted are essential for effective news reporting. Your profession as a reporter calls for certain attributes which include good educational background, ability to exercise restraint, speed and accuracy, good sense for news, wide range of knowledge, intelligence, imagination, punctuality, reliability, occupational aids among others. You need to develop the ability to be impartial, impersonal, objective and dispassionate. You should not shift the emphasis, twist the angle or colour the story. Though you can afford to be ruthless, remorseless in condemning unfair happenings in feature or editorial writings, news reporting differs, what the listeners or readers want in news are facts and not your opinions or emotional reactions.
9. Knowledge of working tools: To facilitate your job, you do not only need to possess some aids you must know how to use them. These include a camera and computer. In fact, in this age of computer- assisted journalism, it will be odd for a reporter not to be computer literate and also know how to search for information on the Internet. Besides, the knowledge of shorthand will be an added advantage.

10. Ability to establishing contacts: As a reporter, it is not enough for you to know how to establish contacts; you should try to sustain contacts. Do not despise anybody; the office assistant or even the cleaner may be your best source in an organization. So, be friendly with them, as you would want to be with their boss.
11. Courage. Courage they say is not the absence of fear but the conquest of it. It is the reporter's ability to face situations even though they appear dangerous.
12. Being painstaking, careful and logical.
13. Versatility: As a reporter you must have knowledge of the beat you are assigned to cover. Also, you need to know about the community where you are operating. Thus, take extra time to equip yourself with this quality, as no school of journalism will teach you that. A good reporter should also be pleasant, neat and stay intellectually alert, optimistic and adaptable.
14. Compassion for others
15. Good command of written and spoken language of his medium: To do your job well, you must be proficient in the language of the news. This will enable you to learn as many things as possible. The present trend towards specialization in news reporting makes it mandatory for reporters to learn as much as possible on the subject they are assigned to, such as politics, science, labour, economics and history.
16. Having interest in public service: the society can only get better when individuals work for its good. The concern of the report is bringing issues

into public discourse, report issues that are destroying the society and suggest ways out in order to better the society.

17. A good sense of humour: journalism is not only about raising serious issues. It also involves helping the members to relax and laugh over issues. Thus, a journalist sense of humour will help bring about the sort of entertainment the society desires.
18. Trustworthiness: As an investigative reporter, you need to respect the confidence reposed in you by your sources. You must have the capacity to protect your source no matter what. On no account should you divulge your source of information. Be prepared to go to jail if that will help protect the source, Tony Momoh refused to disclosed the source of his information that Senators were lobbying for constituency projects, they ended in court. The court ruled in his favour. In Nigeria, journalists like Nduka Irabor and Tunde Thompson, Nduka Obaigbena, Chris Anyanwu were sentenced to prison for failing to disclose the sources of information on military officers shortlisted as ambassadors and the source of the information on Oladipo Diya's coup.
19. Speed and accuracy: As a reporter, you have to bear in mind that your medium is competing with others in the market. To meet a deadline, you need to race against time in gathering and presenting news. Remember the saying that journalism is history in a hurry. Your ability to gather and process news in a timely manner is a critical skill and quality you need to survive on the profession.

### **How to Cultivate the Traits**

- (1) By training (through formal educational teaching, through self-education, attending seminars, workshops etc.
- (2) Close association and discussion with experienced journalists.
- (3) Imbibing ethical orientation.

### **Steps to Investigative Journalism**

Having a background knowledge of reporting is germane to investigative journalism. However, those involved in cover up, manipulations of figures would want to stop the investigator or to quick measures to stop their nefarious activities from being exposed. No journalist worth his or her worth will want to be beaten to a story. The level of success an investigative reporter would record will depend on his or her ability to keep tab on important and minute details that could uncover the real truth.

It must be stated here that the suggested tips or approaches here are not mutually exclusive, but only a guide on how the right result could be realized. Although there are known steps in following up a story sometimes such steps should not necessarily follow a chronological order. However, journalists should know that the police office should not be the first place of call in investigation. There are a number of cases which the police authorities have covered up over time such that the cases ended up in controversial circumstances without concrete evidence to pursue them. Till date, the police have not established who killed Bola Ige, the then Attorney General of the federation. Marshal Harry and AK Dikibo both PDP leaders from rivers state. A recent case of a young man who died in police cell but was

alleged to have died by a hit and run vehicle in Benin City also presents the type of tales the police often tell to cover up issues particularly when there is vested interest from the top echelon of the society. In this case, the young man working in Protea Hotel in Benin City was alleged to have stolen some money from the Hotel. He was arrested and taken to a police station that is not more than 100 meters from the Hotel. By the following day, when the family members arrived to see how they could resolve the problem, the police told them he was taken to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital, on getting to the hospital, they were told that their son is dead. Certain questions became pertinent in this case, what did the police do to the boy in the cell? What is the relationship between the cell and the alleged case of the vehicle been hit by a hit and run vehicle? How did they come to the conclusion that he should be taken to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital when the Central Hospital is closer to the alleged scene of the incident? Was there an autopsy conducted by the University of Benin Teaching Hospital to ascertain the cause of death? Or did the doctor who certified him dead adduce the cause of death? Will his or her report correlate with the autopsy? Nevertheless, the police version in an investigation is crucial but must not be the first point of call.

It is also important to state that different stories have their own approach, while some may involve more than one reporter, others may not require more than one person. While some stories may take a long time to arrive at a dependable report, others can be dispensed with in matter of days or weeks. This basic understanding will help the reporter plan the best approach to the story. It would help him develop the right temperament necessary for the smooth execution of the story. There are

reporters who are not patient, who cannot persevere, while there are others who can go the extra mile to get a job done.

The following steps are tips that could assist in investigation. Irrespective of how long or short the investigation would take.

### **1. Preliminary Knowledge of The Subject or Issue Through Research**

When you are commissioned by your editor to carry out an investigation in your own community about what is happening, you need to first of all sit and do a rough examination of what the issue is, who and who you will ask questions, where and where you need to go to get information, the type of documents that may be required to get detailed information. The essence of the preliminary information is to prepare or guide your actions or plans before you go out for the actual investigation. In our internet fast paced world, you can quickly run through the net to get relevant cases like that with the mind of acquiring knowledge of the intricacies involved in such investigation. You can read newspapers and watch the broadcast media on sign post to the case. The side-bars to the case could be identified from the press interviews granted in the news, the reaction of some principal officers, the host community and other individuals or organizations mentioned in the news.

It is important to state that the essence of the research is to arm the reporter with preliminary knowledge or information which could facilitate the investigation. An unplanned investigation will be done half-hazardly. Research enables the reporter to plan. It could give the reporter an idea of what may be the cost, likely obstacles to the investigation. Therefore, it is imperative that an initial search is done

to uncover what should be the basic focus of an investigation. This would help the reporter not to dissipate energy on what is not relevant.

## **2. Starting the Investigation**

Having acquired the necessary knowledge and preliminary facts about a case, the reporter can now set out into the field for the actual investigation. This step will require the reporter to step into the scene of the events to have a feel of what the atmosphere is like, the tension, the blame game and intricacies of the case. This step also requires the reporter to ask questions from the principal actors on what the issues are. Such visits afford the reporter a first-hand assessment of the damages, injustices and harm which generated the investigation in the first place. The in-depth interview which the reporter needs to conduct an issue is conducted at this stage. Where it requires him to content analysed document, it is the information gathered from the interview which provided the tip-off that could probably inform the analysis of relevant documents to see the relationship between the issues and the likely facts that may emanate.

In conducting the interview, the reporter should watch the body language of the interviewee to know his or her take on the questions, such reactions could spur him into questioning the veracity of the claim.

## **3. Confer with relevant authorities**

There are regulatory bodies that coordinate every sector of the national life. For instance, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) regulates broadcasting, issues and disputes in the broadcast media rest with this authority, the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) handles the print media aspect. The Economic and Financial Comes

Commission (EFCC) deals with cases of economic fraud, corruption, embezzlement in public offices, financial fraud etc, the Nigeria police force is responsible for handling any cases of crime in the society, the central bank of Nigeria (CBN) regulates the bank sector. The Nigeria deposit insurance corporation (NDIC) takes charge of insurance businesses in Nigerian economy. The list can go on and on.

Every crime or problem that requires investigation needs a corresponding authority to confer with on the veracity of the claim and the extent to which the regulator has stepped into the case. For instance, when there is a case of gross misconduct in a university, the administration will set up a panel to investigate the issue or the disciplinary committee of the university will invite individuals to appear before it. The decision of the disciplinary committee cannot stand, unless the governing council of the school rectifies such decisions. When there is a case of financial fraud in any organization, the Economic and Financial crimes Commission (EFCC) or the fraud unit of the Nigerian police need to be asked questions regarding such issue. The essence is to give official position or version of the story. The duty of the investigator is not to pronounce any party guilty in an investigation, but to see how relevant facts could lead the public into drawing conclusion on who or how a crime was committed.

Apart from regulatory bodies, there are other professional bodies whose knowledge of the law is needed in helping to unravel the kernel of an investigation. The essence is to break very knotty issues into simple and clear understanding. They could help in identifying the missing link in a report. A professional account could

establish the financial fraud in a financial statement through his knowledge of book keeping.

It is instructive to state here that authorities could be a party to an investigation. A case of extra-judicial killing by a police officer makes the police a necessary party to the case. This will not in any way stop the reporter from asking questions from the police. The point is, the interest of an authority in a matter does not foreclose the journalist from asking questions even though the authority may be bias in response.

#### **4. Re-Examine Your Facts and Sources**

It is not enough to conduct interviews and examine records when carrying out an investigation, when a reporter double check fact and re-examine sources, he becomes critical with the facts and question the missing link in the facts before him or what was said. The reporter must ensure that all legal encumbrances like libel or slander, depending on the medium are removed. The facts presented could lead the reporter to verifying the authenticity of the claim made by other sources by asking an independent observer about what was said by others or to reconfirm what a source said previously in the light of the fresh facts that have emerged.

The need for a re-examination of the facts is to put the reporter and the media organization on a clean state, promote justice, and ensure that interviews will not say they were quoted out of context. A typical case of a source denying an earlier claim was the case between Vera Ifudu of NTA and Olusola Saraki, the then Senate Leader. Ekwelie (1986) cited in Udejah (2004, p. 139) aptly explains the scenario.

The country had discovered that \$2,800,000,000 was missing in its foreign account. The, the senate leader Olusola Saraki, indicated that he had located the missing money. On the basis of this claim, the Nigeria television authority sent a reporter to interview the senator, but when the interview resulted in a controversy, the reporter, Vera Ifudu, refused an order to surrender the original tape. She was dismissed from the NTA on April 28, 1980. Ifudu went to the industrial arbitration panel, which awarded her N23,000 for wrongful dismissal.

This is just one of the many cases, where officials will deny a statement earlier made. When a reporter is sure of what was reported, it gives the reporter the peace of mind needed to react to whatever development that might arise from the report.

## **5. Organize the materials**

Not every material and interview conducted in the course of an investigation may serve the final purpose of an investigation. Some maybe very relevant, others may not serve the key purpose of the investigation. It is in this light that the reporter needs to select and organize the materials that could bring about a meaningful report. Here, the reporter systematically selects the interviews, photographs and protest letters or injunctions secured by parties to the case. When the necessary materials are organized, writing the final report becomes less stressful.

## **6. The Final Report**

This is the report that the public or media audience get to know as an expose or scandal. The final report presents a detailed account of what happened, how it

happened, the intrigues played by different parties to the case and how it blew open. In doing this, the reporter organizes the write-up in a coherent manner to ensure proper linkages. The reporter should at this stage link proper photographs to support a claim. A counter position on an issue should be presented after a particular claim. In either case, sources should be quoted, relevant documents should be inboxed as annexures to the point been made. The presentation of claims and counter claims gives the report a balance outlook statements of facts should be isolated from opinions so that the public can make informed opinion out of the facts. A well written report will not only serve its purpose, but will add credence to the reporter and the organization.

### **Features of Investigative Journalism**

There are certain characteristics peculiar to investigative reports. The attributes distinguish them from other forms of journalistic writing. Some of the features are;

1. Investigative reports expose corruption or ills in the society
2. The reports have criminal undertones
3. Uncovers injustice and perversions in the society
4. There are whistle blowers who may not be identified
5. They are usually longer than the ordinary reports.
6. There are usually a number of photographs and data to support the claims in the report.
7. The expositions may lead to indignation between the state and the accused
8. Most investigative stories end up as scandals

9. The reporter stands the risk of attacks which could lead to death
10. Professional and authoritative sources inputs help to unravel the myths in the case.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **HANDLING INVESTIGATIVE STORIES**

#### **Research and Investigative Journalism**

Research is a systematic investigation into a phenomenon to find the relationship or cause effect of the phenomenon or situation. This is why Ojo (2005, p.1) defines research as a “systematic and intensive investigation geared towards a more complete knowledge of the subject studied”. It is research that provides understanding to why things are the way they are. Research provides basis for further investigation into things. A sound knowledge of research is crucial to investigative journalism. This is because the final product of the investigation flows from research. Research therefore helps the investigative journalist to gather relevant information that could assist the reporter package the report in a meaningful way.

In handling any investigative piece, it is the nature of the issue that determines what research method to be employed in generating data. In matters requiring clarifications from people especially those involved in the issue; questioning the people through interviews or questionnaire is critical to getting perspective on the issue. Where the issue involves analysis of documents to establish basic facts, content analysis is the best method. There are times when you need to get involved in the scenario to uncover the fact of the investigation; the best method to employ is observation method, particularly participant observation.

Whatever the approaches, research serves the following functions in investigation:

1. Widens the reporter’s knowledge of events and issues around him.

2. It helps in the pursuit of truth.
3. It helps to establish the causal relationship between phenomena of interest.
4. Research helps to generalize the level of involvement of individuals or group in a fraud or scandal.
5. It helps to translate raw data into meaningful information.
6. Establish the level of distortions or falsification of public records.
7. Research helps to correct errors of facts and figures which the public often overplay or down play.

### **Techniques of Investigative Reporting**

The foundation of investigative reporting depends essentially on news gathering techniques. The only difference here is that investigative reporting is deeper. Okwechime (2012, p. 113) contends that an investigative reporter “does not necessarily need to play detective in the sense of shadowing persons. Rather he may rely on public records to uncover information about which to query interviewees and to confirm or dispel speculations”.

The techniques are divided into three:

1. Direct Observation (direct, routine, pretentious, participation observation)
2. Interviewing method
3. Public records

The direct observation includes movement of people, actions etc. that point to the issue being investigated.

The routine observation means that the journalist or individual is present at the scene of the incident. Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2013) observed that the basic

principle of an observational technique is that, it is an attempt to summarise, systematize and simplify the representation of an event, rather than, provide an event of exact representation of it. They assert that it is the methodological tools that are applied in communication research to elicit evidence. Observation can be participant or non-participant based. A participant observer is a pretentious observer. While in the pretentious participation observation, the reporter assumes a pseudo-status. That is, he/she can pretend to be a staff or worker in the organisation, with the aim of obtaining facts. However, caution is required. A non-participant observer stays in a vantage position to observe a phenomenon and document what he or she observes. Interviewing method — A vast skill in the act of interviewing is germane to getting facts e.g. panel interview, personality, vox pop, etc.

In conducting an interview, Stovall (1998, p.122) recommends the following guidelines:

- Think of your audience in preparing the questions.
- Prepare at least 20 questions in advance.
- Avoid asking yes or no questions.
- Start with the 5 W's and H questions.
- Don't be afraid to set aside your prepared questions if your interview goes off on an interesting or newsworthy direction.
- Be on time for the interview, and dress appropriately.
- At the beginning, introduce yourself and state the purpose of your interview.
- Break the ice with light conversation before you start asking questions.
- Let your source do the talking.

- Listen carefully to your source's answers and take very good notes. Develop an efficient note-taking system.
- Get at least three good, insightful direct quotes from the source.
- Write down exact spellings of names. Double check them. Then triple-check them.
- Ask for permission to telephone your source later for more information if necessary.
- Know the background of the person you are interviewing.
- Collect more information than you think you will need.
- Do not hesitate to ask the source to repeat something important.
- Be aware of your surroundings during the interview. A few notes about the room and other surroundings may be useful in a feature or interpretative story to help set the mood of your piece.
- Ask the most difficult questions last.

While it is necessary to have these interviewing tips at the back of your mind, it is also very important to know that in conducting an interview for an investigative report, cautious effort must be made to introduce yourself to the interviewee. Inspire the sort of confidence he or she needs to talk. Your politeness and respect for the subject is key in this regard. In addition, your confidence is crucial in pressing it on the subject to speak out. Your sense of logic should inspire to approach your questions either from the conclusion to the premise or the premise to the conclusion. Lighten his or her mood intermittently by throwing jokes that would enable the interviewee relax. Shun questions that will limit the capacity of the source to express

himself or herself. When using figures ensure that you quote correctly. Where necessary, collect documents to support the interview. Make sure, your recordings are correct to avoid future denial.

The celebrated case of an interview Vera Ifudu conducted on Olusola Saraki then Senate Leader on the alleged 2.8 billion dollars in the early 1980s resulted in controversy and denial. Vera stood her ground and refused to surrender the original tape when pressed. Her refusal led to her dismissal from NTA but she took the case to the Court of Arbitration where she won the case.

Public records include hospitals, tax office, motor licensing office, police records and other public offices where information can be sourced. This also involves library research into a judge's judgment, historical antecedent of the issue and other indices that a skilful journalist can transfer.

Against this background, the reporter needs:

1. Do a thorough homework of the issue being investigated. That is a working knowledge of the place, the functions performed in that office, the rules guiding the place amongst others.
2. Background knowledge of places where there is negligence, corruption, ineptitude amongst others.
3. Know registration certificates for cars, death, birth, marriage, divorce, elections and all forms of registration. The essence is to help you dig into problem relating to these areas.
4. Have a working knowledge of police and court proceedings because they are areas people can do a lot of cover ups.

5. Be sound in record research. For instance, a retired military officer who claims to be 45 years, when in essence, he has served the nation for 35 years. The question is: When did he complete his primary and secondary education?
6. Working knowledge of federal, state and local government administrations.
7. Watch out for a lead, it can come from a tip, gossip or complaint. Once you get concrete evidence from your lead, tell your editor and proceed with your investigation. You must be alert in you beat, anytime, anywhere because events are unfolding every now and then.

What to investigate therefore revolves around issues and institutions. It is any matter that concerns government. Political parties: A political manifesto, whether it is ambiguous or will help the people. Also, politicians are matters for interpretation and investigation. Senate as a body, bills passed, motions and individual senators are subjects for interpretation and investigation. For instance, the then Bendel state government took the federal government to court in 1981 over the revenue allocation formula passed by the National Assembly. In their writ of summon the State argued that the bill did not follow the right procedure. The Supreme Court haven examined the case ruled in favour of the state and declared the act illegal. Only reporters who are quite sensitive and who understand the law and the rules of procedure can draw public attention to such illegality.

Nwanze (2000) enumerated areas an investigative reporter could focus on as; House of Representatives, the Speaker, Principal Officers, all members, their bills. State legislature; their members and their principal officers. Local government; the Chairman, Secretary, Personnel Manager, etc. Government parastatals, NNPC, Shell,

Chevron, Electricity distribution and generation companies, Railway, etc. Media houses — are subjects for investigation. Individuals — Students, Housewives, Pastors, Priests, Bishops, Imams, etc.

**Non-Governmental Organizations:** e.g. an orphanage home, civil liberty organisations are all subjects, if there is any complaint or tip-off about their illegal activities, they can be investigated and interpreted.

Trade Unions - ASUU, NLC, PENGANSAN, NUPENG, NURTW, NATO, NUT, NUJ, NANS, NULGE.

Every government official, particularly those manning offices, drivers, clerks.

**Private companies:** Some expatriate companies do carry apartheid acts against black workers in their companies. Private Institutions — Nursery/Primary, continuous education centre, etc. Police, Army, Air force, Naval (Pension Scandal) Professional bodies — NIPR, NBA, ICAN. Churches. Youth organizations of villages and towns. Junior Chambers International (Jaycees), Rotary, Inner Wheel. Stock Exchange market, Brokers firm. What to investigate and interpret is everything, provided it is done in the interest of the public. The public will be concerned and the people interested in it. Your reason for the investigation must be for patriotic reasons, not sentiments.

### **What to Do After Getting A Lead**

Ogbeni (2002) observed that when a reporter gets a lead it is important to follow these steps.

1. Once you get a lead, you have to weigh the implication to ascertain whether the issue is of public interest or not. If it is not, forget your investigation.
2. Interview persons to back up your storyline; they can be your sources, subjects or anybody who knows about the particular issue.
3. Confront them with questions and watch their reactions.
4. Watch out for facial expression and watch reactions (smile, anger, pity, fidgeting, uncomfortability, etc.)
5. Watch his direction of focus
6. Guarantee him confidentiality
7. Maintain an independent mind and make sure you are not misled.
8. Mind what you do with your source. The fact that your source gave you a tipoff lead or document is not enough to make him a friend. You have to decide on what your source should be in your effort at getting to the root of a matter. Note that your source can be official or unofficial. Official, if authorised to give out information; unofficial are those who aid with information, though they are not permitted to do such, they include the messengers, cleaners, clerks, typists, etc. can help as sources of information.
9. Cultivate your source — that makes him have confidence in you. This can be done by regular visits, calls, meetings etc. to strengthen the friendship, but do not, if you are at risk for doing so.
10. Sometimes your source may be a double-edged sword, in that he may be a source on one hand and a suspect on the other.

11. Study your sources very well to be able to deal with them; always suspect your source or subject.
12. Interview them when they are relaxed not when they are tensed up.
13. If your source is not forthcoming, play dumb. Make them feel you do not know anything. Your source or subject may fail to attend or meet interview appointment. They might be uncooperating.
14. Your source might change and begin to avoid you, do avoid him too.
15. You may have to pay to get information but it is quite dangerous, because they can give you false lead.
16. Off-record — when your source says “do not quote me”, it means there is something to hide. If you think he or she is lying, ask him or her if you can put the statement in a particular way. If he/she says ‘yes’, know that there is truth in what he or she is saying.
17. Do not allow your source to be your master.
18. Some sources can be very difficult when you notice this, ask the source who else can be of help.
19. Your editor’s interest can lead to a conflict between you and him or her.

### **Confronting Your subjects**

1. Prepare your questions and anticipate the kind of answers to be given.
2. You must know the rules guiding public offices. Know his salary, asset, taxes paid, etc.
3. Listen to his explanations.
4. Quote the person’s response to your question.

5. If she's or he's trying to be difficult, camouflage the question.
6. Use two reporters — one who is soft and the other who is hard.
7. Be kind to them; listen to their point of view.

### **Investigative Journalism Tools**

Modern communication technology has made it possible to carry investigations without dangling the gadgets. For instance, the I-pen, e-tie and micro-chips have simplified the process. However, care must be taken to ensure that they do not interfere with the process. Besides the above, you need a calculator, microphone, camera, mini-tape recorder and the internet for easy access to information and to aid the filling of reports.

In addition to the above, your notebook, iPad, smart phone, diary marked with dates and reference on it so you can refer to your notes long after the event to check if someone queried your report or raised issues with it. Your ability to type is also very important to get the report out on time and minimize errors associated with giving your work to third parties to type.

### **When to Terminate an Investigation**

You can possibly stop an investigation based on insincerity on the part of your source. Again, when the matter appears Complex and there is conspiracy of your source. This is more serious when inaccurate information is provided. There is limited time available, or lack of fund to execute the investigation. At other times, when an issue has been quickly averted, there may be no need for further investigation. It is also important to state that when blind tip evidences are the only ones available there is no need to continue with the investigation. An issue that has

become a subject of litigation does not require further investigation, similarly, when there are counter charges in court over the issue being investigated. However, a judge attitude or hasty decision on a matter can be investigated.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SOURCES OF INVESTIGATIVE STORIES**

#### **Handling and Use of Sources**

Sources are at the heart of interpretative and investigative reporting because a lot depends on the information these sources will give to you. Are they willing to give you information? It is important to seek further useful guides through records to confirm what the source has said. Reporters are warned to be careful, because some sources can cook up or manufacture and manipulate news. Some sources can rent a crowd, sources may not be reliable, they may provide you with false reports. You must find out and check-up the stories in records. Sources can be saints and devils

Who then are sources? They can be people of high, middle, low status. They can be high- and low-income earners. However, a source is anybody who can volunteer information.

#### **How to Cultivate and Secure Your Source**

The principle behind cultivating a source lies on mutual trust and understanding between the receiver and the source. Once there is suspicion, message will not flow

1. You have to attract the source.
2. Patriotic business and motives
3. You encourage the source for the benefit of your own interest
4. Develop interest in your source, you must maintain and sustain that interest

5. You must evaluate your source. This you can do by verifying (their information) them, with the records. If the records are correct you can build on the source. If not, know that your source is not trustworthy.

Sources will open to you if you are not:

1. Flippant, drunkard, busybody
2. Depending on the integrity of your organization.

You can also evaluate your source based on your findings. You can repeat the same question in three ways. You can challenge them to produce evidence.

### **How to Get Along with Your Sources or Dealing with Your Sources**

1. You can be playful or just easy going.
2. You can be business-like.
3. Always make yourself known to them.
4. Make quick and short visit.
5. Respect their privacy.
6. Meeting at odd hours but you must apologize.
7. Be a good listener; ask questions when necessary.
8. Do not be carried away with their explanations.
9. Do not lie to them; be straight-forward.

### **Handling and Uses of Record**

Records are used to verify the sources' statement. The records themselves provide evidence. A document provides tip-off.

1. Find out which type of records you are using and if there is no signature, do not use it. If the date falls on Sunday, do not use it e.g. June 12, 1993 election.
2. Always make sure the officials are the ones releasing the record.
3. All materials in the library
4. Stock exchange report, tax records, they are allowed by the law. There are some that are not allowed to be seen e.g. Defence Secret, Official Secret Act. Although there are some that are not allowed by the law e.g. personal health records, income tax but you require a lawyer's report.

### **Problems with Records Keeping**

1. Poor book keeping — conflicting records among ministry of finance, Central Bank and office of the Auditor General.
2. Officers sometimes provide false records e.g. The number of children immunized by health care providers are sometimes inflated to attract more funds.
3. Records can be manipulated.

### **Examples of Records that can be Used**

1. Death certificate
2. Marriage certificate
3. Birth certificate
4. Business registration
5. Check age declaration — check of against, secondary primary schools and the day he started work.
6. Court records

7. Bank records — withdrawal slips
8. Political campaign contributions
9. Census figures — state, local, federal towns
10. Auditors' report or their records
11. Philanthropist, voluntary, orphanage home records should all be checked
12. Certificate of Occupancy
13. Town planning records
14. Vehicle license
15. Police records
16. Police enlistment and discharge records also with the military
17. Medical records
18. Income records e.g. VAT
19. Income disbursement to states and local government
20. Purchase voucher
21. Contract signing agreement
22. Court legal notices such as summon, notices and judgment
23. Archives and museums
24. Pay roll
25. Stock exchange records
26. Maritime records
27. School environment figures

## **Gathering the News**

Nwanze (2000) touched on news gathering and hyped on its essential in investigative reporting. He sees News gathering as the process of, or the art of collecting raw materials for reporting. It is an important aspect of news reporting. The heart of newsgathering operations is the newsroom. Here, the news editor (or chief reporter) presides over the news desk, compiling the diary of jobs, briefing reporters, monitoring the day's (or week's) cover page, checking the finished stories, liaising with photographers, answering queries, signing expenses and briefing the editor and chief sub-editor on the progress of operations.

Technology has changed the face of the newsroom. Reporters have on their desks computers and laptops. This has replaced the old bedlam typewriters. Instead of piled up paper, news stories scroll across Visual Display Unit (VDU) screens as reporters bend over their terminals.

It is an obvious change that even the blind can see. Apart from the shift to on-screen writing, the reporter's role has not altered less than any other in the computerized newspaper and broadcast industries. Newsgathering and news writing remain, as they always were, the heart of a newspaper's and news media organization reason for existence.

The news editor, who is an experienced Reporter knows what length a particular story could take assigns reporters to stories. Many of the stories could be planned events, that is the type of events entered in advance in the newsroom diary such as courts, special holidays, world events, councils, committees, tribunals, inquests, political speeches, weddings, meetings, arts events, sporting fixtures and

opening ceremonies. Although the form of an event is known in advance, what actually happens or is said or done on the day makes the news.

There are also accidental news events that are not planned - deaths, accidents, fires, robberies, strikes, weather stories, crashes, sinking, and occasionally the odd fight or elopement. A third category of new jobs could be put together from tip-offs i.e. information reaching the office or a reporter could elicit potential news from contacts. Such stories might involve, or be about a variety of human situations and achievements, tales of heroism or of unfair or shady dealing. Scoops or Tip-offs often provide media organizations, with more spectacular and exclusive stories.

Media organizations can get stories from telephone contact. A research into news files in the library can assist the reporter in his or her preparation for a reportorial assignment. Usually, the news editor will expect check calls to be made by reporters on the progress been made. This will enable the Editor prepare against deadlines and other unforeseen circumstances.

Nwanze (2000) also touched on deadlines which Reporters, even new ones, quickly become aware. They will learn from bitter experience that, no matter how well they have written a story, if it misses deadline, they would have inadvertently killed the story. They would also come to the realization that deadlines are a continuous routine both for news but other aspects. E.g. Weekend edition of a newspaper, columns, politics etc. He enumerated and discussed the different ways of getting news stories. News can be gathered either through personal visits or by telephone, on known or likely news sources; for example, the police, fire officers, hospitals, council officials, MPs, undertakers and secretaries of organizations.

Parliamentary journalists check what questions have been put down to be answered by ministers or attend press briefings.

Whatever your newspaper, make your network of calls as wide as time allows. Apart from your attending court sessions, council and public meetings, this might be your only contact with some important sources of original news. Since many calls may not receive favourable responses, there is a limit to the time worth spending on some of them, such calls should nevertheless be made courteously, whether on the phone or personally.

Calls to religious ministers and secretaries of organizations often turn up more information about what is going to happen than what has happened. Make a note of these pieces of information. Beyond routine calls, you need contacts. Make a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of your regular contacts.

### **Tip Off or Scoop**

Tip offs can be a source of big stories that can make the front page of the next edition of your newspaper or major news of a radio or television station. Never shun the person who approaches you, even if you are busy and get a message that someone is at the reception wanting to see you.

Other news sources can provide the link into stories other than diary jobs, which can be the news programmes of radio and television – often in the form of a passing mention of something that is going to vitally affect your area. You should read your own newspaper, as well, to know what topics are of current interest, and to find ideas for more news.

Also, remember to glance through the advert section, as it could be a source of news. If you get news from advertisements, check to ensure that they have not already been reported. Nwanze (2000) noted that besides your own paper, take time to glance at any papers you can lay hands on. Here is what you should look for: Look for stories or future diary dates. Local stories reported elsewhere that your paper has missed and need or require follow-up. National news that may have local relevance. Other things to look for: letters to the editor, diary columns, show business items, news in brief, sporting briefs, job advertisements, wills, obituaries; academics, church and other appointments; news of industrial orders and technological developments. Lastly, almost every pamphlet and piece of paper that comes into the office is worth a glance.

### **Chasing the Facts**

Nwanze (2000) observes that, once an assignment has been given to you by your head, it is up to you to produce the story. But remember that however accurate, fair and well written your account may be, its success will hinge on your perseverance in getting the facts. If you are unsure of your briefing ask questions before you leave the office. Be sure you know what is expected of you. Give yourself time to check reference books. Above all, check the library for any filed cuttings that relate to your assignment. Making use of the filed cuttings should be a second nature to a reporter. They can show if your story really is new, and can fill you in with previous references to the subject or to those involved. “Press clippings” as they are usually called are good sources for back-grounding your stories. Nothing is more embarrassing than for a sub-editor to have to go back to the reporter and say: ‘This

is old news. A similar report has been written about the person, issue before. Your research would save you the needless waste of time. At the same time, do not spend too much time on the preliminaries. The information source you need to see may have gone for the day's business. Remember also the time it will take you to get from city A to city B. You might have three locations to visit; if you have a set time to meet someone, arrive a few minutes early rather than be late.

### **Note-Taking**

Nwanze (2000) advised that you may be attending a meeting, a court hearing or a dinner at which your main task is to watch and listen to what goes on. Check with an official afterwards if there was anything you did not understand. Ask the person for the names of speakers you do not know. Ensure you spell names correctly. Generally, people feel bad when their names are wrongly spelt. At meetings, keep an ear open for unusual or interesting points of view, or for decisions of interest to your paper. Ensure that all shades of views are reflected in the report.

You may not need long notes to wade through afterwards, but you will need a verbatim report of every important statement you intend to quote; especially a proceeding of a tribunal, parliamentary sitting etc. To keep your notes manageable, ignore the preliminaries, the platitudes and the funny stories (unless they are good enough to retell in the gossip column). Try to edit long-winding explanations. Stay through at events to the end when possible. It is annoying to see an account of an event in a rival paper based on some dramatic incident that occurred five minutes after you had left. For courtesy sake, try to explain to the secretary if you have to leave to attend another function or prepare your story in time to meet a deadline. If a

speaker refers to some published body of facts, check the reference afterwards. If a speaker is replying to something someone has said, ensure all speakers are quoted correctly. If a speaker makes an attack on someone not present, give the other person a right to reply. Reports of damaging statements without an opportunity for the other person to reply are a common source of grievance against newspapers.

Watch out for the unexpected. For example, when a person was cleared of a charge in Court A, and his supporters decided to celebrate, the same person could be sentenced by another court.

### **Make Inquiries**

If your job is to make inquiries rather than attend a function, the cuttings library should be your first port of call. But do not assume that a cutting from your own newspaper is necessarily accurate. Match it against others - and look for mistakes that are copied from cuttings to stories which have themselves become cuttings. Examine carefully the information you have. If necessary, talk personally to the persons named.

### **Dealing with People**

Persuade people you interview to let you use their names and addresses. Anonymous quotes from 'a passer-by' carry little conviction. The readers might think you invented them. This is one drawback of investigative journalism in Nigeria.

The danger in seeking personal views and statements is that you may cause embarrassment or be considered intrusive. The Code of Conduct of the National Union of Journalists reads: 'In obtaining news or pictures, reporters and press

photographers should do nothing that will cause pain or humiliation to innocent, bereaved or otherwise distressed persons.’

Courtesy is the best policy. Explain your person and your mission. Do not ask questions in an aggressive or demanding manner. If your presence is unwelcome, leave. Never go to the house as a bearer of ill or bad news. Allow the police to do their work first. Be patient and sympathetic with people. If you are dealing with people against whom allegations have been made you may need to be tougher. Point out that it is in their interest to make a comment rather than let a one-sided story go to the public. You will discover that every person you talk to, will shed light on a given situation in a slightly different light. Here you must rely on your judgment of what you have been told to make your account as balanced and accurate as possible. The basic facts of a situation often seem like a nut covered in shell upon shell. The reporter's task is to remove the shells to get at the truth. Make your interviews in person if you can. People prefer to talk to someone they can see before them rather than at the other end of a telephone. Besides, going to see your informants helps you to get to know them, which might be useful in the future. It makes it easier to listen and to seize opportunities for further questions on the spot. But do make proper appointments if there is time.

If you cannot get to the person you want to, think of someone else who might be of help. Try to avoid being put off with promises of answers “see me tomorrow or next week”. Also, if you can, avoid confidential matters in case they get into print and cause embarrassment. If you are given confidential information be sure to honour it.

If people try to persuade you to keep your story out of the paper, tell them you will pass on their request to your editor. Do not make any promises. Put your questions to them just the same. Do not allow yourself to be fenced off by being asked to talk to someone else. The other person may be unavailable on the day.

Try and be fair in your dealings. If your inquiry concerns your institution and is controversial, rather than do the routine, get in touch with the Rector or Vice Chancellor for official clarification. Where there are controversial matters, be sure to get on to people on both sides of the argument. If anyone is reluctant to give information, point out how damaging a one-sided report could be. Getting both sides of a story is your safeguard against the inaccuracy of prejudiced informants. One-sided stories can also be damaging and legally dangerous. Similarly, when you are writing about a report or document containing allegations or criticisms about people, give them an opportunity to make their reply.

### **Be Thorough**

Nwanze (2000) noted that you cannot be too thorough. You need to answer all the questions the reader might ask and all the questions you will ask yourself when you write your report. The name, occupation and full addresses of those you obtained information from are essential. Do not be satisfied merely with recording opinions. Get people to give the facts on which they have based their opinions. For example, in a strike, what the two sides say about each other matters less than the facts of the situation that caused the conflict. You need these facts. It is interesting to see how the hard facts of a dispute can get lost in the midst of heated arguments.

There are other points of detail that may not be necessary but which will add life and reality to your story, the feel of the place where an event happened, the colour of a suit, tie, shoes etc Get all the facts you can, when you can. There is no substitute for facts. You can always prune down but, it is hard to add to facts when you have left the scene and the people have all gone home.

### **Conclusion**

As a reporter, you need to know the various sources of news and also try to generate news worthy ideas. Regular contact with your sources of news is also necessary. There are various sources of news to a reporter. They can be official or unofficial sources. What is required is for the reporter to regularly visit official beats while taking time to watch out for tip-offs which could lead to deeper investigation.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **WRITING AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORT**

#### **Introduction**

A good writer can conceive what the lead of a story will be shortly before he ends the investigation. From the gathering of facts to the organization of the ideas, care should be taken to highlight the key point or issues that will form a substantial point of the entire work. The ideas can be thematized or written as topic sentence. This arrangement of thought help to create rhythm of thought. It is not enough to arrange the ideas in a logical or coherent manner, your ability to describe and paint a picture of how the events unfolded will automatically put the reader or viewer in the picture.

Although investigative stories seek to expose certain ills in the society, not all investigative stories may have dramatized end as scandal. Some may provide vital lessons for the viewer or reader on what it means to be cautious. Others may provide the education necessary when in a difficult situation. An understanding of the purpose of the write-up is therefore important to keep up on track. Whatever is the purpose of the write-up, you must take cognizance of the cardinal principles of journalism, understand the thrust of the story, the interest or audience the story will serve, the language (including proverbs, anecdote, illustrations) that will help achieve the interest.

Your write-up could be very serious and playful, it could be plain and simple, it might be complex, dramatic and conversational. These various styles can be your stand of authority in telling the story or uncovering the event. Whatever is your

writing style, it should conform with the house style of the organization where you work. There are media organizations where the titles of individual are not mentioned. Some have rules regarding how each sentence should begin. These basic understanding will keep you in check and help you write in a manner that communicate meaning to the reader or viewer.

Remember that in journalism there are six basic questions that are satisfied; Who, What, when, where why and How! Your discussion or narration should necessarily help to resolve these questions.

### **Headlines or captions**

Headlines are signpost to stories. They are collection of lines of display typefaces which precede a story, which most importantly summarise or introduce the story. A headline is expected to tell the reader what is the thrust of the story at a glance. The caption should accurately tell the news as the mood of the story. A well couched headline should naturally attract readers to the story. The headline is the introduction to the story. The way and manner it is written has implication for whether the audience will be interested in reading it or not. The headline is therefore the foundation of the story. You can have an idea of what the headline will look like from your investigation. An intelligent way of presenting the Kernel of the investigation with particular details is to have a headline with relevant adjuncts like the kicker and the rider. The kicker and the rider provide additional information to the headline which will sell the story better. Although the responsibility of casting the headlines rest with the sub-editor, the journalist can cast his or her own but

subject to the sub-editor's approval. You must ensure that your headlines sell the story to your reader or viewer.

What you must bear in mind is that the title is very important to the story since it has the capacity to arouse the curiosity of the reader or viewer, care must be taken to ensure that the words are corrected in a manner that elicit spontaneous emotion.

### **Lead**

A lead is the first paragraph of a story that summarizes or introduces the story of the day. It may answer the five Ws and H questions in Journalism. Since the lead represents a peep into what the entire story is, it is very necessary to use a lead that keeps the reader or viewer attuned to the entire story. It is important to state here that investigative stories do not have the straight news lead format. If the lead puts the reader or viewer off, the whole effort in gathering the facts about the story will become wasted. The point being made here is that the lead like the headline should spur the reader or viewer on. For very busy people like top Executive Officer the lead of the story help them to grasp the gist of the story in a brief moment.

A good lead should necessarily draw the viewer or readers' attention to the story in wanting to read through or follow the report through. The lead necessarily provides the link between the headline and the detailed report in the body of the work. There is no rule about the type of lead to use since there are different types of lead. The nature of the story should determine the lead. If it is a case of death or controversy, the lead could begin with a question. A story that describes the way a man died can begin with the descriptive lead.

Whatever type of lead you decide to adopt, the most important elements in the story should be included. It should not be too wordy and verbose. The lead should strike the reader or viewer up to the extent that he or she may become engrossed in it. In writing the lead care must be taken to ensure that the essential things in the story are well captured.

There are essential features of a good lead. Utor and Sambe (2004) cited in Asemah (2011) suggested the following attributes.

- i. It should give the list of the event reported
- ii. It should emphasize the news
- iii. It should be interesting, especially in style and manner of presentation
- iv. It should suggest or give the authority on which the news is printed
- v. It should provide such a gist identification of person or place, as it is necessary to understand the story.

Therefore, ensure that you are not in a hurry when you write your lead. This will make for a holistic write-up that is exciting enough to stimulate readership.

### **Types of lead**

There are different kinds of lead in journalistic writing. The nature of attention which the writer seeks may institute his or her choice of lead. Essentially, we have the following types;

- i. Summary lead
- ii. Delayed lead
- iii. Direct address
- iv. Descriptive lead

- v. Contrast lead
- vi. Staccato lead
- vii. Question lead
- viii. Cartridge lead
- ix. Punch lead
- x. Quotation lead
- xi. Epigram lead
- xii. Tabulated lead
- xiii. Digest lead
- xiv. Literary allusion lead
- xv. Parody lead
- xvi. Explosive lead
- xvii. Narrative lead
- xviii. Combination lead
- xix. One-word lead
- xx. Dialogue lead

### **Summary Lead**

It is the type of lead that summarises the story of the day by highlighting on the salient points. This lead is close to the inverted pyramid format which provide answers to the what, how when, where, why and how question. A peep into this lead would have told the entire story of the day.

*Example of a summary lead: As part of its corporate social responsibility, a church, the Redeemed Christian Church of God cornerstone worship centre,*

*Province 35 Obanikoro, on Saturday, gave out free drugs and basic food stuffs to hundreds of residents of Ebute Metal Community in Lagos State. (culled from The Punch May 16, 2011, P.5).*

### **Delayed Lead**

This type of lead suspends the interest of the reader before the main gist of the story is served. In other words, every part of the story is not revealed once, but is unfolded gradually by letting the reader into the story from one scenario to another. This is very common in magazine news stories. The story must be read in its entirety before the reader can totally grasp the gist of the story.

*Example: From a union that became renowned for its militancy, it is something of a miracle that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has not gone on strike for two years. Now it seems it is beginning to suffer from withdrawal symptoms.*

*A few days ago, the university lecturers served notice of imminent strike action on account of the failure of the Federal Government to fulfil all aspects of an agreement reached between the parties two year ago. (Culled from The Nation Newspaper, Tuesday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011, P.64)*

### **Direct Address**

The lead tells the readers the essential aspect of the news story straight without unnecessary embellishment. It is common with the electronic media, especially in breaking news. It creates a direct link between the news and the reader by using the second person pronoun ‘you’ in presentation. However, the print media use more from an excursion or biography by questioning the reader’s knowledge of the subject or person.

*Example you remember the vociferous environmental right Activities from Bayelsa State, Orono Douglas? The S.A to President Goodluck Jonathan on documentation and strategy is dead. He died after a protracted battle with cancer in the early hours of yesterday at the National Hospital Abuja.*

### **Descriptive Lead**

The lead of this nature tends to describe in details the events that happened, using adjectives that create the event in the mind's eye. It helps the reader paint the imagination of the event. The descriptive lead could be the mood at the scene of the event, the environment, the weather constraint, the reaction of the crowd or spectators, the feeling expressed, the level of damage, and other side bars that are germane to the issues under investigation or news event. It is what a commentator in a live commentary of a football match literarily does by taking you into the stadium and presents the action and reaction of the spectators to you. A good descriptive lead has the capacity to make the reader or viewer want to know more about the event.

*Example Nigerians-home and abroad heaved a sigh of relief when the curtain was drawn on the April 2011 election. Tension ran high, apprehension was thick in the air will the elections go the way of those before it or will president Goodluck Jonathan and the new INEC deliver on their promises of credible polls? Will the leopard of the country's politician change its spots? The initial hiccup suffered by the election was all many needed to scream "here we go again" today, Nigerians walk tall as the result of the successful conduct of the April 2011 general election. An overwhelming majority of the people are happy and satisfied that the elections*

*were fair and credible and that, for once in many decades their votes were allowed to count.*

### **Contrast Lead**

It is the presentation of two opposite issues or situations or people in a comparative manner but with the aim of contrasting them. A writer can contrast the bad state of a road before its current well-constructed state. The same personality can be contrasted to show the change.

*Example After a disappointing season with Chelsea, Michael Essien turns his sight to a charity initiative aimed at promoting and raising the awareness of peace in African.* (culled from the National Newspaper, Tuesday May, 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011, P.24).

### **Staccato lead**

The Kernel of this lead is its use of short witty remarks in form of a word, phrases or sentences to convey a serious matter. Such words or phrase is usually punctuated to make it sound poetic or stressed.

*Example Even his friends dreaded him. The sound of his voice strings like the wild-bee. His name struck a paroxysm of fear. But when death comes knocking even the-feared the-strong and the-weak are at its mercy.*

### **Question lead**

Question lead must answer the question that it asked. The writer usually begins by asking a question which the subsequent paragraphs provide answer to. The lead may serve as an introduction to the cause of death. Investigative hearing, the

punishment that awaited the action etc. It is good in matters that generate argument or debate.

Example *Do policemen get punished for extra-judicial activities? Hon Justice Rowland Amaize of the Benin High Court answered this question in the affirmative yesterday.*

### **Cartridge lead**

It is a timely report of the end of an important issue like war, death of a personality and any other happenings in the society

Example: *As I type this piece on my laptop is till Wednesday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015. By the time you get to read it, however, it will be Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015 when history is made and the aspiration for change become the reality of a new beginning.* (The Nation, Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015, P.64).

### **Punch Lead**

It is the type of lead that explains or breaks the thrust of the news report in a defined manner to signal the end of an era, cessation of hostilities or war and other unusual events. It is very close to the cartridge lead except that it is longer

Example: *The tortuous legal battle and the long wait for justice over the murder of Alhaja Kudirat Olayinka Abiola ended yesterday. And the verdict was the death sentence for the two accused person. Hamza Al-Mustapha, former Chief Security Officer (CSO) to the late head of State Gen. Sani Abacha and the victim's personal aide Lateef Shofolahan.* (The Guardian, Tuesday, January, 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012. P.1).

### **Quotation Lead**

It is the citation of the statement credited to somebody or liking a part of a work as a reference or link to the story of the day. Usually, such quotation has something to do with the story or a lesson which the writer wants the reader to take to heart

Example: *“But what I will say is since the telephone call you made you have changed the course of Nigeria’s political history. For that you have earned yourself a place in our history, for stabilizing this system of multi-party democracy and you have earned the respect of not only Nigerians but world leader”-President Elect Muhamadu Buhari. (The Nation, Friday May, 29<sup>th</sup> 2015 p.1).*

### **Epigram lead**

This type of lead involves the use of short vital statements in a clever or amusing way to convey a moral undertone to the writer.

e.g. *Those who murdered Sleep will themselves not sleep. This was the case of two young men who killed an old man to steal a mercury from the old wall clock in his living room.*

### **Tabulated lead**

The lead is used when the reporter has important issues to present in the lead. The reporter therefore tabulates the facts in points to highlight the seriousness there is usually an introductory statement that presents the tabulated point.

e.g. *The Federal government has proposed three key issues before the international community as part of the strategies at developing the north-east devastated by Boko Haram. First, Donor funds to support the rebuilding of social infrastructure, second;*

*the fumigation of the environment polluted by chemicals and dead decayed bodies, third, the safe return of internally displaced persons to their ancestral homes.*

### **Digest lead:**

It is a form of summary lead that provides answer to the 5Ws and H questions e.g. *the Chief Judge of Edo State, Justice Crownwell Idahosa yesterday set free the prisoners who have been kept at Oko prison in Benin City for thirteen years without trial.*

### **Allusion lead**

It is a reference made to a historical fact or figure. When the figure been referred to is a Biblical character, we call it Biblical Allusion. If it is a historical fact or character, we call it historical allusion. Thus, a journalist who is knowledgeable about history, literature and scripture can anchor a lead drawing his or her reference from such historical characters or events.

e.g. *When Governor Adams Oshiomole put up a spirited fight against godfatherism in Edo State, many compared his action to the Biblical story of David and Goliath.*

### **Parody lead**

This type of lead copies and exaggerates the position of a writer, artiste or famous person.

E.g. *When Fela Anikulapo Kuti came up with his famous song “everyday my people dey inside Bus, suffering and Smiling, 40 sitting 99 standing” little did he know that he was to aptly describes the plight of commuters in the Federal capital Territory, Abuja.*

### **Narrative lead**

Narrative lead as the name suggest tells or narrates a story from the most important to the least important. Its presentation may take the order of precedence or the way they occur.

### **Explosive lead**

This type of lead is close to the staccato lead. It uses phrases or sentence that sound poetical and make common sense to tell a story. It is commonly used in feature stories and straight news

*e.g everyday has turned nightmarish for 15-year-old Semisola Olona (not real name) who seems not to get over the traumatic experience she had when she was allegedly raped by a commercial tricycle rider, known as Mr. Lati Ajoje (Vanguard, Saturday February, 2016, P.28).*

### **Dialogue Lead:**

This lead according to Galadima (2000, p. 27) is the kind of lead that starts with dialogue between people. Reuben Abati a renowned columnist, former Chairman, Guardian Newspaper editorial Board and Special Adviser to President Jonathan is found of using dialogical lead.

*e.g. Eku change oo! Which change? Change from PDP to APC. From darkness to light abi? Oh is that what you mean?.....*

### **The Body**

We have examined the different types of lead which signpost the details of a story. The details are treated in the body of the story. It goes beyond the summary details in the lead, headlines into a deeper description, narration of what the issues

raised in the lead are. The summary prescribed in the lead are expanded upon. Facts can emanate from sources which the writer interviewed; Or from secondary materials which the writer came across. The writer uses his or her journalistic skills to put the fact together to make sense to the reader.

When the facts and other supportive details are well written in a story, the reader follows the story through. Where the story is a matter of disputation, it is necessary to bring in all sides to the story, you would have balanced the story and keep yourself far away from bias.

The body of the story should fulfil the fundamental functions of communication to humanity. This you can achieve through the style you have adopted. Your style must put into consideration the audience you are writing for. This knowledge of the audience helps you to maintain a sense of homophily between you and the reader. Use simple sentences that are clear, concise, coherent and complete. The mastery of language register peculiar to the topic and the excellent writing skills keep the reader on the story.

The body of your story should therefore follow a pattern and the direction of thought should follow a trend. This you can achieve through the use of transitions, quotations and linking words to tell the story. You can maintain first person singular or plural-pronouns. Whatever the approach, have it at the back of your mind that you are writing about a topic. The topic should reference your narrative style. Ensure you avoid the temptation to inject your feeling into a story. Remember, your responsibility as an investigator is to present the facts to the people. The judgment belongs to the community or readers. Mind your language and avoid name calling,

this could lead to litigation bothering on defamation of character or misrepresentation of facts.

In all, never lose focus of the fundamental principles of journalism, anchored on truth, objectively, impartiality, balance accuracy and society or public interest. When these principles guide your writing, you would have succeeded in fulfilling your role as an impartial observer of life events.

### **The Conclusion**

The last lap of a story is the conclusion. Although there are no set rules for ending a story, it is important for the story to end in such a way that the key issues are in a way resolved or point a direction on who and who needs to be further ask questions or where the likely answers will come from. When a story ends without the necessary key as to what went wrong and who should be held responsible, the investigator, would have failed. Therefore, when you carry out an investigation; read the story through and find the missing link. Correct all errors of facts and opinion. Ensure that the arrangement of the story lend itself into order, climax and resolution.

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CHALLENGES OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**

#### **Introduction**

Journalism is a profession that unethical people don't like to associate with. Investigative journalism is a difficult terrain that most lily-livered reporters do not like dabbling into. As a result of the implications associated with investigative reports, people who are likely to be implicated in the actions do very damaging things to ensure that the report never sees the light of the day and this makes investigative journalism a daunting, frustrating, painstaking and outright revealing.

The challenges are internal and external to the reporter. The nature of the society also influences the extent to which a reporter can gather facts from the field with minimal hindrances. Experience has shown that the authoritative nature of the Nigerian society and the growing emphasis on materialism limit the capacity of a reporter to conduct investigation into a matter without unnecessary efforts to kill the report. Perhaps, a quick look at some cases of brutality against reporters may serve as a guide to some of the challenges to investigative journalism from independence till date. Here, effort will be made to highlight brutalities, murders, arrest and imprisonment of reporter in the different administrations in Nigeria.

Ufuophu – Biri, (2006, p. 146-147) description of the state of the Nigerian press is very apt in this regard, according to him;

The press suffered untold hardship which ranged from various types of censorship to proscription and banning of media houses, psychological and physical harassment of media workers and their families,

seizure of newspaper and magazine copies, closure of media houses, act of arson against media houses, detention and imprisonment of journalists to the journalist to the killing of journalists.

He provided the following examples of defamatory and offensive publication decree No. 44 of 1966, public officers (protection against false accusation, Decree No 11 of 1976 and Decree 4 of 1984. The 1984 decree which led to the arrest of Tunde Timpson and Nduka Irabor on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1984 and jailed for writing a story entitled ‘eight military chiefs tripped as ambassadors’. The proscription of *Newswatch* magazine on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1987 for publishing the political bureau’s recommendations ahead of the official announcement. The arrest and detention of Chris Okolie of *New Breed* on June 8<sup>th</sup> 1990 for publishing great Ogboru’s letter to General Ibrahim Babangida. The arrest, detention and sentence of Nduka Obaigbena, Ben Obi, Mrs. Chris Anyanwu and George Mba all publisher, editor, publisher and editor of the *ThisDay*, *The News*, *TSM* and *Tell* respectively who were jailed 15 years each over their stories on the 1995 Gwadabe coup. The assassination of Bayo Owu of the *Guardian* Newspaper in 2007, the assassination of Efenji Efenji of AIT, Godwin Agbroko of *ThisDay* newspaper in 2005 represent the many cases of intimidation and offences against journalist.

Nwabueze (2005) chronicles some of the abuses of press freedom from 1999 – 2005. According to him, in October 23, 2002, Cyril Mbah, state house correspondent of *The Monitor* newspaper was barred from covering the state house, Abuja, he was escorted out of the state house by men of the State Security Service (SSS) for allegedly writing a story that did not go down well with the Presidency;

Mr. Isaac Umunna, Editorial consultant of *Global Weekly Star* was arrested by men of the state security service over comments he made in the paper which was considered uncharitable by the presidency. Tuesday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005, about 10 journalists in Abuja who had gone to cover a National Executive Council meeting of the People Democratic Party (PDP) at the party's headquarters in Abuja, were seriously brutalized by mobile police men. Such that one Segun Olatunji of the *Nigerian Tribune* was brutalized. On September 4, 2004, about 20 men of the State Security Service (SSS) invaded the premises of *Insider Weekly* magazine at the magazine office on Acme road Ogba, Lagos State. The raid led to the arrest, removal and destruction of personnel personal effects and documents of the media organization.

Some other cases during the period includes the closure of *AIT* in 2005 over the television station footage of the ill-fated Bellview plane crash. In August 2008, 5 editors of the *Leadership* newspaper were arrested and charged to court over one of the headlines of the newspaper entitled, Yar'adua's failing health. On September 16, 2008, channels television was closed down by men of the state security service who acted on the order of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) over a news broadcast that the president will resign after reshuffling his cabinet. This particular news item was later retrieved by station, but the security agencies considered it against national security. In March 2014, Clinton Nwachukwu, a political reporter with the *Leadership* newspaper was arrested and charged to court for allegedly forging the President's signature.

The many cases of media violations by security agencies acting on the orders of government officials and top politicians represent a tip of the many factors that hinder press freedom or the capacity of reporters to effectively carry out investigative stories. As noted earlier, the incumbrances to investigative journalism can be internal and external. An examination of the constraints is germane here.

### **Internal Challenges/Constraints**

1. **Ownership factor:** there are certain interest which the owner of a media house would not want the reporters working in his medium to jumble into. Such interest may come from his political associations, economic interest, religious background and ethnic sentiments. Where a reporter's investigation will bring the interest of the owner to question, editors can stop the investigation by withdrawing the reporter from the beat or give a clear instruction to stop further investigation. Gbenga Aruleba was seen to be too critical of the Musa Yar'adua's government. The then Security Adviser, Sarki Mukhtar allegedly summoned Chief Raymond Dokpesi to Aso Rock to show him the litany of accusations against his media organization's criticism of the Yaradua's government. He was alleged to have been asked to remove Gbenga Aruleba from presenting the programme or else, he will be charged for corruption over the 500 million naira he received from the former Governor of Rivers State, Dr. Peter Odili and that the money was a subject of investigation by the EFCC. Chief Dokpesi later issued a press statement on the removal of Aruleba as presenter of 'focus Nigeria'. He told the world that Aruleba was going for a correspondence course in London, meanwhile,

the course had started September 2008, whereas, the press conference was given in November of that same year. This scenario represents many of the cases where proprietors and editors kill investigations because of the proprietor's interest.

2. **Logistic:** Reports are not conducted in the air. The reporter needs to visit the places where he needs to gather the relevant facts and information that could make for a good report. Unfortunately, many media houses do not have the resources to acquire utility vehicles, pay for a reporter hotel bills and the resources needed to make copies of relevant documents etc. When the necessary logistics are prepared for or arranged for the reporter, he or she does the job seamlessly, where the reverse is the case, much enthusiasm might not be shown particularly when the reporter has to board public vehicles, arrange for his or her place of rest etc.
3. **Economic:** Finance is crucial in media business. Every media organization needs financial resources to acquire the basic tools or equipment required for smooth operation of the organization. With particular reference to investigative reporting, there are new technologies that are germane in helping to facilitate smooth investigation. Tools like the 1 – pen, micro-chips, e-tie, digital recorder are some of the technologies that a reporter can use in investigation without making it obvious that he or she is out for investigation. Unfortunately, many media houses do not have the resources to acquire these technologies; as a result, investigative reports are not regular features in many media houses.

4. **Motivation:** It is the drive or what pushes a reporter to get a job done. A media organization may have all the logistic arrangement and financial resources needed to make it functional. The degree of motivation of the reporter is germane to the realization of credible reports. The motivation may arise from the wages of the reporter, the work environment, career prospects, welfare package, the state of the reporter's immediate family and the reward or recognition system both within the organization and outside the organization. Where these are lacking, workers may lack the motivation to work.

The Nigerian media environment presents a case where media workers are owed one-year salary arrears or some more than one year. The question is, how much can a man who is hungry do to get his job done? Good remuneration is crucial to promoting sound journalism practice. It becomes better, when a reporter expends extra-cost in getting a report out, the willingness of the organization to reimburse the cost will motivate the journalist to do more in future.

### **External Constraints or Challenges**

External constraints or challenges are those factors which do not emanate from the media organizations or personnel themselves but are induced from outside. Some of the external constraints or challenges are:

1. **Threat to life/family:** The history of Nigeria press is replete with journalists who died investigating stories. The deputy political editor of the Guardian newspaper Bayo Ohu was killed in 2007 in the presence of his wife and children. Godwin Agbroko then chairman of *ThisDay* editorial board was

assassinated on his way from work. Efenji Efenji of AIT political bureau was killed on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at a garden in Karu, Abuja while spending the Valentine's Day celebration with his family. The death of Dele Giwa through a letter Bomb in 1986 was attributed to his decision to publish an investigation he carried out on a drug related crime. In the heart of the Boko Haram crisis, *Channels Television* correspondent Mr. Akogu was killed by Boko Haram fighters for daring to cover their invasion of the police zonal headquarters in Kano. Three members of the Nigeria Union of Journalist died in Abia State, following the injuries they sustained in a kidnapper's attack on their convoy in 2009.

There were others who escaped death by the whisks, others had their families arrested. Ufuophu – Biri (2006) observed that Mrs. Olurunyami was arrested and detained on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1997 because of her husband who escaped from security operatives at the time. He also observed that Nosa Igiebor's wife was arrested on September 10, 1997 till May 1998. Death threats were sent to Gbenga Aruleba and Amaechi Anakwe of AIT in May 2010 over their comments that the then chairman of the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Professor Maurice Iwu was not fit to seek reappointment as the chairperson of the Commission considering his dismal performance in the elections he conducted. A journalist with *Daily Independent Newspaper* was kidnapped and taken to Bayelsa state on the orders of the then Governor, Timipre Sylva over the journalist story that described the governor as a boxer. In this story, the reporter alleged that the Governor had a fight with a friend at Transcorp Hilton Hotel in Abuja after taking some quantity of liquor.

He was taken to Bayelsa State and detained arbitrarily by the Governor. It took concerted effort by the Nigerian Union of Journalist (NUJ) to secure his release.

2. **Threat to media houses:** A number of cases about how media houses were burnt because of the organizations stand on some issues. *Guardian* newspaper was set on fire in 1997 by Abacha hatch men. In July 2003, Anambra Broadcasting Service was set on fire by those opposed to the then governor of Anambra, chief Chris Ngige. *Daar communication* complex in Lagos and Kano were set on fire in April 2015, by those who felt unhappy with the way the communication outfit covered the 2015 general elections. On September 16, *Channels Television* Lagos was closed down by the State Security Service (SSS) for two days on account of a story the security outfit considered to be against national security.

Apart from physical assault on media organizations, the other threat has to do with the withdrawal of adverts from media organizations. For instance, in January 2015, *Independent Television* alleged in a report that the governor of Edo state, Adams Aliyu Oshiomole security aids beat up a reverend father. The Governor gave the station 48 hours to retrieve the story and apologies but the station refused and stood by her story. The Governor ordered all APC contestants having their political campaign jingles and commercials aired on *ITV* and *Independent Radio* to withdraw their adverts, the governor went ahead and cancelled the memorandum of understanding between the parent company and the state government. Apart from this incident, the station was too critical of the state government following this development, the station apologized and the adverts were restored.

3. **Security operatives brutality:** Security operatives have often treated journalists with harshness and brutality. For instance, the *Nigerian Observer* correspondent in Port Harcourt Mr. Minere Amakiri was ordered beaten and his hair shaven with a bottle by the military Governor of the State Alfred Diette-spiff. A photojournalist who had gone to Igandura palace ground of the Oba of Lagos to cover the visit of the then Vice-President Atiku Abubakar in 2001 was mercilessly beaten by the Vice-President security details. Channels television correspondent, Reporter and Camera man were beaten in Calabar during the 2015 General Elections, such that the camera was destroyed by security operatives, Ofouphu – Biri (2006) reported that on September 29, 1992 four photojournalists (Diran Ose, *Daily Champion*, Oseri Yusuf of the *Guardian*; Fola Haastrup of the *Daily Sketch*; and Dipo Onabanjo of the *Daily Times* were man handled by military men at the scene of the Air Force plane crash that killed about 163 soldiers in Lagos. Their cameras were also confiscated. When police and security operatives brutalize reporters, it prevents to a high degree the capacity for a robust information flow.
4. **Hostile Sources:** There is a kind of fear associated with speaking with journalists on issues that are criminal in nature. This fear springs from the possibility of the police going after those who volunteer information in an investigation. It is this fear that creates the hostility associated with hostile sources. When a source becomes very hostile, the reporter needs tact to get facts from the source.

5. **Legal restrictions:** The official secret Act 1963, and the national security act pose serious restrictions to investigative journalism. For instance, the national security act forbids media personnel into military functions, except when they are invited for certain ceremonies. The official secret acts make it punishable for a journalist to publish or broadcast information that is classified as “official secret”.

Although the Freedom of Information Act of 2011 provides for access to information, there are provisions within the acts which will require an individual seeking public information to approach a court to mandate the access in case he was initially denied. Our knowledge and experience from legal proceedings suggest that procuring justice from the court may take a while. Thus, a journalist investigating a case, requiring him or her to approach the courts before he could gain access to information means that the investigation may suffer a set-back and provide avenues for important evidence to be destroyed.

The other constraints are not locally based but universal.

6. **Attitude of Government:** Government all over the world do not like people exposing their wrong. African governments have a stronghold over the press. The stronghold is likened to master-servant relationship. They often believe that the press should serve them and that things should be done in their favour not publishing damaging story about them. They are prepared to crack down on the press if they publish any damaging story. Such act discourages the press.

7. The constitution regulates how the press should operate. It spells out how the society and government want the press to be. The government mandates every press organization to register before operating. This is to check the journalists.
8. Seditious and Libel Laws — seditious law was introduced to protect public officials from the frequent embarrassment and accusations by the media. If you publish anything and it is found to be false you will be held liable. Seditious law was introduced in Nigeria in 1907 by the colonial government. If you charge a government official for offence and he denied it, he can charge you for sedition. Government officials always use the law as a back-up to escape from their inadequacies. However, libel is a defamatory statement that reduces the image or personality of an individual before the right-thinking members of the society.
9. Classified and Official Secret Act: This means government can at any time states that a particular information is secret. Official secret act means that government agents can at any time declare particular information secret. Such information cannot get to the public because it is an official secret. It is secret because only the government can declare such information to the public when they so desire. If a journalist should get such information and publish it, he can be arrested for felony. It is a tool used by government to deny the journalist of information.
10. Extra-Judicial Activities: Certain information that can cause trouble for the government are often killed by closing the newspaper houses, threat to the

life of the journalist, sealing up the premises of the newspaper or media organization etc.

11. Government requires that every paper and journalist be registered with the imprint of the paper. This can influence government's attack and evil intention.
12. Ethnic/Religious Constraint: Our ethnic and religious affiliation affects our interpretation of certain events, although they can be averted.
13. The issue of development communication: Government in power always finds fault in pressmen who report in such a way as investigating them. Hence, they label such journalists as dissidents, disgruntle, unpatriotic element.

### **References**

*Freedom of Information Act*, 2011.

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## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**

#### **Introduction**

Information is very crucial to democratic sustainability. This is because people need information about what is happening in their society, how they can participate in the governance process, and the means of government accountability to the society. The level of inefficiency, corruption, and profligacy in government is attributed to the extent to which people have access to public information. It is against this backdrop and the need to promote open governance that led to the formation of the international principles on freedom of information legislation. The idea behind freedom of information is to break the barrier to public information and remove the incumbrances to openness in government. In many developing societies, their government used different laws to restrict access to government information. The resultant effect is that such societies continue to lag behind in development indices and cage the freedom of its citizenry.

Even in many democratic societies, the label of a democratic state was more in name than in practice. In such societies, repression remains an underground tactics employed by despotic leaders in democratic gab.

The value of freedom of information from a media perspective is that it makes for a responsible media. A responsible media could be inferred from the words of Mahatma Gandhi “one of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular

feeling and give expression to it, another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects”.

The media can therefore inform people by telling them what is happening and giving them the voice to be heard and heeded as the issue demands. The media also need to provide the people with the information they need to participate in state affairs, decide on the national course of action that would be beneficial to them. The regular provision of information will help in socializing the people, equip them with the valves of pluralism and the important indices of a modern society. Thus, when public officials give citizens unfettered access to public information, they will conceive the public seriously and will be more responsible to the people, the citizen could then understand their role as watchmen. Where this is the case, it marks the institutionalization of civic culture.

Yadav (2001) noted that the right to information is key to good governance. He noted that good governance is conceived as the capacity of the state, the market and the civil society, the media to sustain themselves under the constitutional in order to move towards aroused goals, reduce the inherent cleavages among social, cultural, ecological and political systems and communities, conceive sound policies, mobilize resources and maintain the sufficient level of legitimacy, transparency, credibility and accountability before the public. He goes further to say that good governance steers in normative order to achieve its goals – law and order, inner and national security, voice and participation and the promotion of public goods.

Cognizance of the value of the public right to know about what is happening in public institutions, the international standards series published article 19 on the

principles on freedom of information legislation in 1999 in London. The principles provided the basis for the development of national legislation on the freedom of information.

In Nigeria, the freedom of information Act took ten years to be passed. It was initiated in the year 2000, but only succeeded in May 28<sup>th</sup> 2011 when President Goodluck Jonathan signed it into law. Unfortunately, the level of its awareness is still very low. The basic thrust of the Act is that it makes public records and information more freely available, provide for public access to public records and information, protect public records, information on the protection of personal privacy, protect serving public officers from adverse consequences of disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorization and establish procedures for the achievement of those purposes.

The freedom of information Act 2011, is hereby presented:

### ***FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, 2011***

#### ***ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS***

##### *Section*

- 1. Right of access to records*
- 2. Information about public institution*
- 3. Request for access to records*
- 4. Time for granting or refusing application*
- 5. Transfer of application*
- 6. Extension of time limit for granting or refusing application*
- 7. Where access is refused*

8. *Fees*
9. *Record keeping and maintenance of records*
10. *Destruction or falsification of records*
11. *Exemption of international affairs and defence*
12. *Exemption of law enforcement and investigation*
13. *Training of officials on the right to information and on the effective implementation of this Act*
14. *Exemption of personal information*
15. *Exemption of third-party information*
16. *Exemption of personal or other privileges conferred by law*
17. *Exemption of course or research material*
18. *Severability*
19. *Denial by a public institution to disclose records*
20. *Judicial review*
21. *Hearing in a summary way*
22. *Access to information by the court*
23. *Court to take precautions against disclosing information*
24. *Burden of proof*
25. *Order to disclose information*
26. *Exempted materials*
27. *Protection of public officers*
28. *Documents under classification*
29. *Submission of reports*



- 2) *A public institution shall ensure the proper organization and maintenance of all information in its custody in a manner that facilitates public access to such information.*
- 3) *A public institution shall cause to be published in accordance with subsection (4) of this section, the following information-*
  - a) *a description of the organization and responsibilities of the institution including details of the programmes and functions of each division, branch and department of the institutions;*
  - b) *a list of all*
    - i) *classes of records under the control of the institution in sufficient detail to facilitate the exercise of the right to information under this act, and*
    - ii) *Manuals used by employees of the institution in administering or carrying out any of the programmes or activities of the institution.*
  - c) *a description of documents containing final opinions including concurring and dissenting opinions as well as orders made in the adjudication of cases;*
  - d) *documents containing-*
    - i) *substantive rules of the institution*
    - ii) *statements and interpretations of policy which have been adopted by the institution,*

- iii) *final planning policies, recommendations, and decisions;*
- iv) *factual reports, inspection reports, and studies whether prepared by or for the institution;*
- v) *information relating to the receipt or expenditure of public or other funds of the institution;*
- vi) *the names, salaries, titles and dates of employment of all employees and officers of the institution;*
- vii) *the right of the state, public institutions, or of any private person(s)*
- viii) *the name of every official and the final records of voting in all proceedings of the institution;*
- e) *a list of-*
  - i) *files containing applications for any contract, permit, licenses or agreements*
  - ii) *reports, documents, studies, or publications prepared by independent contractors for the institution, and*
  - iii) *materials containing information relating to any grant or contract made by or between the institution and another public institution or private organization;*
  - f) *the title and address of the appropriate officer of the institution to whom an application for information under this Act shall be sent, provided that the failure of any public institution to publish any information under this subsection*

*shall not prejudicially affect the public's right of access to  
information in the custody of such public institution*

- 4) *A public institution shall ensure that information referred to in this section is widely disseminated and made readily available to members of the public through various means, including print, electronic and online sources, and at the offices of such public institutions.*
  - 5) *A public institution shall update and review information required to be published under this section periodically, and immediately whenever changes occur.*
  - 6) *A person entitled to the right of access conferred by this Act shall have the right to institute proceedings in the court to compel any public institution to comply with the provisions of this section.*
  - 7) *Public institutions are all authorities whether executive, legislative or judicial agencies, ministries, and extra-ministerial departments of the government, together with all corporations established by law and all companies in which government has a controlling interest, and private companies utilizing public funds, providing public services or performing public functions.*
3. 1) *An application for access to a record or information under this act shall be*
- made in accordance with section 1 of this act*
- 2) *for the purpose of this Act, any information or record applied for under this act that does not exist in print but can by regulation be*

*produced from a machine, normally used by the government or public institution shall be deemed to be recorder under the control of the government or public institution.*

- 3) *Illiterate or disabled applicants who by virtue of their illiteracy or disability are unable to make an application for access to information or record in accordance with the provisions of subsection (1) of this section, may make that application through a third party.*
- 4) *An authorized official of a government or public institution to whom an applicant makes an oral application for information or record, shall reduce the application into writing in the manner prescribed under subsection (1) of this section and shall provide a copy of the written application to the applicant.*
4. *Where information is applied for under this Act, the public institution to which the application is made shall, subject to sections 6, 7, and 8 of this Act, within 7 days after the application is received.*
  - a) *Make the information available to the applicant;*
  - b) *Where the public institution considers that the application should be denied, the institution shall give written notice to the applicant that access to all or part of the information will not be granted, stating reasons for the denial, and the section of this Act under which the denial is made.*
5. 1) *Where a public institution receives an application for access to information,*

*and the institution is of the view that another public institution has greater interest in the information, the institution to which the application is made any within 3 days but not later than 7 days after the application is received, transfer the application and if necessary, the information to the other public institution, in which case, the institution transferring the application shall give written notice of the transfer to the applicant, which notice shall contain a statement informing the applicant that such decision to transfer the application can be reviewed by the court.*

- 2) Where an application is transferred under subsection (1), the application shall be deemed to have been made to the public institution to which it was transferred on the day the public institution received it.*
- 3) For the purpose of subsection (1), a public institution has 'a greater interest' in information if-*
  - a) the information was originally produced in or for the institution; or*
  - b) in the case of information not originally produced in or for the public institution, the institution was the first public institution to receive the information*
- 6. The public institution may extend the time limit set out in section 5 or section 6 in respect of an application for a time not exceeding 7 days if-*

- a) *the application is for a large number of records and meeting the original time limit would unreasonably interfere with the operations of the public institution; or*
- b) *consultations are necessary to comply with the application that cannot reasonably be completed within the original time limit, by giving notice of the extension stating whether the extension falls under the circumstances set out in this section, which notice shall contain a statement that the applicant has a right to have the decision to extend the limit reviewed by the court.*

7. 1) *Where the government or public institution refuses to give access to a record or information applied for under this Act, or a part thereof, the institution shall state in the notice given to the applicant the grounds for the refusal, the specific provision of this Act that it relates to and that the applicant has a right to challenge the decision refusing access and have it reviewed by a court.*
- 2) *A notification of denial of any application for information or records shall state the names, designation and signature, of each person responsible for the denial of such application.*
- 3) *the government or public institution shall be required to indicate under subsection (1) of this section whether the information or record exists.*

- 4) *where the government or public institution fails to give access to information or record applied for under this Act or part thereof within the time limit set out in this Act, the institution shall, for the purposes of this Act, be deemed to have refused to give access.*
- 5) *Where a case of wrongful denial of access is established, the defaulting officer or institution commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N500,000.*
8. *Fees shall be limited to standard charges for document duplication and transcription where necessary.*
9.
  - 1) *Every government or public institution shall ensure that it keeps every information or record about the institution's operations, personnel, activities and other relevant or related information or records.*
  - 2) *Every government or public institution shall ensure the proper organization and maintenance of all information or record in its custody, in a manner that facilitates public access to such information or record under this Act.*
10. *It is a criminal offence punishable on conviction by the court with a minimum of 1 year imprisonment for any officer or head of any government or public institution to which this Act applies to wilfully destroy any records kept in his custody or attempt to doctor or otherwise alter same before they are released to any person, entity or community applying for it.*
11.
  - 1) *A public institution may deny an application for any information the*

*disclosure of which may be injurious to the conduct of international affairs and the defence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.*

- 2) *Notwithstanding subsection (1), an application for information shall not be denied where the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs injury that disclosure would cause.*
12. 1) *A public institution may deny an application for any information which contains:*
  - a) *Records compiled by any public institution for administrative enforcement proceedings and by any law enforcement or correctional agency for law enforcement purposes or for internal matters of a public institution, but only to the extent that disclosure would-*
    - i) *Interfere with pending or actual and reasonably contemplated law enforcement proceedings conducted by any law enforcement or correctional agency,*
    - ii) *Interfere with pending administrative enforcement proceedings conducted by any public institution*
    - iii) *Deprive a person of a fair trial or an impartial hearing,*
    - iv) *Unavoidably disclose the identity of a confidential source,*
    - v) *Constitute an invasion of personal privacy under section 15 of this Act, except, where the interest of the public would be better served by having such recording being made available, this exemption to disclosure shall not apply, and*

- vi) *Obstruct an ongoing criminal investigation; and*
- b) *Information the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to be injurious to the security of penal institutions*
- 2) *Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, an application for information shall not be denied where the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs whatever injury that disclosure would cause.*
- 3) *A public institution may deny an application for information that could reasonably be expected to facilitate the commission of an offence.*
- 4) *For the purposes of section (1) (a), “enforcement proceeding” means an investigation that-*
  - a) *pertains to the administration or enforcement of any Act, law or regulations;*
  - b) *is authorized by or pursuant to any Act, law or regulation.*
- 13. *Every government or public institution must ensure the provision of appropriate training for its officials on the public’s right to access information or records held by government or public institutions, as provided for in this Act and for the effective implementation of this Act.*
- 14. 1) *Subject to subsection (2), a public institution must deny an application for information that contains personal information and information exempted under this subsection includes-*

- a) *Files and personal information maintained with respect to clients, patients, residents, students, or other individuals receiving social, media, educational, vocation, financial, supervisory or custodial care or services directly or indirectly from public institutions;*
  - b) *Personnel files and personal information maintained with respect to employees, appointees or elected officials of any public institution or applicants for such positions;*
  - c) *Files and personal information maintained with respect to any applicant, registrant or licenses by any government or public institution cooperating with or engaged in professional or occupational registration, licensure or discipline;*
  - d) *Information required of any tax payer in connection with the assessment or collection of any tax unless disclosure is otherwise requested by the statute; and*
  - e) *Information revealing the identity of persons who file complaints with or provide information to administrative, investigative, law enforcement or penal agencies on the commission of any crime.*
- 2) *A public institution shall disclose any information that contains personal information if-*
- a) *the individual to whom it relates consents to the disclosure; or*
  - b) *the information is publicly available.*
- 3) *where disclosure of any information referred to in this section would be in the public interest, and if the public interest in the disclosure of*

*such information clearly outweighs the protection of the privacy of the individual to whom such information relates, the public institution to whom request for disclosure is made shall disclose such information subject to section 14(2) of this Act.*

- 1) *A public institution shall deny an application for information that contains-*
  - a) *trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a person or business where such trade secrets or information are proprietary, privileged or confidential, or where disclosure of such trade secrets or information may cause harm to the interests of the third party provided that nothing contained in this subsection shall be construed as preventing a person or business from consenting to disclosure;*
  - b) *information the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to interfere with the contractual or other negotiations of a third party; and*
  - c) *proposal and bids for any contract, grants, or agreement, including information which if it were disclosed would frustrate procurement or give an advantage to any person.*
- 2) *A public institution shall, notwithstanding subsection (1), deny disclosure of a part of a record if that part contains the result or*

*product of environmental testing carried out by or on behalf of a public institution.*

3) *Where the public institution discloses information, or a part thereof, that contains the results of a product or environmental testing, the institution shall at the same time as the information or part thereof is disclosed provide the applicant with a written explanation of the methods used in conducting the test.*

4) *A public institution shall disclose any information described in subsection (1) of this section if that disclosure would be in the public interest as it relates to public health, public safety or protection of the environment and, if the public interest in the disclosure clearly outweighs in importance any financial loss or gain to, or prejudice to the competitive position of or interference with contractual or other negotiation of a third party.*

16. *A public institution may deny an application for information that is subject to the following privileges-*

- a) legal practitioner – client privilege;*
- b) health workers – client privilege;*
- c) journalism confidentiality privileges; and*
- d) any other professional privileges conferred by an Act.*

17. *A public institution may deny an application for information which contains course or research materials prepared by faculty members.*

18. *Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, where an application is made to a public institution for information which is exempted from disclosure by virtue of this Act, the institution shall disclose any part of the information that virtue does not contain such exempted information.*
19. 1) *A public institution may deny an application for information that contains information pertaining to-*
- a) Test questions, scoring keys and other examination data used to administer an academic examination or determine the qualifications of an application for a license or employment;*
  - b) Architects' and engineers' plans for buildings not constructed in whole or in part with public funds and for buildings constructed with public funds, to the extent that disclosure would compromise security; and*
  - c) Library circulation and other records identifying library users with specific materials;*
- 2) *Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, an application for information shall not be denied where the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs whatever injury that disclosure would cause.*
20. *Any applicant who has been denied access to information, or a part thereof, may apply to the court for a review of the matter within 30 days after the public institution denies or is deemed to have denied the application, or*

*within such further time as the court may either before or after the expiration of the 30 days fix or allow.*

21. *An application made under section 20 shall be heard and determined summarily.*
22. *Notwithstanding anything contrary contained in the Evidence Act, or any regulation made under it, the court may, in the course of any proceeding before it arising from an application under section 20 of this Act, examine any information to which this Act applies, that is under the control of a public institution, and no such information may be withheld from the court on any ground.*
23. *In any proceeding before the court arising from an application under section 20, the court shall take precaution, including when appropriate, receiving representations ex parte and conducting hearings in camera to avoid the disclosure by the court or any person of any information or other materials on a basis of which any public institution will be authorized to disclose the information applied for.*
24. *In any proceeding before the court arising from an application under section 20, the burden of establishing that the public institution is authorized to deny an application for information or part thereof shall be on the public institution concerned.*
25. 1) *Where a public institution denies an application for information, or a part thereof on the basis of a provision of this Act, the court shall order the institution to disclose the information or part thereof to the applicant-*

- a) *If the court determined that the institution is not authorized to deny the application for information;*
  - b) *Where the institution is so authorized, but the court nevertheless determines that the institution does not have reasonable grounds on which to deny the application; or*
  - c) *Where the court makes a finding that the interest of the public in having the record being made available is greater and more vital than the interest being served if the application is denied, in whatever circumstance.*
- 2) *Any order the court makes in pursuance of this section may be made subject to such conditions as the court deems appropriate.*
26. *This Act does not apply to-*
- a) *published material or material available for purchase by the public;*
  - b) *library or museum material made or acquired and preserved solely for public reference or exhibition purposes; or*
  - c) *material placed in the National Library, National Museum or non-public section of the National Archives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on behalf of any person or organization other than a government or public institution.*
27. 1) *Notwithstanding anything contained in the Criminal Code, Penal Code, the Official Secrets Act, or any other enactment, no civil or criminal proceedings shall lie against an officer of any public institution, or against*

*any person acting on behalf of a public institution, and no proceedings shall lie against such persons thereof, for the disclosure in good faith of any information, or any part thereof pursuant to this Act, for any consequences that flow from that disclosure, or for the failure to give any notice required under this Act, if care is taken to give the required notice.*

2) *Nothing contained in the criminal Code or Official Secrets Act shall prejudicially affect any public officer who, without authorization, discloses to any person, an information which he reasonably believes to show-*

*a) a violation of any law rule or regulation;*

*b) mismanagement, gross waste of funds, fraud, and abuse of authority; or*

*c) a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety notwithstanding that such information was not disclosed pursuant to the provision of this Act.*

3) *No civil or criminal proceeding shall lie against any person receiving the information or further disclosing it.*

28. 1) *The fact that any information in the custody of a public institution is kept by that institution under security classification or is classified document within the meaning of the Official Secrets Act does not preclude it from being disclosed pursuant to an application for disclosure thereof under the provisions of this Act, but in every case the public institution to which the*

*application is made shall decide whether such information is of a type referred to in sections 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20 or 21 of this Act.*

2) *If the public institution to which the application in subsection (1) is made*

*decides that such information is not a type mentioned in the sections referred to in subsection (1), access to such information shall be given to the applicant.*

3) *If the public institution, to which the application mentioned in subsection*

*(1) is made, decides that such information is of a type mentioned in sections referred to in subsection (1), it shall give notice to the applicant.*

29) 1) *On or before February 1 of each year, each public institution shall submit to*

*the Attorney – General of the Federation a report which shall cover the preceding fiscal year and which shall include-*

a) *The number of determinations made by the public institution not to comply with applications for information made to such public institution and the reasons for such determinations;*

b) *The number of appeals made by persons under this Act, and the reason for the action upon each appeal that results in a denial of information;*

- c) *A description of whether the Court has upheld the decision of the public institution to withhold information under such circumstances and a concise description of the scope of any information withheld;*
  - d) *The number of applications for information pending before the public institution as of October 31 of the preceding year and the median number of days that such application had been pending before the public institution as of that date;*
  - e) *The number or application for information received by the public institution and the number of applications which the public institution processed;*
  - f) *The median number of days taken by the public institution to process different types of applications for information;*
  - g) *The total amount of fees collected by the public institution to process such applications; and*
  - h) *The number of full-time staff of the public institution devoted to processing applications for information, and the total amount expended by the public institution for processing such applications.*
- 2) *Each public institution shall make such report available to the public, among other means, by computer and telecommunications, or if computer and telecommunications means have not been established by the government or public institution, by other electronic means.*

- 3) *The Attorney – General shall make each report, which has been submitted to him, available to the public in hard copies, online and also at a single electronic access point.*
- 4) *The Attorney General shall notify the chairman and ranking minority member of the committee on government reform oversight of the House of Representatives and the Chairman and ranking minority member of the committees on Government Affairs and the judiciary of the senate, not later than April of the year in which each such report is issued, of the existence of such report and make it available to them in hard copies as well as by electronic means.*
- 5) *The Attorney – General shall develop reporting and performance guidelines in connection with reports required by this section and may establish additional requirements for such reports as the Attorney – General determines may be useful.*
- 6) *The Attorney General shall in his oversight responsibility under this Act ensure that all institutions to which this Act applies comply with the provisions of the Act.*
- 7) *The Attorney-General shall submit to the National Assembly an annual report on or before April 1 of each calendar year which shall include for the prior calendar year a listing of the number of cases arising under this Act, the exemption involved in each case, the disposition of such cases, and the cost, fees, and penalties assessed.*

- 8) *Such report shall also include detailed description of the efforts taken by the Ministry of Justice to encourage all government or public institutions to comply with this Act.*
- 9) *For purposes of this section, the term-*
  - a) *“government” includes any executive department, military department, government corporation, government-controlled corporation, or other establishment in the executive branch of the government (including the Executive Office of the president), or any other arm of government, independent or regulatory government agency or public institution; and*
  - b) *‘information’ means any term used in this Act in reference to information or record which includes any information that would be held by a government or public institution and information subject to the requirements of this Act, when maintained by any public institution in any format, including electronic format.*
30.
  - 1) *This Act is intended to complement and not replace the existing procedures*  
*for access to public records and information and is not intended to limit in any way access to those types of official information that have been normally available to the general public.*
  - 2) *Where the question whether any public record or information is to be made available, where that question arises under this Act, the*

*question shall be determined in accordance with the provision stated herein, unless otherwise exempted by this Act.*

31. *In this Act-*

*“applicant” refers to any person who applies for information under this Act;*

*“application” refers to any request for information made under this Act;*

*“Court” means a High Court or Federal High Court respectively,*

*“Foreign State” means by State other than the Federal Republic of Nigeria;*

*“information” includes all records, documents and information stored in whatever form including written, electronic, visual image, sound, audio recording, etc.*

*“Public institution” means any legislative, executive, judicial, administrative or advisory body of the government, including boards, bureau, committees or commissions of the State, and any subsidiary body of those bodies including but not limited to committees and subcommittees which are supported in whole or in part by public fund or which expends public fund and private bodies providing public services, performing public functions or utilizing public funds;*

*“Public record or document” means a record in any form having been prepare, or having been or being used, received, possessed or under the control of any public or private bodies relating to matters of public interest and includes any-*

*a) Writing on any material;*

- b) Information recorded or stored or other devices; and any material subsequently derived from information so recorded or stored;*
  - c) Label marking, or other writing that identifies or describes anything of which it forms part, or to which it is attached by any means;*
  - d) Book, card, form, map, plan, graph, or drawing.*
  - e) Photograph, film, negative, microfilm, tape, or other device in which one or more visual images are embodied so as to be capable (with or without the aid of some other equipment) of being reproduced;*
- “minister” means the Minister charged with responsibility for information;*
- “person” includes a corporation sole and body of persons whether corporate or incorporate; acting individually or as a group;*
- “personal information” means any official information held about an identifiable person, but does not include information that bears on the public duties of public employees and officials.*

32. *This Act may be cited as the Freedom of Information Act, 2011.*

### **How the Freedom of Information Act Can Aid Investigative Journalism**

The old assumption about public institution is that records kept by such bodies are not meant for the public consumption. This wrong notion has helped in perpetuating corruption, crass irresponsibility, nepotism and ethnocentrism. The principle of maximum disclosure establishes the presumption that all information held by public bodies should be subject to disclosure except where the information comes within the limit of what is permitted for disclosure. Thus, investigative journalism can pursue cases that promote public interest without the fear of denial to

public records or the destruction of public record. Public officers themselves know that the destruction of records is a criminal offence which is punishable by law.

Principle 2 which stipulates the obligation to publish can also help in investigative reports. The International Standard Series (1991) stated that public bodies should, as a minimum, be under an obligation to publish the following categories of information:

- Operational information about how the public body functions, including costs, objectives, audited accounts, standards, achievements and so on, particularly where the body provides direct services to the public;
- Information on any requests, complaints or other direct actions which members of the public may take in relation to the public body;
- Guidance on processes of which members of the many provide input into major policy or legislature proposals;
- The types of information which the body holds and the form in which this information is held; and
- The content of any decision or policy affecting the public, along with reasons for the decision and background material of importance in forming the decision.

Where these provisions are well known, the reporter will not need to ask for what is not within the purview of the institution to publish. The journalist can also examine published information to identify discrepancies or inconsistencies in facts and figures. Access to information gives the reporter the latitude to boldly request access to records which could facilitate the information needed to get a quality report. Even,

when public officials initially try to resist or refuse the request, the reporter's knowledge of the law will serve as an anchor to getting the records.

A thorough examination of the freedom of information Act gives hope for a robust journalism practice which can help in building society. In specific terms, Freedom of Information Act is relevant to investigative journalism in the following ways:

- Facilitate quick and easy access to public records
- Where there are refusals not within the rules for exemption the reporter can seek the court injunction for access
- Help in comparing records from the usual threats to life and family
- The brutality of security operatives will be curtailed or reduced to the barest minimum
- Promote cooperation between public officials and the journalist in information sharing.
- Places a burden of accountable record keeping on public institutions.
- Prevents the tendencies to destroy public information.
- Encourage and protect whistle blowers
- Serves to promote open governance and public interest.

### **Handling the Problems of Investigative Journalism**

The challenges or constraints of investigative journalism are not insurmountable. They are necessary evils which the reporter must strive to overcome. To give-in to such problems and not to something about them amount to indiscretion and incompetence. This is because, journalists have a way of weaving round a

problem to uncover the hidden truth in it. The following are measures that can help in facilitating good investigative reports irrespective of the constraints.

1. **Insurance policy for reporters:** The hazards of journalism necessitated the need to provide insurance policy for journalists so as to assure them of protection in case of accidents, death and incapacitation. The provision of a comprehensive insurance policy will afford the reporter the willingness to take the risk necessary to uncover a fraud, crime and other unwholesome practices. The attack that claimed the principal officers of the Lagos State chapter of the Nigerian Union of Journalists in Abia State in 2010 while returning from their AGM in Uyo reinforced the need. Although the death was not occasioned by their quest to investigate an issue, it re-echoed the dangers reporters are subjected to while on the job.
2. **Security protection:** The police have shown various forms of brutality against reporters. It is a sad tale that those the police ought to protect are the very people they attack every now and then. This obvious show of power often emanates from the security operatives attached to government officials and top politicians in the society. They often fail in their understanding of the law – in that they are custodian and protector of the law. Where the law encounters the very people, they are meant to protect, they ought to be on the side of the law. Ironically, the poor orientation of an average policeman sees his or her boss as equal to the law. They can kill, brutalize and maim reporters in the name of protecting their bosses. The police need to have a new orientation regarding their position as law enforcement agents. When the

security of the reporter is guaranteed, the reporter could carry out investigations without the palpable fear dominant with carrying out investigations.

Part of the measures also lie in the ability of the police to come to the aid of the reporter when cases of threats to life are reported to them. The reporter should be given police protection to guarantee him or her the needed confidence to approach the individuals affected by an incident generating the investigation. We have seen cases where two policemen fight for their bosses to prove their loyalty. The shameful act of brutality by Honourable Chidi Loyd of the River State House of Assembly against his fellow Honourable Member, Chinda was aided by policemen. In the event leading to this incident, police details from the government house were mobilized to overpower the police orderly of the Honourable Members who were for pro-impeachment.

The point been made here is that reporters need protection from the police even when the boss of a police orderly is the subject of investigation.

3. **Welfare package:** Individuals have different levels of motivation. The prompt payment of wages could be a motivation for work. Others could be regular promotion, annual holidays, bonus, awards, recognition etc. when the welfare package is good enough, reporters will go the extra-mile to getting reports out.
4. **Promoting the freedom of information Act:** The freedom of information act is a launch pad into investigative journalism. The promotion of the tenets of the act in public institutions will assist public officers in proper record

keeping; such that enquiries into the contents of the documents or records will not generate the usual tension, half disclosure and threats perpetuated by public officials. When a society practices openness in public service, it would invariably enhance journalism. Workers will not be afraid, since there is protection for whistle blowers in the act.

5. **Acquisition of hi-tech equipment:** The movie season 24 presents the power of technology in investigation and crime prevention. The acquisition of powerful hi-tech equipment can facilitate investigative reports without subjecting the reporter into unnecessary risk. When a media house acquires 1-pen, e-tie, micro-chips and other devices, it affords the reporter the opportunity to take anti-visual recordings of the scene and individuals involved in a case. A thorough analysis of the subjects in the visuals can lead to a deeper understand of an issue.
6. **Collaborative investigation:** When a reporter has studied a case and masters the potential dangers and threats in it; it is better to use a collaborative approach in investigating the case. This approach will prevent the setting of 'land mines' for a particular reporter. Thus, the collaborative efforts of other reporters will provide multiple channel of access into the case. The result will be more comprehensive and faster than an individual reporter doing it alone.
7. **Minimize your social outings/spots:** Efenji Efenji political correspondent with AIT was killed in a relaxation spots in Karu- Abuja on February 14, 2010 in the presence of his wife. Investigative reporters need to understand

that when they are known in certain ‘bars’ and ‘joints’, the risk of them falling into the hands of their trailers is higher. Nevertheless, such spots provide access to raw information about the different perspectives to a story. The ability to maintain a low profile and avoid been known or identified with a particular spot will keep his trailers at bay. When an investigative reporter becomes a socialite, it is difficult for him to escape premeditated attacks against him.

8. **Personal safety:** Reporters should make effort to secure their homes through technology, collaborative effects with neighbours contact with police division closer to him or her and provision of security tips for family members. Mr. Tony Iyare, a former editor with *Concord* newspaper and one-time Special Adviser to Governor Oshiomole escaped security operations in the days of military brutality through personal safety and orientation given to his family members. In one incident, SSS men had trailed him to his house, his younger brother, Austine Iyare, conscious of their mission engaged them in a conversation until his brother took an alternative route out of the house. One way an investigative reporter can do this is to warn his/her family members not to open the door for those not known to the family. Avoid disclosing his schedule of activities to others and a security alert system that could detect metals, illegal entries etc.

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**PART 111**  
**INTERPRETATIVE WRITING**

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **NEWS INTERPRETATION**

#### **Concept of News Interpretation**

Ighata (2011) asserts that news interpretation and analysis afford the reporter or journalist/presenter the opportunity to talk to both sides on an issue because doing so is likely to yield new facts and put the news story in a better light. This view sees news interpretation from the perspective of broadcasting. News interpretation is also a common feature of newspapers as seen in features, columns and letters to the editor.

There are news stories that may not make meaning to the reader or viewer. This is because news has no value or relevance until the consumer understands it. News is information. But information has no value until it provides a change in the consumer or at least evokes a wide range of reactions or elicits positive responses. Basic to these changes in journalism as a profession is the development of the twin functions of interpretation and analysis of news. News interpretation is, therefore a new concept of news treatment. It is called by different names, some call it commentary, others analysis.

Hoffman (2007) sees analysis as ‘a systematic approach to problem-solving. Complex problems are made simpler by separating them into more understandable elements. This involves the identification of purposes and facts, the statement of defensible assumptions, and the formulation of conclusions.

Commentary according to Ogbemi (2008) refers to programmes of news with comments (and these comments are given by analysts and commentators.

News interpretation was not initially a part of the media function, the development in media practices in the 1970's and 80's resulted into news interpretation, which differs greatly from the conventional straight news treatment. But why should news interpretation agitate our minds in this jet and pollution age?

The complexities of our contemporary life, the diversity of modern society, the rapid changes brought about by new technology, the rapidity with which events come and go, education explosion and increasing awareness and the probing potentials of modern people, all require that news has to be explained and interpreted so that the public may be well informed and at the same time be in a position to form good opinion. Furthermore, interpretation makes the news more believable.

Joshi (1999, p.13) spells out the functions of mass communication to include: surveillance, transmission of values, lineage, entertainment and interpretation. Expatiating on the interpretative function of the media, Joshi writes that the media select the important news and issues for the attention of the people (audiences) and not only provide information of (sic) the events but they also provide information on the ultimate meaning and significance of these events.'

Ighata (2011) believe that centrality of news in mass communication and societal change cannot be fully or truly achieved when the news events that wrought these changes are left to the audience to reach their own conclusions without the guidance and expertise of authorities on diverse human endeavours; hence, the need for news to be interpreted and analysed.

He contends that with the vaunted place of news in the society, there seems to be a crying need not just to timely report the news but also to engage in analysis

and interpretations: to dig beyond the surface of news stories; to explain the cause(s) and effect(s) and the significance to the audience.

A society replete with pressures, constraints and demands require a thoughtful and well-organised approach to interpreting and understanding its problems. This of course is, the historic mission of interpretative journalism. Yesterday's one — dimensional journalism yielded not neutrality but superficiality. The mass media, both print and electronic, deluge their audience with a daily dose of unrelated facts. They report events; some sensational but ignored the antecedents of those events. It is therefore the reporter's responsibility to provide perspective and continuity and to add the "why" to the "what" of events.

As old standards of news judgment crumble, a new standard for news that is relevant, pertinent and salient to its audience emerges. Thus, news with interpretation becomes consumer-oriented. This new style of journalism is a complete departure from the mechanistic coverage of public events that often stood alone without linkage in meaning and substance.

Today in Nigeria, mass media have both psychological and sociological implications on the people. The psychological effects range from the images of fear, hope and courage. The media create new ways of living; building confidence and habits that may sustain the society. And with the proliferation of the mass media in the society, man's mind has become the daily target that receives the gun-like blasts from the news barrels of mass media. Schuson (2003) quoted in Montgomery (2007) sees news as, information and commentary on contemporary affairs taken to be publicly important', (p.14).

The informational aspect of the news report is usually in ‘simple and straightforward manner so as to give the listener or viewer a few pertinent facts’ (Stovall, 2006, p.205). News reports are condensed to their essence because of time.

For instance, there are more than 30 daily and weekly national newspapers and more than 130 radio and 100 television stations offering several news stories to the audience. There are also news stories from international sources.

There is also media competition for audience attention: some complex, some ambiguous. This has been the dilemma in which modern readers, listeners and viewers have found themselves — to understand and believe the avalanche of information reaching them.

Nwanze (2000) observed that the audience can absorb these jumbles of facts for sure, but is impossible for them to make any meaningful appraisal of this never-ending kaleidoscope of local, national and international events that make up the day’s news. This is because these news items are disassociated in time, space and subject matter. Some have ideological colouration. Lack of time also makes reporters go for stories that might not need explanations. Some stories are, however, both complex and important and explanation cannot be avoided.

For the reader to grapple with the explosion in this mind caused by this daily input of disordered news, he must, of necessity require the services of well-informed, intelligent, framed and articulate journalists with experience to interpret the news for him.

The explanatory aspect of news is what Montgomery (2007) calls the third shape of news — the interview. (The other two shapes news takes are reports and

presentations, p.36). He sees the interview as ‘a widely mediated public genre [sometimes used in the course of a news broadcast] that offers the Journalist a crucial device for supplying quotable material to underpin the news’. This crucial device comes in four sub-genres, namely: the affiliated, the experiential, the expert and the accountability interviews.

According to Montgomery:

- *The affiliated interviews are interviews with correspondent (reporting and commenting on news stories) — This type of interview sees the interviewees as affiliated with the news institutions.*
- *Experiential interviews are with ordinary people affected by, or caught up in the news (witnessing, reacting and expressing opinion) event as an actors or responsible agents.*
- *Expert interviews are with interviewees with first-hand knowledge of the event or holding knowledge about it. In other words, experts’ interviews inform and explain the cause and effect of a news event.*
- *Interviews with ‘principals’ — public figures with some kind of responsible role in relation to the news events (accounting).*

Montgomery further notes that the accountability interview is usually with a public figure. The essence of the interview is for the ‘public figure to account in relation to an issue or event of the moment either for their own deeds or words for the actions/statements of the institutions with which they are associated...’ The interviewer [usually anchor of a broadcast news] seeks to query the basis of a

statement or action, typically the interviewee seeks to justify it and by their official status are treated as having some locus' on the matter at hand (2007, p.148).

Ighata (2011) observed that these interviews are known as commentaries which are usually based on the news of the day. They are used to report and support the news of the day (news narrative) and interpret these events by analysts to point out the significance by giving the audience 'added perspective' in order to help him evaluate an issue' (Joshi, 2001 pp.12-13). Hence, broadcast news value tends to increase when news analysts/experts give their opinion. Daramola (2001) noted that when background information is provided by informing and explaining the significance of news events already reported as news the audience will a better knowledge of the news. This background information given by experts, reporters, correspondents, eye witnesses, and political figures enhance the narrative reported as news for the audience to apply them to their everyday socio-economic and political life.

### **Meaning of Interpretation**

Perhaps Ighata (2011) insight into the functions of the mass media could serve as our basis for understanding interpretation. He contends that the functions of the mass media to society include: education, entertainment, mobilization, agenda-setting, opinion-formation, creating an informed citizenry through its objective and credible reportage of events covered as news in societies that are usually outside the immediate purview of the audience.

The basis of interpretative journalism is telling the news and telling what it means. Interpretation is the explanation and analysis which go with the news. it is

the treating of the cause, course and trends (results and circumstances). It is the linking of events rather than isolating them. It is adding flesh, blood and humanism to the bare facts of the news story. Interpretation is the ability to form public opinion and at the same time influence it. It is the making out of two or more stories out of a factor or thought as well as making sense of the factor. It is an in-depth reporting or taking the readers behind the news.

Interpretation explains the horizon of news and gives it substances and bearing (perspective). It is adding the factor of judgment to straight news or deadpan in the unvarnished recital of facts that may not be true or represent the truth. It is, by this token, an application of the rule or reason to conventional news. It also means giving background and focus to news stories.

In summary, interpretative report is an analysis or in-depth report, in-depth explanation. It concerns nature of factors that influence that report, what are the effects, significance etc. of the report on the public? What are the consequences of a problem to the national economy? (e.g. an outbreak of tsetse is widely going to affect the economy or the case of bully by the big boys on small children in school, or bush burning and the effect).

Such reports go beyond the 5W's and by going to ask: Why! Why! It searches into hidden meanings, expectations, factors, significance, and publications.

The difference between investigative and interpretative is that, investigative pieces tend to expose secrets, woes and corruption but interpretation goes into the why. Ganiyu (2000, p.183-185) says that the process of interpreting a news story takes the following steps: backgrounding, talking to eye witnesses, talking to experts,

talking to the other side (that means all sides) and so on. Adenaike Felix, the former Editor-in-Chief of the *Nigerian Tribune*. Ganiyu, (2000, p.183) says most stories need back grounding because most incidents do not happen in isolation for a story that keeps unfolding news dimensions for many days. Something similar may have happened in the past.’ Ganiyu further says that back grounding or backgrounds to a story lend depth to a story and make the story not to, in his words, hang.

For newspapers to stay alive under this — new development, they have to resort to in-depth reporting of the news. The radio disseminates the news and runs commentaries on them as soon as they develop, leaving the newspapers trailing behind. Television has commenced news comments, especially in- between newscasts.

Another development is a mounting level of general education. As more and more people receive general education, there is a pressing need for interpretative articles, features, editorials, commentaries, etc. to cater for the various interest groups. But no matter what, an interpretative writer, like other journalists, must play a vital role in determining the shape of news.

Apart from the above, news interpretation can also begin by talking to eye-witnesses or victims. Their views on an event can provide insight into the plausible cause(s) number of deaths, number of houses destroyed and companies, job losses, the implications for the insurance companies who paid out hundreds of millions in claims to companies and individuals whose property were damaged and so on.

Another step is to talk to experts in that area. Ganiyu (2000) used the satellite that Nigeria launched that year into orbit to explain this better. He says that with the

reporter and presenter talking to space scientists and physicists, they would provide depth to the satellite story by telling the audience about the implications for the country's development as regards communications, science and technology (p.185).

Ganiyu (2000:187) writes that there are at least five ways of going about news interpretation which include: news review, news analysis, survey, compassions and forecast. a commentary on an important and sometimes controversial news item or issue with the aim of clarifying the issue further for the reader, [viewer or listener] and putting it in proper perspective. It also tries to influence change on the part of decision makers,' (p.188).

Ighata (2011) notes that the others mentioned can be included in the course of a journalist's reportage, commentator's analysis. For instance, the result of a survey can be analysed with its implications highlighted by an expert to give a true picture of happenings in the country or community; by comparing the past and the present budget so as to be able to make a reasonable prediction or forecast of future trends in terms of economic development and growth and so on.

### **The relevance of news Interpretation**

Ike (2005) sees interpretative journalism as a style of news reporting that involves careful thought analysis of an idea as well as dogged pursuit of facts to bring together information in a new, more complete context that provides deeper public understanding'.

Ighata (2011) contends that news analysis and interpretation enhance public understanding of the key socio-economic and political issues of the day for the public. Asemah (2009) puts the need for news interpretation and analysis 'as the key

to most stories on business, industries, agriculture and labour even most of the routine stories. The reader or viewer or listener usually wants to know why something happened and what it means to him.’

In journalism, interpretation, analysis, depth reporting and explanation tell the story in its straight form and give a step further to explain it. Readers are told what is important and what is not. Readers do not want biased, controversial or perverted news that lack background and grace. They want to read/listen/view, understand and, if possible, believe what the story is all about. The principles of interpretation, comment, and analysis seek to explain, inform fully and to educate more meaningfully.

In spite of the audience’s crying need to know what caused a news event by being put into context by the reporter and presenter in the stream of cause and effect (with the help of analysts and experts), the reader, viewer or listener would want the news stories interpreted or told in the language he understands’ because the world [or field] of business, industry, agriculture and labour has languages’ — jargons — on their own and those jargons need to be distilled to the understanding of the housewives and the professionals. The professional insights and the expertise of seasonal analysts, commentators and the journalists give them, room to interpret the news the way they see it. [They] can inject [their] own ideas, opinions and pass comments on the facts being reported’ (Asemah, 2009, p.114). he says that just like investigative reporting, the need for interpretative reporting or news analysis requires additional facts from the journalists, analysts and commentators for easy classification[sic] (or clarification), about explanation and logical analysis’.

To Asemah, the interpretative news reporting is like the in- depth stories he describes in his book that needs full treatment and stories back grounding of news stones. Also, the news analysis can be likened to the in-depth news stories described by Asemah because it normally comes after the news break and require creative thinking and deep imagination (thorough knowledge and expertise) on the part of the reporter (presenters, commentators or analysts). Like the reportage of news stories, there is no limit to the subject . . . ‘which has interpretative feature because ‘it covers every field’. Asemah says most in-depth stories come after the news break which is essentially what news analysis is all about by putting the news into context or putting meaning into the news’ that is just breaking by relating the breaking news to the reader’s own framework and experience’.

Writing on the need and significance of news interpretation and analysis (Akagbosu and Omoruyi, 2003, pp.53-54) cited in Ighata (2011) say the process involves the followings:

- The ability to decide and explain the jargons used by the people in different walks of life.
- The ability to recognise a particular event as one of the series with both cause and effect in the example on, the reduction of government expenditure the reporter needs to inform the readers [and audience what has led government to doing what it has decided to do.’

Another essence of news analysis and interpretation is the need for the media to dig deeper and find more facts into the straight news stories that have either been reported or broken in order to put meaning into the news. MacDougall (1972) cited

by Okwechime (2009:100) put forward what interpretative and analytical aspects of news tend to address:

- What happened? That is, what really happened? — the complete story, not just the result of a series of incidents.
- Why (or how) did it happen? That is, what is the explanation?
- What does it mean? What are the implications? That is how to interpret it?
- What next? In the light of today's news, what may be expected to happen tomorrow?
- What is beneath the surface? What are the trends, ideologies, situations and so on, of which one should be aware so that an overt news incident will make sense?

Nwanze (2000) contended that news interpretation thus helps the audience to put things back into some type of coherent picture of the society and the world at large in order to have basis for their opinion and actions. The members of the audience can hardly be expected to analyse carefully the human elements in the news or the elements of bias inserted by the communicator. Surface half-truths can be dangerously exploited by unscrupulous people for their own advantage in expectation of obscuring the essential truth. Politicians, diplomats and business cabals do this. Added to the above factors are the following special developments. There has been increasing competition for newspapers and magazines as other media seek to become rival opinion makers. The advent of radio and later, television, brought a new era in news dissemination to the utter disadvantage of newspapers/magazines.

Okwechime (2009) observes that the adequate knowledge and understanding on the part of the reporters, analysts or commentators of the undercurrents relating to the news events analysed help to provide greater substance to the straight news stories reported so that they can be clarified, explained, interpreted and integrated with other news stories.

Interviews during news broadcast help to clarify and explain the motives of the *dramatis personae*, the significance of the news event and eyewitness accounts of these events by providing useful supplements to the accounts of the events by the reporter and presenters.

News interpretation provides a detailed analysis of the news of the day in a way the audience can grasp their significance, relevance and impact to the community (or nation).

It gives depth and meaning to day-to-day events and probes the news stories with the help of analysts, commentators, eyewitnesses, and experts for probable consequences, which usually divulge opinions from facts. Nwanze (2000) noted that news interpreters even dare to evaluate, challenge, crusade, teach and measure the news of the day. The aim, in the final analysis, is to produce a broader interpretation of the news of the policies of government at all levels. It is also a mere accurate way of ascertaining and measuring public opinion. This again, as a process, creates a better-informed electorate, a better government and a more orderly society. Interpretation is a barometer for measuring the tempo of political inputs and outputs. Interpretation also makes room for a considerable opinion — of an expert (in and out

of the news organizations), thereby making a complicated news development more intelligible to the public.

This is because persuasion, recommendation and exhortation are outside the techniques of telling news. Interpretation bridges the credibility gap between the public and the news media and gives the public more confidence in the information process.

The need for news analysis and interpretation seeks to explain “what the news means,” rather than ‘what the news is’ through the commentaries and analyses of the reporters, analysts and experts. They tend to ‘add flesh to the bare bones’ of events in the news. This enables them to provide the people with the kind of information they need to make meaningful input into how society is structured, how they are governed and how their economic well-being is managed. (Okwechime, 2009, p101 and Daramola: 2001).

Anim (2006, pp.30-31) cited in Okwechime (2009) says that the need for news interpretation (and analysis) helps the people (audience) and society by doing the followings:

- It is a deeper sense of the news than routine observation and recording of day-to-day events.
- It recognises a particular event as being one of a series of events with both cause and effect, which are inevitably linked in a chain.
- It seeks to influence public opinion, although it is not in itself an opening by providing information significant to the events.

- It is an analysis of the causes behind a particular event or a discussion, for example, of the implications of a new government policy.
- There is a vast difference between interpretation and opinion. Whereas interpretation is an explanation or expansion of the news by providing background information, comparison, analysis and pointing out the significance of an event, opinion is a subjective judgement, which has the additional destructive element of emotional impact.
- Interpretation is, in addition to the presentation of the pertinent facts, past and present, “an effort to give meaning to these facts.”

Daramola (2001) says, though, a few media houses do investigative reporting or journalism but ‘interpretative journalism has continually suffered a crippling effect’. To him... interpretative journalism for a developing country like Nigeria is not only preferred, it is meaningful’ (p.170). This assertion is further corroborated by Okigbo (1991) cited in Daramola (2001) who says that ‘the occurrence of events has been selected, ordered and explained with implications highlighted. That, in essence, is interpretative journalism which the Nigerian press tends to shy away from’.

Daramola posits that it is ‘hardly controvertible that reports of events in our press today are empty, dry and meaningless, it is equally true that what those reports lack can be recouped through incisive, well-researched, in-depth and well-written news analyses or commentaries. In other words, while the reports are in most cases more of bones, the flesh is supposed to come in form of news commentary on newspaper, television and radio, (pp. 170-171).

In its real form, interpretation is an extension of the news reporting branch, and because it researches into public attitudes, the fears that there are barriers between the editorial writers, columnists and reporters, are believed. This stance accentuates the justification for their existence and the validity of their profession.

### **Functions of Interpretative Reports**

Joseph Pulitzer's (Jr) thought on the subject of news interpretation, perhaps serve the relevance of interpretation. According to him "without it, an editor becomes a mere rubber-stamp for the prejudices of the mob, and a newspaper is nothing more than a wad (paper) for wrapping fish instead of a respected chronicler of life itself." Although his position came at the time that newspapers were the dominant media of mass communication, nevertheless, interpretation functions can be summarized thus:

1. It performs the correlation function of the mass media.
2. It helps to raise government and public awareness about a problem.
3. It brings about hidden meanings for better understanding of issues as a prophet who sees to past, the present and predicts the future.
4. It helps government and public to make better decision, formulate policies for a better society.
5. It explains issues and occurrences e.g. 14 years Ese Oruru abduction, marriage and conversion to Islam saga that started in August 2015 to march 2016.
6. Interpretative report is constitutionally based on Sections 22 and 39 of the 1999 constitution.
7. A well-informed society is better governed than an ill-informed society.

8. They teach and educate government and the public on occurrence, how it affects them and the way out.
9. It helps to find solution to problems in the society, by highlighting the causes, effects and the way out.

Mass communication is more than news report, but interpretative reports x-ray the society and make it a better place.

### **Skills Required of an Interpretative Reporter**

Nwanze (2000) contends that at all times, places and circumstances, an interpretative writer must have a tradition of conscience by overcoming old prejudices and entrenched interests. He should realise that news is not merely a record of ascertainable facts and attributable opinions, but a chronicle of the world we live in terms of moral values. He may be abused, misunderstood or can err as a mortal, but he should, at least, be in a position to tell the story in all its definitions.

He opined that as an interpretative writer, you must possess the right tools and critical equipment needed for the job. Interpretative writing requires basic intellectual skills and an understanding of the social forces, power systems, and group behaviour patterns that have shaped our world. He should also develop specialized knowledge in an area that is likely to be exposed to the liberal arts, humanities, social sciences and physical sciences.

The knowledge of these disciplines will be invaluable to his engineering work as a news interpreter. The answer to this is a trend towards specialization. The reporter, in addition, should be endowed with both natural, and trained powers of observation and reasoning.

1. Must be grounded in research — scientific research method and social science research.
2. He must know how to interview — because the backbone of this type of research is from experts.
3. Ability to identify and locate the right expert and materials to use

### **Techniques of Interpretative Writing**

1. Pick a topic or issue that is current, not just current but relevant and what is meaningful to the people.
2. Identify the experts who can provide the information. Students Admission, JAMB, about university matters — NUC, Nigerian Ports Authority, fraud in banks, CBN.
3. Look into past and present records e.g. voting pattern in Nigeria, formation of political parties
4. Use data to explain points
5. Use archive, computer, internet and records to back your reports
6. Interview — before interview, pick the topic; identify your source before you interview him or her. Political issues should be referred to political scientists or an expert or a lawyer in constitutional matters. While on interview, they may digress but do not throw it away, keep and use it for the future.
7. Accuracy is the watchword — This you can get by asking the expert for documents, maps, etc. to verify the points.
8. Ask them to clarify ambiguous words

9. Use research findings — It is the best, because it provides ready material for your search. This you can get from journals, research projects etc.
10. Have eyes for details e.g. 10 people died of AIDS. How many men, women or children? What period did they die? festive, ordinary season?
11. Consult your sub-editors and lay the information before them. This will enable them organise the story in chronological order with simple and well comprehended language.
12. Be mindful of the 7C's of communication, coherence, credibility, clarity, complete, consistency, content and context.

### **Limitations of Interpretative Journalism**

Interpretative writing, though vital for full understanding of the news, has many problems militating against it. Nwanze, (2000) highlights the following;

- a. There are pressures from government, especially censorious governments, industrialists, the labour movements, advertisers, the Public Relations side, educational institutions, alternative rivalry, sometimes unspoken directives from powerful employers and the habits, training and intellectual backgrounds of the interpreters themselves.
- b. Lack of press freedom or inadequate freedom for the press.
- c. Dearth of qualified staff to do the job of interpretation.
- d. Government ownership and control of the mass media apparatus.
- e. Low level of education and mass illiteracy.
- f. Lack of specialisation on the part of the media practitioner.
- g. Poor funding and staffing of the mass media houses to enable them provide

adequate facilities, including research possibilities.

- h. Poor economy and political instability.
- i. Poverty and, in some cases, apathy on the part of the consumers.
- j. Competition among the media organisations, but no matter what, an interpreter must be able to determine the truth and present it to the public in a palatable form.

### **How Interpretation is Done**

Nwanze (2000) insight into interpretation is also very useful:

- (a) In the print media, interpretation may be written into the main news story or it may be made a subject of an analysis as a separate article. In the electronic media, it is made during the course of newscast or immediately after the news bulletin in form of commentary — news analysis or news talk. These are often written by analysts of established reputation.
- (b) For all media, the general rule is to give the news first and then, at an appropriate point, tell what it means. The public must, however, be given the facts on which an interpretation is based, so that each individual may determine for himself the soundness of the analysis in the light of this adduced evidence. In other words, the interpreter must give the news peg or news development which forms the basis of interpretation.
- (c) Through sidebar story, there is an additive to explanation to the main story and therefore derives from same. Sidebar may deal with the details, side attractions or issues not fully dealt with in the main story. But on no account should a sidebar repeat the ideas already stated in the main story.

- (d) Interpretative lead can be used to give meaning and background to the news.
- (e) The writer's by-line goes with an interpretative story and serves as the best guarantee that can give impartial explanation of events that is being given.
- (f) When a story explains itself, it should be told without recourse to interpretative techniques. Perspectives in the form of dates, designations, previous actions, decision or thoughts should be given, but this does not constitute interpretation. They are part of ingredients of solid news reporting.
- (g) Radio and TV interpretation must be dramatic to suit the transiency and the personal appeals of these media. They are in form of "magazines" and documentaries.
- (h) In writing for news magazine or newspaper roundups (digests), a reporter or writer should not over-analyse or over-interpret. Even if the reader does not know the basic facts of a given situation, it is a mistake to play him with too much opinion when he simply is not interested in it. This is the basic weakness of many an editorial page as well.

### **Meeting the Challenge of Interpretation**

The rate of policy change is synonymous with change in government and appointments. This is why Nwanze (2000) observed that the story of politics and government in an expanding world, presents the news media with some of their greatest challenges. These are; informing the people accurately and fully; enabling them to understand and believe what they have read or listened to, and to be able to form a resilient public opinion. Some of the ways of meeting these challenges are;

- (a) More educated, trained and specialised staff.

- (b) Enough freedom for the press.
- (c) Mass literacy (for increased awareness)
- (d) Proliferation of mass media output as well as the diversification of their messages.
- (e) Appointment, proper training and motivation of the personnel of the mass media organisations.
- (f) The growth of the metropolitan newspapers in the rural areas i.e the establishment of provincial or community newspapers to cater for the interest of rural dwellers.
- (g) The expansion of news magazines or features' outfits in areas where there are poor newspaper coverage.
- (h) The commitment of leaders and even government in local radio and television to the cause of good government is an added potent force.
- (i) Improvement in the communication base.
- (j) Providing the people with the basic necessities of life, etc.

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## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **NEWS AND NEWS INTERPRETATION**

#### **Conventional News and News Interpretation**

A clinical synthesis of journalism practice in Nigeria indicates that some of our reporters have not deviated from the norm — the practice of status quo reporting of events that are as banal as they are irrelevant without any efforts to analyse or interpret the importance of such events.

Reporting the hard facts of the news story in a straight news fashion, coupled with the often-cited factor of lack of time, often times, omits the fact that a particular story a reporter reports as news is one of a series of events with both causes and effects, which needs explanation rather than only informing the audience — that is, if and when interpreted and analysed by commentators and analysts — it will help broaden the audience's understanding of that particular news event.

News interpretation and analysis refers to the examination and identification of the various components of a news item (Ewuola: 2000).

The norm does not yet include probing beneath the surface of events or questioning certain established truths and procedures and discovering the actual intentions or plans of those who make and execute government policies. There are numerous questions that news interpretation should answer. For instance, why are things said and not done; why people are not happy, (and yet the sources of happiness abound); why are things not working the way they should, why are panel reports on any conceivable public impropriety not been treated or implemented? accordingly, why the economy is bad and politics sour, and the society, at large corrupt; why

morals are stinking, why so much deaths on our roads, why widening unemployment situation, why we cannot govern ourselves, why corruption and the fear of domination still persist. Again, why armed robbery has defied law enforcement efforts, why we have broken homes and malignant juvenile delinquencies. (What of adult delinquencies?) Why is smuggling on the increase and drug-pushing a malignant issue? Why is it that people do not obey the law of God or have respect for human dignity? Why is moral depravity haunting human race? Why does mankind build civilizations and at the same time destroy them, and more and more. These questions, Ighata (2011) reasoned should be the focus of interpretation.

News analysis and interpretation is like the newspaper editorial which according to Akinfeleye (1987, p.109) 'is based on the explanation of the significance behind a news event. It gives meaning to the issue, condition, or situation that is first reported as news and later commented upon by analysts and commentators. Furthermore, Ewuola (2000, p.38) says aside it being an attempt to tell what the facts mean in terms of causes and effects of a news story, 'it is another way of explaining the substance of the story' by bringing the insights of experts to bear on recent events and topical issues to an increasingly information-hungry and demanding audience.

Ighata (2011) observed that all the aforementioned definitions take on news analysis or interpretation when viewed from Curtis D. MacDougal's own definition of interpretative reporting cited in Daramola 2001 as 'an objective judgement based on background knowledge of a situation, an appraisal of an event.' To Daramola (2001, p.169) news analysis or commentary is the electronic equivalent of

newspaper's editorial which Akinfeleye (1987) says usually..." provide historical, political, geographical, etc. background of the issue'. Writing further, Daramola says that news commentators or analysts are to the broadcast medium what newspaper or new magazine columnists are to the print medium. These commentators or analysts are usually called upon to express their opinions and viewpoints about matters of current or public interest. And 'such news commentaries may stand themselves as whole programmes or may be part of other news programmes' (Daramola: 2001). Today, he says many newscasts are no longer like the traditional news bulletin that is limited to straight news stories. 'They are now much longer and do include special reports, news analysis, interpretative piece or commentaries. This format of newscast is what he termed the 'integrated news broadcast' which goes just beyond news information to explaining to the audience that, 'if so and so happens, then XYZ is likely to be the consequence of the action' (Akinfeleye: 1987).

The integrated news broadcast is also closely related to another form of news cast which Daramola calls, the single-story news extra'. According to him, the single-story news extra does not relate different news stories about different events instead it dwells on the same events using news reports, live interviews or live discussion, with experts or eye witnesses regarding the same event.'

It is 'a fairly recent development in broadcast news format and public affairs programming' (Daramola: 2001). The American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), one of the national television companies in the United States of America, 'pioneered' this format of broadcasting news in 1979 when members of the US diplomatic corps

were held hostage by Iranian students during that country's Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Over the years, both news formats (the integrated news broadcast and the single-story news extra) have become the mainstay of most broadcasting houses such as the Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World, and BBC World Service, Sky News, Voice of America (VOA) and so on.

The importance and need for broadcast news interpretation makes Ganiyu (2000) posit that it is, . . . a step ahead of the news in that it seeks to give meaning and perspective to the news story' (p.179). He further states that the normal news broadcast or story, which is straight-forward and clinical in its reportage, gives the audience the facts of the story and leaves them to reach their own conclusion one way or another, the interpretation of news reports let them know the implication of the news event' (p.179)

Ighata (2011) citing Akagbosu and Omoruyi (2003, p.51) says the audience need to know that these reported events or facts do not stand on their own, and they must be related and be made meaningful to the day-to-day living of the audience'. In other words, the news analysis, commentary or interpretation is relating the news to the readers [or audience's] framework and experience', or 'putting meaning into the news' or in fact 'pointing up the significance of current events.

These analyses according to Ganiyu (2000, p.179) seek'. to provide pointers to the future by projecting, from the facts available to the reporter [experts and commentator], the consequences of today's actions tomorrow. 'News interpretation

and analysis takes the audience behind, ‘... the scenes of today’s actions, make sense and meaning out of facts and outline the importance of today’s actions.’

In trying to make sense and meaning out of today’s events via broadcast news analysis, Ewuola (2000, p.38) opines that, ‘...news analysis requires thorough knowledge [of the issues on the part of the reporter/journalist] or expert knowledge and complete understanding of the background of the subject in question.’

News analysis must be able to put a complex subject/event ‘into a simple and understandable language which readers, listeners (and viewers) from the common housewife to the professor will understand (Daramola: 2001). Where this is the case, meaning would have been inputted into the news’ for them to put into their everyday life activities. Akagbosu and Omoruyi (2003) say it is the business of the journalist to make the citizens know the likely implications and consequences of government action. The fact that news interpretation and analysis put meaning into the news helps point out the significance of current events, (Okwechime: 2009) says it is another way of humanizing the news’. Put in another way, while the straight news reportage and news broadcast informs the audience about events outside their immediate purview; the interpretative and analytical aspects of news... dig beyond the surface of news stories to explain the causes of occurrences, the motives of the dramatis personae and the significance of the events in the story to the [audience]’, (Ganiyu, 2000, p.179).

MacDougal, (cited in Ganiyu 2000, p.179), who is one of the earliest writers on the subject, sees news interpretation as, an objective judgment based on background knowledge of a situation, an appraisal of an event’, which is provided

by the thorough knowledge of the reporter, experts and analysts, -. intended to expatiate, elucidate and shed light on an event with a view to ensuring that an in-depth package is given to the viewer or listener to enhance his understanding of a particular event,' (Daramola: 2001).

In his bid to further make his case for the inclusion of news interpretation and commentary or analysis to news broadcasting, Daramola (2001, p.169). says that the information contained in a newscast only act, more often than not like the tip of an iceberg, [whereby], what would enhance the viewer or the listener's understanding of the facts or implication of an event must of necessity be analysed or commented upon, and [be] backed up by visuals in the case of television rather than making them straightforward news that are bare and bald official report'.

As a genre of news broadcasting, Daramola argues that news analysis and interpretation must have a firm place in radio as well as television programming. Confirming the firm place of news analysis and interpretation are media scholars and experts such as Tunji Oseni and Okigbo, who have not only argued for its need and inclusion in news broadcast but also that, news without commentaries or analyses is almost a disservice to the audience.'

According to Tunji Oseni cited by Daramola (2001) the news context can even be more important than the news itself because without it being put into context, a news story can get a different meaning from that intended. Daramola (2001) cited the example of the then Obasanjo administration's increase of the minimum wage and why (the need for) news analysis would have educated state governors then as well as the public that it was 'aimed at reducing poverty in our society' (p.170).

Ganiyu (2000) used the example of the murder of former Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Chief James Ajibola Ige, to once again emphasize the importance of news interpretation and analysis. He contends that news interpretation focuses on the ‘why’ of a news event. He says after a series of ‘whys’ as regards Bola Ige’s case, it was ascertained that his murder was connected to the political crisis prevailing in his state, Osun, then.

According to Ganiyu, the asking of more ‘whys’ at different times and levels threw up more answers that lent greater context to the murder. Series of questions were answered: why was he killed in his Ibadan home and not at Abuja where he lived and worked as a Minister or at Lagos where he had just arrived from seeing his sick brother or even at his country home of Esa-Oke, where he was due to spend the Christmas holiday? Ganiyu says that some analysts and commentators linked Ige’s murder ‘to the wider strategy of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) to capture the Yoruba states then controlled by the Alliance for Democracy (AD),’ As a result of the ‘whys’ being asked in order to dig deep into the story, more information was provided on the murder, thereby exposing the causes and motives behind every action taken by key actors in the aforementioned examples.

Nwanze (2000) contends that even some straight news lead to interpretative articles, news analysis and editorial comments. These interpretative chunks are labelled various names — articles, features, news analyses, backgrounders “think” pieces, situationers, editorials, digests, supplements, the “low”, spotlight or thumb—suckers.

The thrust in many newsrooms is towards the full-dimensional story; one in which the reader gets both an accurate account of an event or situation and enough additional information to ensure understanding. In this way, the reporter, to use a medical metaphor, is being allowed to both take the x-ray and read the film.

### **Criticism Against Interpretative Reporting**

Nwanze (2000) believed that interpretative writing has been criticized for opening the door to biased journalism. The critics argue that interpretative writing lacks objectivity since ideas are subjective. Implied in this criticism is the contention that specialised articles are, unmistakably, devoted to advocacy and characterized by signature authorising the writer's own conclusions and interpretation. Some critics are concerned that it is difficult to find journalists with the basic honesty and integrity who seek to write entirely objectively.

The problem of biased writing in our newspapers is a serious concern to well-meaning Nigerians. Even the news commentaries on radio and television current affairs programmes and documentaries contain much elements of bias. A clinical synthesis of the interpretative articles published in some of our national dailies confirms that some of our journalists are partisans in their treatment of feature stories.

Nwanze (2000) contends that sometimes what is supposed to be an interpretation of a complex situation turns out to be "muckraking" and "yellow journalism". In a bid to serve their supporters, and patrons, most Nigerian newspapers publish anything in the form of interpretative articles. This situation imposes a form of censorship when we consider that the news comments and interpretations which more than 50 million Nigerians receive every day are

determined by a handful of men and women responsible only to their corporate employers, and filtered through a handful of editors, columnists, feature writers, candidates, and commentators who admit to their own set of biases.

Interpretative or analytical reporting is not without its critics. Akagbosu and Omoruyi (2003, p.54) say that, some conservative journalists believe that the journalist can only interpret the news from a personal perspective which removes the objectivity and depersonalization which news reporting is all about.’ Ganiyu (2000:17) concurs: albeit, he puts it thus, ...[that] news analysis affords the reporter more opportunity to inject his knowledge, comment and opinion into the analysis. This also confirms the lack of depersonalisation which traditional straight news stories are imbued with. It is safe to say that this is a serious case against news interpretation and analysis. It did not end there. Joshi, (2001, p.18) notes that despite the fact that, now-a-days, mass communicators have realised their responsibility to evaluate and interpret events for the reader [or audience],’ ... the dysfunction of the interpretation and prescription by mass media can be that people may not get the depth and true picture of the event or issue and may not contribute to the development of an individual’s critical faculties.’

Nwanze (2000) argued that News interpretation, due to the fact that it lends itself to explanation and analysis, leads diametrically to “editorializing” which is “an injection of personal opinion to the straight news story”. But the interpretative writer must realize that nothing negates the tenets of journalism as bias which also aborts objectivity and truth.

Okwechime (2009) says as more journalists move away from straight news format into interpretative reporting; they tend to run into some potential hazards. These dangers include journalists being accused of partnership, pandering to ethnic sentiments or sometimes of embarking on a vendetta mission — in their effort to give perspectives to the news.’ Okwechime further states two major hazards when journalists try to give their perspectives to the news. They are ‘in the course of attracting attention or being entertaining, some interpretative writers [and commentators or analysts] run the risk of confusing “what is happening” with “what they devoutly wish may happen”. And ... opinions do sometimes slip in and editors fail to spot and kill them.’

A perfect example is the Andrew Gilligan affair. He was one of the former defence correspondents of the BBC: On May 29, 2003, during its news and current affairs programme *Today*’ on BBC Radio 4, Gilligan in an interview with one of the presenters John Humphreys said, ‘. . . we’ve been told by one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up that dossier that actually the government probably knew that {the} forty-five [minutes] figure was wrong even before it decided to put it in.

In other words, Downing Street [which is how the British government is called], in short, had ordered the dossier to be sexed up’ (Montgomery: 2007). According to Montgomery the *Today*’s Programme is, a prestigious news magazine programme which is broadcast daily, features a mix of news summaries, reports, features and mostly serious interviews with politicians’ (2007:132). Its presenters are experienced and respected journalists. [The *Today*’s Programme) has some claims to set the hard news agenda for the day’.

Nwanze (2000) noted that on a less spectacular level, however, a little bias is not, we think, too high a price to pay for an intelligent, informed and interpretative reporting. Professionally, working journalists are supposed to be trained to overcome their biases and present a balanced and an objective picture of the news as much as possible. On the other hand, problem of bias stems from the type of media ownership in Nigeria. Even where the journalist has a good intention to produce an objective piece, he is compelled by the editorial policy of his newspaper and broadcast station to slant the article to favour the owners. Because government and party-owned media have such control on the consciousness of the writers, (for he who calls the piper dictates the tune), It is suggest that governments should help set up the media, and appoint a Board to determine and execute the policies, it is only through this approach that journalists will be free to interpret news and situations objectively and make fair comments on issues of public interest without fear of losing their jobs. In other words, the control and management of media houses should be in the hands of the professionals. It is in this setting that the much-vaunted freedom of the press can be guaranteed.

Ighata (2011) observed that the government, under the office of its then Director of Strategy and Communications, issued a rebuttal of Gilligan's claim. It was acknowledged in the next hour of the programme, but Montgomery said the positions of the BBC and the government became entrenched'. The government accused the BBC of painting it in. a bad light to the public, by saying it was lying to the British people. The BBC responded by saying that the essential core of Gilligan's story was true by backing the broadcast as ' an important contribution to the public

debate about the justification for war.’ The government demanded a retraction from the BBC but the BBC refused.

The hazard or risk of reporters’/journalists’ opinions getting in the way of news analysis and interpretation especially in live broadcast is potentially more damaging and serious than its print counterpart. This might not be unconnected to the medium’s pervasiveness, dominance of mass communication and the immediacy of its message getting to its audience. Any slip in broadcasting let alone during its news interpretation can have dire consequences just like that of Andrew Gilligan in spite of his experience’. The moral of this case as Igata (2011) noted is important because of the domino-effect the Gilligan slipped statement had on the lives of those involved — personally, professionally and politically. Dr David Kelly, a respected government weapons scientist and one of Andrew Gilligan’s sources killed himself. An independent inquiry was set up as a direct response to the widespread concern of Dr Kelly’s death and was headed by Lord Hutton.

The Hutton’s report said that Dr Kelly took his own life and ‘found little fault with the government.’ The report, however, found Gilligan’s allegation unfounded, faulting the editorial practices and policy decisions of the BBC as regards that day’s broadcast, because it failed to ensure proper editorial control over the crucial broadcast’ the BBC failed to properly investigate the background of the Director of Strategy and Communications’ [Alastair Campbell’s] complaint, failed to check Gilligan’s notes — which did not support the wording of his broadcast

The slip in Gilligan’s broadcast was caused by him not following his script or notes despite his experience and knowing full well the sensitivity of the Iraq war

at the time and the evenly split sentiment both for and against it. Stovall (2006) says ‘even reporters doing live news spots often work from notes’ (p.205). Gilligan did not follow his note to the letter, as revealed by the Hutton’s report. The slip in Gilligan’s wordings in the live broadcast led to his resignation, the Director General and the Chair, Board of Governors’ resignations as well as Alastair Campbell’s from his government’s post.

Aside the high-profile case of Andrew Gilligan, there is also a problem with news analysis and commentary which Daramola (2001, p.170) calls ‘the superficiality of news reports and the emptiness of news analysis by stations ... ‘that carry it out. He also faults most commentaries and analysis done by broadcast stations as ‘profile based, political, non-committal or apologetic’.

Nwanze (2000) believe that all explanations or analysis must be seen as extension of news, not new developments. All those who have flair for writing must do so with utmost objectivity and impartiality. Partisanship — in editorial comment or interpretative articles, which knowingly detracts from the truth, does harm, aids violence on the best spirit of modern journalism. In the news columns, it is disservice of a fundamental principle of the profession.

These cogent criticisms against news interpretation and analysis, notwithstanding, authors and scholars have written to defend its firm place in news broadcast. Akagbosu and Omoruyi (2003) cited McDougal who remembers the defence put up for interpretative reporting by Laser Markel:

‘Those who object to interpretation say that a story should be confined to ‘facts. I asked, ‘What fact?... Take the most ‘objective’ of reporters. He collects fifty facts,

but of these facts he selects twelve which he considers important enough to include in his piece, leaving out thirty-eight. This is the first exercise in judgment. Then the reporter decides which of these twelve facts shall constitute the lead of the story. The particular fact he chooses get the emphasis which is important. This is the second exercise of judgment.

This exercise of judgment is a crucially important function of the press now-a-days, because it selects ‘the important news and issues for the attention of the people’ by not just providing them with information of event ‘but also providing information on the ultimate meaning and significance of these events’ Joshi (1999, p.12). Again, this exercise of judgment through the interpretation and analysis of event gives the audience added perspective to help an individual to know the viewpoints of various people, which help him to evaluate an issue,’ because a wide range of expertise is available to the individual to which he might not have an access through interpersonal communication’, (Joshi, 2003; pp.12-13).

If the press has a duty to reveal what is hidden, especially if it is in the interest of the public, Okigbo (1991) cited in Daramola (2001) admonishes journalists not to give convenient shelter to acts of folly or injustice, in the name of prudence’ by being deterred by criticisms against news analysis and interpretation and its potential hazards because it will be ‘a disservice to the nation and its inarticulate millions who look up to the press to inform them of, and help them form judgement on what is going on ‘rather than being left’ to reach their own conclusion one way or another’. Again, the interpretative function of the media helps to prevent ‘the over stimulation and over modification’ of issues and events reported to the inarticulate million. This

is because news interpretation usually focuses on stories that are controversial and may not be easily understood by the undiscerning reader or members of the audience. Thanks to the expertise of news commentators and analysts available to him, he might be able to reach an informed decision after hearing from all sides through the extra efforts made by the journalists to dig behind the news in order for the audience to make informed decision as a result of the added perspective available to him.

We conclude this aspect of the criticisms from Nwanze (2000) comments that, some of the columnist materials are devoted to advocacy, trying to slant the news in favour of an incumbent, a personality, a political party, etc. Most of the writings can easily pass for “canned” editorials and “encapsulated” features. Others are sponsored columnists who portray one kind of bias or the other in their writings. In a situation such as this, we should not blame the Nigerian news fans for complaining that they are not getting the value of their money when they buy a newspaper. To balance their information in an attempt to get at the truth, most fans have to buy two or three different newspapers a day and listen to news and commentaries, from different radio stations. It is unethical for journalists, through their articles and columns, to display contempt for the ability of the ordinary man to make intelligent appraisal of the stuff he receives. We should therefore try, relentlessly, to approach our assignments with a sense of fair play and, above all, with humanitarian concern.

### **Interpretation and Editorials**

Nwanze (2000) noted that Conventional or straight news is event-oriented. Interpretative news is process-oriented. It is typically about recent happenings, and

it is generally uninterpreted with minimal context, and unrelated to other situations and events.

In contrast, news interpretation is process-oriented. It is the explanation of conditions and situations in society that are related in broad and over time. Process-oriented news treatment can be found in some of our daily and weekly newspapers (feature pages), special reports and comments on radio and television as well as in magazine articles. He observed that sometimes, these articles are written by non-journalists (but yet experts in their fields). Some newspapers assign their staff to dig some particular events while others may commission outside persons to write the articles. These articles may be anything from politics, economy, social problems, cultural matters, science, literary, music, space exploration, natural and man-made disasters, international politics and diplomacy; energy, religion, tourism, discoveries and inventions, lifestyles, wars and other international crises; drought, famine, health and disease; human rights violations, agriculture, corruption, the services, life and death; horoscope, utilities and anything men think about, say or plan or do.

Nwanze contends that these and many others are bound to attract the thought and the pen of a dedicated and well-articulated interpretative writer. As a matter of practice, both conventional and interpretative reporting co-exist in many newspapers. It is crucial that the difference between interpretation and opinion is fully recognised. Lester Market of the *New York Times*, in the early 1960 — advocated three approaches in dealing with the news. First, the basic facts, second, the interpretation of those basic facts, third, comment on the basic facts.

It is to insulate opinion from news columns that the newspaper provides special columns for editorial comments. The expression of opinion should, therefore, be confined to the editorial column. Interpretation is an objective appraisal based on background knowledge of a situation as well as the analysis of primary and related facts.

Editorial opinion on the other hand is a subjective judgment or the opinion of a media organization on an issue. It is a definite taking of sides; it is likely to be exhortative. An interpretative writer explains while an editorial writer or a columnist advocates, condemns, praises or persuades.

### **Techniques of News Interpretation**

Nwanze (2000) opined that Interpretative writers can discharge their obligations in the following ways:

- a) Exploratory writing
- b) Interpretative features
- c) Background features
- d) Syndicated columns
- e) Commentaries
- f) News analysis
- g) Sidebars
- h) Survey pieces
- i) Personality profiles
- j) Reaction stories
- k) Investigative reporting

- l) Precision journalism
- m) “Reportage”
- n) Editorials.

Exploratory writing is the “unearthing and galvanizing of the facts around a given situation, people and institution, it may be termed “focus”, “spotlight”, “supplement” or “digest”.

Interpretative articles are forms of expose, giving the explanation of what the news is all about but not fully dealt with in straight news report e.g. “How to combat crimes in our society”.

Featurised news are those schedules of facts about something which actually has happened; of little importance to the public but of considerable potential reader interest, hence they are called “brightness”. They are usually brief and everly written as featurised articles. They are variously termed “offities” in the news. “Things that matter”, etc.

He noted that besides the above-named techniques which are self-explanatory and do need more clarification. Some still need, due to their technical nature. They are:

- i. Sidebars, commentaries
- ii. Precision journalism
- iii. Reaction story
- iv. Survey piece
- v. “Reportage”

- a) **Sidebar** is a story written besides the main story, giving further explanation to the main idea of the story in order to render it more meaningful. This is common with most news magazines. They are boxed story that provide depth to the main story of the day. Nwanze (2000) contends that news commentaries are very effective in giving meaning to a complex subject. It is a broadcast tool and normally follows immediately after the broadcast of the news bulletin. Take a situation where the president announces the year's budget or makes major foreign policy statements. To make these policies intelligible to the average reader or listener, informed political and economic analysis or article should be made to interview the president who made these policy statements to explain the details or the implications of these statements. The commentators should then analyse, interpret and appraise their "remarks" and make them available to their audience as commentaries or news Talks.
- b) **Precision Journalism**: it is the use of empirical data to humanize stories. Ukonu (2005) calls it 'new journalism'. According to him, "it is an attempt to shift from the strictures of the old methods of reporting- straight news, inverted pyramid, five Ws and H, specified lead formats; dead pan reporting and event-cantered nature of news reporting". He goes further to say that precision journalism helps with information that can hardly be acquired through direct observation or through press conferences. There is need for interpretation and evaluation of the

increasing amount of quantitative research that is flowing across news desks. He observes that precision journalism incorporates surveys (opinion polls), content analyses, experimentation and statistical tool. The essence he noted, is to use quantitative methods to convert events, characteristics, behaviour, or attitudes to number that can be analysed.

In its simplest form, precision journalism means “humanizing” and “concretizing” dry statistics—laden story with solid data and meaningful analysis (Nwanze 2000).

- c) **Reaction story** is a story generated by an issue of public interest and which, by its very nature, appears to be very “sensitive”. It can also be an answer or a reply to a given situation, statement made publicly or a peculiar development that is of high public concern e.g. the Dasuki gate, Saraki and the panama papers. The issue surrounding both personalities is the abuse of public office by corruptly enriching themselves and their cronies. Although they have not been proven guilty, the revelations from their trial raise questions about their stewardship in office.

Reaction stories or rejoinders are public debates on issues of the moment. Points of view in support of them are made, rebuttals are initiated, clarifications are made, suggestions of partisanship are common, revelations are made by unearthing hidden facts. This takes the form of “press battles”. In the long run, issues are roundly examined and proper public opinion focused on.

In reaction stories which are spontaneous and emotionally charged, facts not very known to the public are revealed and articulated in order to project a particular point of view in what may be tagged, ‘Get the facts straight’, “The truth you don’t know”, “The heart of the matter’ etc. A recent case of reaction story emanated from the just concluded Rivers rerun election, the APC in the state alleged that the PDP was behind the killings in the state to scare their supporters. However, in a press conference attended by many media organizations and a later interview with *Channels Television* the Governor noted that the violence and events that led to the cancellation of the election in 8 local governments were orchestrated by the attempt of the former Governor of the State, Rotimi Amaechi, with the support of military personnel and INEC officials to subvert the will of the people. Rotimi Amaechi reacted with the statement my “Rivers story”.

- d) **Survey piece:** Nwanze (2000) sees survey as a pre-event or post-event analysis of a situation involving explanation, analysis, collation of data and prediction or apportioning of blames. Survey pieces can be done on such issues as the national budget, sporting events, general elections, summit, meetings of heads of States, important international conferences, etc. In survey pieces, the details and other side attractions surrounding an issue or a situation are given and examined in view of apparent evidence and positive stand taken or recommended. Example: ‘Nigeria withdrawing from the Commonwealth’. Here the merits and the demerits

are highlighted to enable the public see reason in the opinion they held.

Others are the British and its reactions to the situations in Nigeria.

- e) **“Reportage”** means in-depth reporting. It is interpretative reporting — telling the news and giving the other details surrounding it. It is news analysis or giving background information. It is adding the factor of thought and common sense to straight news treatment. Modern journalism should be an embodiment of “Reportage”, stating the cause, course, trends and consequences of events.

### **Strategies for Gathering Information**

Nwanze (2000) noted that interpretative writers have four main techniques for gathering information. These are:

- i. Direct observation of an event, that is being a participant observer, or he can observe the news situation indirectly through other eye - witnesses.
- ii. Search of primary and secondary documents: Such as archival materials, morgue clippings, police blotters, and reference works. The investigator should search all relevant public records for the information needed. These are more related to investigative reporting.
- iii. The receipt of unsolicited information via this from government, press agents or “friends” of the media.
- iv. Direct interviewing of people who are involved or those concerned with or informed about news events. The information obtained from interviews should be carefully evaluated to avoid mistakes. In doing this, reporters would do well to remember that human beings are prone to selective recall,

and that memory often erodes at an alarming rate. By the same token, psychological studies indicate that people have selective perception, that is, they note only take parts of an event, and the “nothings” are conditional to what we expect and what we are.

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## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **LEGAL ASPECTS OF INVESTIGATIVE AND INTERPRETATIVE JOURNALISM**

#### **Introduction**

The media in any country are not isolated from the laws which guide public communication and human relationship. Although the constitution provides for the freedom of expression and the obligation of the mass media to society, it did not in any way isolate the media from the laws of the land. The aspect of law that guides journalism practice is referred to as press or media law.

Ordinarily, law according to Okoye (2007, p. 4) refers to the set of rules established by nature or human authorities, to regulate natural phenomena or human behaviours, within a given community or country. In relation to the mass media, media laws are those set of rules recognized by the state which stipulates the standard of practice and by which public communication must be conducted. The essence of the law is not to gag the press but to prevent the press from abusing its privilege as the voice and watchdog of the society and to prevent the press from trampling on the fundamental human rights of citizens.

What makes journalism a profession is the presence of certain laws which the reporter must hold in high esteem. It is the law that gives the profession excellence and credibility. A reporter who seeks the truth knows he or she is on the side of the law irrespective of what people do to malign him or her. The reporter will assure confidence the more when he or she follows the laid down rules for seeking the truth. The law is not just to guide the journalist, it becomes the protector of the journalist.

A knowledge of the law guiding journalistic writing is therefore imperative for the investigative and interpretative writer. The law will restrict the reporter's excesses and also provide the leeway for him or her to gather facts without fear. The following media laws are constitutionally recognized to regulate journalism.

### **Official Secrets Act**

The official secret Act became part of the Nigerian laws in 1962. The law was enacted to protect certain official documents from getting to the public. Thus, government document classified as official secret or confidential must not be disclosed to the public unless there is an authorization to that effect.

Ufouphu – Biri (2006, p. 139) observes that section 1(1) of the Act states that “a person who transmits any classified matter to a person to whom he is not authorized on behalf of the government to transmit it, or who obtains, reproduces or retains any classified matter, which he is not authorized on behalf of the government to obtain, is guilty of an offence.

Section 2 of the Act states inter-alia that; “any person who, for any purpose prejudicial to this section of the law of Nigeria.

- a. Enters or is in the vicinity of or inspects a protected place
- b. Photographs, sketches, or in any other manner whatsoever, makes a record of the description of anything situated in a protected place; or
- c. Obstructs, misleads or otherwise interferes with a person engaged in guarding a protected place; or sketch, plan, model, or document relating to anything situated in a protected place shall be guilty of an offence.

Elias cited in Nwabueze, (2005, p.177) defines a protected place within the meaning of the official secret Act as

Naval, military, or air force establishment in Nigeria used for or in connection with the production, storage, or testing by or on behalf of government, of equipment designed or adopted for defence purpose; and any area in Nigeria or elsewhere for a time being designated by an order made by the minister as being an area from which should be excluded in the interest of security of Nigeria.

The essence of the Official Secret Act is to prevent the disclosure or publication of government information. It is this law that government officials hide to perpetrate fraud against the people. This law helps to maintain blind integrity and loyalty from the people. The reporter must take cognisance of this in accessing information from places designated as official secret.

### **Defamation**

Defamation is the communication of a statement that reduces the image of a person, group, product before the right-thinking members of the public. Such a statement may be factual or implied. Therefore, any statement made in respect of another person that reduces the image of the person to ridicule, hatred and humiliation is defamatory. Defamatory statement can either be in form of libel or slander. A defamatory statement or matter is libellous when it appears in permanent form. That is, the statement is in a written form. Such write-ups can appear in newspapers, magazines, broadcast news bulletins, letters, pictures and cartoons – once a defamatory statement is written, it makes the case actionable. The plaintiff

i.e. the person complaining of being defamed does not need to prove the damage done to his person.

There are two categories of libel; civil and criminal libel. A civil libel is one which consist of a wrongful publication of a defamatory statement against a person. Criminal libel on the other hand, one published statement aimed at creating upheavals or public disorder.

For a defamatory statement that is libellous in nature to stand, the following conditions must be established.

- The published material must contain words; pictures, innuendos and motives that are defamatory
- The material must be published such that more than one person must have read it.
- The published material must be injurious to the complainant
- The material content is referring to the plaintiff.

A defamatory statement in a spoken or non-permanent form is slander. The difficulty in slander is that it is often difficult to prove. Nevertheless, the same conditions for libel apply here.

When a reporter is faced with a case of defamation, there are possible defences open to the reporter:

- **Privilege**

There are two types of privileges; absolute privilege and qualified privilege. Absolute privilege refers to statement made under certain circumstances or occasions which may be defamatory in nature but cannot serve as basis for action against

defamation of character. Some of such statements are: statements made in parliament by the senate president, speaker of the House of Representatives or Assembly, statements made in court or judicial proceedings, official state communications and communication between solicitors and their clients.

Qualified privilege is the privilege accorded a qualified person to present an account of an incident or event that may appear defamatory. When a journalist gives a fair and accurate reports of the daily outcome of parliament and proceedings or judicial panel of enquiry he or she cannot be sued for defamation if the alleged defamatory statements are made contemporaneously.

Ufouphu-Biri (2006, p. 130) noted that a defendant who pleads qualified privilege must establish the following:

- That he has a duty to make the statement;
- That the third party to whom the statement was made has a corresponding duty to receive the statement;
- That he has not been actuated by malice.
- **Fair Comment**

A statement made in good faith without malicious intent but in the public interest is referred to as fair comment. Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2011, p. 136) state the following conditions for fair comment to be established;

- The matter must be of public interest, like affairs of government, administration of justice, management of public institutions, church matters etc
- The statement must be an opinion, not an assertion of fact;

- The statement must be based on facts truly stated;
- The comment must be honestly made; and
- The comment must not be actuated by express malice.

- **The Death of the Plaintiff**

The death of a plaintiff in a case of defamation naturally ends the case since his heirs or successors in titles cannot claim reputation in person for the dead. Therefore, when the plaintiff dies, the defamatory action instituted also dies with him.

- **Res Judicata**

A case that has already been decided by a court of competent jurisdiction cannot be the same court a plaintiff will file for adjudication, since the matter has been decided. He can appeal the judgment but not to file the same case in a court of equal status to the one where the issue was initially decided.

- **Truth**

Where a journalist is able to establish the facts in a statement or that the defamatory words are true, the defendant will not be liable.

- **Status Barred**

The time limit to which an action can be instituted in a defamatory case. When action did not commence within six months of the publication, the plaintiff has no case to plead. In the same vein, if it is a case of slander, it must be instituted within three months.

- **Consent**

This is a situation where the plaintiff consent to a publication only to turn around to institute an action. For instance, if an individual invites a reporter for interview, it would be inappropriate to file for defamation when there is a written consent between both parties. In law, it is called *volenti-non-fit-injuria*.

### **Contempt of Court**

Any publication or broadcast which is capable of interfering with the course of justice is contemptuous matters pending in court are usually sub-judicial. To make comments about the case or the judge(s) handling of the case amount to contempt. It could also be in form of the journalist taking photographs of the judge in court, the premises of the court without formal approval, inaccurate report on the proceedings of a court also amount to contempt of court.

Contempt of court can be in two forms;

- a. **Contempt – infalie – curia:** it is the type of contempt committed directly within the premises of a court. The acts under this ranges from; disturbing court proceedings, refusal to take oath, answer questions in interrogation, taking photographs during court sessions or proceedings without due authorization. The essence of this provision is to provide orderliness in the courts and stop litigants from using abusive language or exhibiting violent behaviour. Thus, a journalist who does the following will be guilty of contempt;
  - Taking photographs in the court room or within the premises of the court without the permission of the court.
  - Refusal to testify for the purpose of disclosing the source of news; and

- Using a tape recorder in the court without permission
- b. **Contempt-ex-facie-cyria:** This refers to the contempt committed outside the premises of the court. The following will stand as evidence against this type of contempt.
  - Publication that has the capacity to bring down the reputation of a judge to question.
  - Publication that is sub-judicial to a fair trial
  - Any act that would interfere with the duties of litigants connected with the proceedings of a court.

Contempt of court can also be civil contempt and criminal contempt. Civil contempt emanates from the refusal of a person to obey a court judgment or ruling. Criminal contempt is an action considered to be injurious to the court. This is like contempt infacie-curra.

Therefore, every reporter needs to understand this law to avoid facing contempt proceedings. The publication of a photograph of a court, a judge and comments made in a case does not suggest the norm. Nevertheless, a reporter can report the proceedings of a court when he has the permission to do so.

### **Sedition**

Sedition is the promotion of hatred and rebellion against the state. This could be in form of speech, protest and actions considered by legal experts to tend towards instigating the people against constitutional order. It is a revolt against the government. This does not mean that protest against a policy of government amount to sedition. Thus, the publication of materials that suggest the overthrow of

constituted authority is seditious. Every form of communication targeted at inciting the people to action is seditious in nature. In 2006, Gbenga Aruleba, presenter of ‘focus Nigeria’ on AIT and the aviation correspondent for *Daily Independent* newspaper, Mr. Durojaiye were arrested by SSS men shortly after the programme on the grounds that the purchased presidential jet sounded like a ‘Tokubo’ (second hand) one when it took off at the airport.

Section 50 of the Nigeria criminal code, cited in Nwabueze (2005, p. 186) described a seditious intention as an intention;

To bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against the person of the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, or the governor of a state or the government of the federation, or against the administration of justice in Nigeria, or

- To incite Nigerians or other inhabitants of Nigeria to attempt to procure the alteration, otherwise than by lawful means, of any other matter as established by Nigeria law, or
- To promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between classes of the population of Nigeria, or
- To raise discontent or disaffection among Nigerians or other inhabitants of Nigeria.

What is obvious from the material content is that seditious publication tends towards incitement, violence, and mobilization of the citizens against the state.

However, the provision of section 50 sub-section 2, items I – IV of the criminal code defines what does not constitute sedition, if the publication intends to achieve the following:

- Show that the president or governor was misled or mistaken in any measure in the federation or state as the case may be;
- To point out errors or defects in the government or constitution of Nigeria or of any region as by law established or in legislation or in the administration of justice with a view to remedying such errors;
- To persuade the citizens to procure by lawful means, the attraction of any matter in Nigeria as by laws established; and
- To point out with a view to removing any matter, which is producing or having the tendency to produce feeling of ill-will and enmity between different classes of people or the population of Nigeria.
- In addition to the above, where the consent of the Attorney General of the federation or state is not sought, a seditious offence cannot be instituted.
- Where the offence is not instituted or handled within six months from the date the offence was committed, the proceeding cannot stand for lapse of time.
- In the case of a seditious offence that is spoken, there shall be no conviction unless the testimonies of the witnesses are corroborated.

Despite these provisions, the reporter should take extra measure to avoid being trapped. Since the judge can weigh a material content to establish seditious intent. In the case of Gbenga Aruleba and Durojaiye earlier mentioned, the judge absolved Gbenga Aruleba of culpability but pressed a charge against Mr. Durojaiye.

### **The Law of Privacy**

The constitution guarantees the fundamental right of the citizens to private life. It is the right of the individual to be free from the prying eyes of the camera. Individual are guaranteed the right to be free from media publicity or probe into the private life of the individual. Section 37 of the 1999 constitution state inter-alia “the privacy of citizens, their homes, correspondences, telephone conversations and telegraphic communication is hereby guaranteed and protected”. Therefore, journalists need to restrain themselves from publicizing the private affairs of individuals particular when such publication subjects the individuals to ridicule or demeaning their status.

Nevertheless, public figures and celebrities cannot claim right to privacy since their private life cannot be separated from their public life. The convert here, is that publication of false statements about the private life of any individual cannot stand the test of time or immunity from prosecution.

In summary, the invasion of privacy rests in these four cardinal points;

- i. The appropriation of someone’s picture or name or whatever represents him without prior consent or approval.
- ii. The publication of the health status, finance, love relationship, family secrets which are considered confidential or private information about the person without his consent.
- iii. Intrusion into someone’s private life through eavesdropping, secret recording of his activities, wiretapping, secret examination of his private documents which are confidential to him without the owner’s consent.

- iv. Publication of false and exaggerated information about a person, which may have the elements of truth but over-blown beyond proportion to paint the person in bad light.

### **Proof of Invasion of Privacy**

An individual can press for the violation of this right to privacy when these facts are established by the individual.

- i. The individual sees the publication to be damaging or offensive to the complainant and is understood by right thinking members of the society to be so.
- ii. The accused person is at fault.
- iii. That the publisher or writer of the story knew it to be offensive but disregarded the truth
- iv. That the publication of the matter was maliciously done
- v. That the matter or issue was published without written clearance of the person involved.

### **Defences for Invasion of Privacy**

The possible defences for invasion of privacy according to Nwabueze (2005, p. 179) are:

- That we had the written consent of the person involved (Volents non fit injura) i.e. one cannot plead invasion of privacy if he permitted the action);
- That the plaintiff is a public figure;
- That the matter is of public interest;

- That the action took place in a public place.

Apart from these defences suggested by Nwabueze, Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2011) add:

- News worthiness
- Permanent publication: the right to privacy can only be violated by permanent publication and not by hearsay or rumours.

### **Copy Right Law**

Every creator of an intellectual property has a right to derive the commercial benefits of his or her work. In addition, the creator exercises a degree of control in how or the extent to which third parties can use the work. Third parties who use an intellectual work without permission from the copyright owner commit an offence. In essence copyright is concerned with the property rights of intellectual creators to exercise control over their works that have been produced in a tangible form. In other words, it is the right to claim ownership of a creative work with all the benefits.

Decree No. 47 of 1988 now an act, regulates the practice of copyright in Nigeria. It is managed by the Nigerian Copyright Commission. The Act stipulates works that are protected by copyright such as, films, literary works, musical works, artistic works, cinematography, sound recordings and broadcasts. It is instructive to state here that not all works in permanent form constitute copyright, news, titles (of books, journals, newspapers, films, cartoons, graffities), pen name, works use for academic scholarship for the purpose of review, criticism, citation but with due acknowledgement of the author.

Thus, the right to copy, distribute and adapt a creative work falls under copyright. The question is, does every creative work has to be registered before one can claim copyright? In most countries, copyright stands once the work appears in permanent form and does not need to be registered.

According to Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2011, p. 161) citing World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), “the purpose of copyright is twofold, to encourage a dynamic culture, while returning value to creators, so that they can lead a dignified economic existence and to provide widespread, affordable access to contents for the public”.

The unfortunate thing is that intellectual creators in this part of the world do not get the benefits of their work. A man writes a book just before he sells few copies, another criminal somewhere reproduces the book and starts selling them without permission from the copyright owner. The question is, what is responsible for the poor level of intellectual property implementation in Nigeria?

Oyeshina (2010) cited in Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2011, p. 162 – 165) are:

1. Lack of popular support or public consultation
2. Inadequate cost – benefit analysis
3. Lack of public awareness
4. Lack of inclusion of the course in the law school curriculum
5. Corruption and weak custom enforcement
6. Delays in the judicial enforcement

The relevance of these laws to investigative journalism is that it will help the reporter to be at alert in terms of materials that would form part of his report. This knowledge

would enable the reporter to double check materials, slides, videos that need express permission before they are published or broadcast.

### **Shield Law or Protecting News Sources**

What has become shield law today is actually a judicial notice of the landmark case between Tony Momoh vs Senate and Innocent Adikwu vs Federal House of Representatives in 1980. In no place in the Amended 1999 constitution is reference made to protection of news sources. However, in the Freedom of Information Act, of 2011 section 27 sub-section 2 and 3, talks about protection of news sources as a professional obligation. The code of ethics of the Nigeria Union of Journalists stated in section (d) items i or ii that; “a journalist should observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the sources of information obtained in confidence. A journalist should not breach an agreement with a source of information obtained as “off-record or as “back ground information”.

What is therefore assumed as shield law is more of an ethical issue, but the landmark judgment in the two cases cited above may serve as basis for judicial notice which many communication scholars have referred to as shield law. Fogom and Acqua – Dadzie (1987, p. 64-65) cited in Nwabueze (2005, p. 188) caption the waiting of the judgment.

It must be remembered at all times that:

A free press is one of the pillars of the freedom in this country as indeed in any other democratic society. A free press reports matters of general public importance and cannot, in law, be under an obligation, save in

exceptional circumstances to disclose the identity of the persons who supply it with information appearing in its reports... in respect of the press, the editors or reporter's constitutional right to a confidential relationship with his source stems from that constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and expression. If the right does not exist or is not protected by the courts when contravened, the press's source of information would dry up and public would be deprived of being informed of many matters of great public importance. This must not be allowed to happen in a free and democratic society.

Shield law is therefore an ethical orientation and landmark decision recognized by law that seeks protection for the journalist from being forced to disclose confidential information volunteered or disclosed by sources. The essence of this protection is to build confidence between reporters and whistle blowers or individuals who disclosed certain information. One of the many reasons why many Nigerians don't like talking to the press in investigative matters is the fear that they will be arrested or forced to appear in court to defend their own version of a testimony that they volunteered. Thus, where the reporter and the source do not enjoy this protection, journalism will suffer in news gathering and objectivity. When news sources are assured of the sort of protection, they will enjoy they will not be afraid to say all that they knew about a matter. There are some sources who are not afraid of being quoted, such sources are not what the protecting news sources seeks to uphold. Asemah (2011) noted that there are situations in which an anonymous source might be necessary and that such

sources can be critical and invaluable, especially in the case of major breaking stories.

In whatever circumstances, reporters do not disclose their sources of news. This is why the succeeding military juntas in Nigeria sentenced many journalists to imprisonment for failing to disclose the sources of their reports. When a source chooses to remain anonymous, the reporter has a corresponding responsibility to report the source as anonymous. In Tony Momoh versus Senate, the crux of the matter that ended in court was a report that some senators were lobbying for constitutional projects. He was summoned to the floor of the house to disclose the source of the information but he refused, hence he resorted to the court to enforce his professional obligation to protect his sources of news and information.

When news sources and reporters enjoy protection, it will serve journalism well to these extents;

- Build confidence between reporters and news sources.
- Encourage whistle blowers which can help in bringing about accountability or order in public service.
- The facts and information needed by reporters to write comprehensive reports will not be lacking.
- News flow become seamless since news volunteers are always willing to provide information.
- Enhance the profession of journalism, since the reporters know the implication of not protecting his or her news sources.

- Avoid unnecessary litigation between the news media, the government and the public.

### **Obscene and Indecent Publication**

Obscene and indecent publication Act of 1961 seeks to promote morals, ethics, good taste, public conscience and decency in materials put out for public consumption. The Act makes it a punishable offence to publish pornographic materials, violent scenes, promotion of drugs, filthy materials, materials with vulgar language and those that are distasteful to modesty and decency.

Ufuophu – Biri (2006, p. 138) therefore defines obscenity as, “any publication, which has the tendency to deprave and corrupt those who are likely to read, see or hear it, or corrupt public morals or outrage, public decency”. The Act seeks to protect children from indecent exposure. Specifically, it is against materials that tend to corrupt the minds of children or make them form opinions that crime, deviance, indecency, immorality are acts acceptable to society. One-way media organizations avoid falling fowl of the law is the rating of films or certain broadcast programs as not suitable for viewers below certain ages.

The exhibition or broadcast of crime with blood, killings and other criminal activities that touches the mind require the presenter to call for the viewers discretion. This is to avoid the shock that some people experience when they are exposed to certain horrible pictures or images that touch the mind.

In spite of the noble ideals which the act seeks to promote, advocate of the freedom of expression are opposed to the act. Nevertheless, their opposition should not give room for people to promote obscenity and indecency.

The ombudsman of broadcasting in Nigeria has sanctioned many radio and TV stations for not adhering to the tenets of this act particularly in the exhibition of photographs and the use of immodest language in broadcast. The investigative reporter stands the risk of facing sanctions if indecent language and photographs are used in presenting obscure acts. However, there is a provision to this. When alleged criminals are arrested, media organizations often present the silhouette of their faces to avoid labelling them as criminal when the veracity of the crime has not been concluded. Others often use black tapes to cover the sensitive parts of the known body to avoid presenting totally nude pictures to the public. This measure helps to presents stories in a more decent manner without raising public outcry or animosity against such.

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Ufouphu – Biri, E. (2006). The Act of News Reporting. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **ETHICS OF INVESTIGATIVE AND INTERPRETATIVE JOURNALISM**

#### **Introduction**

Our focus in this chapter is to examine how ethics affects the journalist conduct. Essentially, we conceive people to be ethical based on their level of morality. This is particularly true for the journalism profession. In journalism, there are moral principles that guide journalists in the conduct of their activities. Every true professional journalist is expected to make these principles an internal creed. Unlike law that has the force of enforcement, ethics have no legal force, they are at best subject to the level of the practitioner's orientation. Nevertheless, there are internal measures employed by the profession's unity of journalist to sanction defaulters. However, not much has been done in Nigeria in this regard. Since ethics are voluntarily obeyed, it is often difficult to press charges against violators.

It is important to state here that the ethics of journalism arose as a remonstrance against a free and unregulated press. In the liberation press when yellow journalism thrived considerably, the press abused its freedom. Ojobor (2002, p. 10-11) described the state of the press at the time;

The libertarian era afforded the press so much unrestrained freedom that it became careless and irresponsible thereby taking its freedom for granted. The result of that free-marked was yellow journalism typified by character assassination and sensationalism. Press irresponsibility became the order of the day. Someone needed to call the press back to order because the expected access to the media by individuals was not there, informational needs were

not served, and new problems were being created by radio and television. There was therefore an urgent need for some kind of public control to ensure media accountability.

Efforts made in addressing the pitfalls of the press led to the emergence of the canons of journalism and later codes of ethics for practitioners.

What then do we understand by the concept ethics? From a normative sense, it is concern about what is good or bad in relation to a particular society. The Macmillan Family Encyclopaedia (1990) cited in Sambe and Ikoni (2004) defines ethics as the systematic study of the principles and methods for distinguishing right from wrong and good and bad. It considers the impetus to ethical enquiry to be uncertainty and disagreement over what has to be done. The need to pre-empt the consequences of an action that earlier seemed perfectly acceptable; and the awareness of the difficulties of agreement on norms and practices in a heterogenous society.

The implications of this definition are that the concept has no universally acceptable definition, the changing nature of society suggests the need to always question what has always been good or bad and what should constitute ethics in a multi-ethnic society. The notion of ethics is sometimes seen as a systematic code of moral principles on which human actions are based. It is also seen as the morals that govern the behaviour of the member of a society. However, Odunewu (2000) observed that there is a difference between morality and ethics, he noted that morality refers to behaviour that is acceptable, ethics on the other hand deals with the criteria by which decisions about right and wrong are made.

The import of this assertion lies in the ideological position of the proponent. There are ethicists who believe stealing from the rich to give to the poor is not a bad idea since the intention serves the good of humanity. What you must understand from Odunewu explanation is that morality is what the society considers good for its members, however, morality in one society may differ from another. Thus, when you apply yourself into justifying why your actions are right or when people think your actions are wrong, you are in the realm of ethics. In other words, ethics is the systematic study of the codes or principles of what is right or wrong.

Ethics have no universal application. It varies from one profession to another. Our concern however, is journalistic ethics especially how it affects the investigative and interpretative journalist.

### **Ethics of Journalism**

As noted earlier, that the unregulated freedom enjoyed by the press in the rein of libertarianism gave birth to a press that was irresponsible. The measure adopted to address the problems of the era led to the setting up of commissions to recommend the best codes for practitioners. The earliest attempt in this direction was canons of journalism adopted by the American society of newspaper editors in 1923. The 1952 code of ethics developed by the United Nation sub-commission on information. Robert Hutchins Commission of 1947, which recommended “the public right to know”, “the responsibility of the press”. The MacBride Commission (1981) which recommended the adoption of the true nature of ethics, codes of professional ethics in Mass Communication to be adopted by media professionals without government.

Journalistic ethics are the principles and norms that guide journalists in making moral decisions on how best to cover and report events. Imagine a journalism culture with regulations, the result will be vulgarity, hate writing, ethnic war, sensationalism and unmitigated abuses.

Ethics of journalism according to Ufouphu-Biri (2006, p. 118) referred to “those rules of conduct that guide the journalist in the practice of his profession”. Thus, ethical codes are developed to prevent practitioners from taking unfair advantage over the public in their reporting decisions.

Okwechime (2009, p. 9) provides the reasons for ethics as:

1. As a means of social control – they define acceptable professional conduct for new members and help to keep old members in check.
2. To prevent control and interference by the government or society through its agencies
3. To protect the group which upholds these ethical standards and the public
4. To promote higher standards of professional conduct

Merill and Lowenstein (1979) also provided insight into the value of ethics in journalism. According to them;

Ethics- at least a concern for ethics, instils in the journalist a continuing sensitivity to his every action, to his every decision, it integrates or blends with total search for truth, and it gives him greater awareness of himself or others of the consequences of interpersonal relations. A concern with ethics is the key plank in any journalistic platform, it is the ‘alpha and omega of public communication.

Ethics of journalism in addition to the positions canvassed by the above scholars help in the following regard.

- Helps to promote journalism standards
- Promotes public taste of decency and morality
- Helps the practitioner to take the best decision when confronted by two extreme positions.
- Promotes the information requirement of a true democratic society
- It is a peep into the level of professionalism inherent in media practice.

The code of ethics operational today was the efforts of different meetings at the international level held between 1978 to 1993. The consultative meetings were held under the umbrella of UNESCO with the following organizations participating; International Organizational of Journalist (IOJ), International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), International Catholic Union of Press (UCIP), Latin American Federation of Journalists (FELAP), Federation of Arab Journalist (FAJ), Union of African Journalist (UAJ), and Confederation of Asian Journalists (CAJ)

The following were the 10 codes put out by the committee:

1. People's right to true information
2. The journalist's dedication to objective reality
3. The journalist's social responsibility
4. The journalist's professional integrity
5. Public access and participation
6. Respect for privacy and human dignity
7. Respect for public interest

8. Respect for universal values and diversity of cultures
9. Elimination of war and other great evils confronting humanity
10. Promotion of a New World Information and Communication Order

However, the codes of journalism spelt out in the Nigerian Press Organization (NPC) code are:

1. That the public is entitled to the truth and that only correct information can form the basis for sound journalism and ensure the confidence of the people.
2. That it is the moral duty of every journalist to have respect for the truth and to publish or prepare for publication only the truth to the best of his knowledge
3. That it is the duty of the journalist to publish only facts; never to suppress such facts as he knows, never to falsify either to suit his own purposes or any other purposes.
4. That it is the duty of the journalist to refuse any reward for publishing or suppressing news and comments, other than salary and allowances legitimately earned in the discharge of his professional duties.
5. That the journalist shall employ all legitimate means in the collection of news and he shall defend at all times the right to free access, provided that due regard is paid to the privacy of individuals.
6. That once information has been collected and published, the journalist shall observe the universally accepted principle of secrecy and shall not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.
7. That it is the duty of the journalist to regard plagiarism as unethical.

8. That it is the duty of every journalist to correct any published information found to be incorrect.

### **Codes of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists (1998, Ilorin Declaration)**

The codes of ethics for the Nigerian journalist aptly referred to as Ilorin 1998 declaration provides the code that currently guide the practice of journalism. It states as follows:

#### **Preamble**

Journalism entails a high degree of public trust. To earn and maintain this trust, it is morally imperative for every journalist and every news medium to observe the highest professional and ethical standards. In the exercise of these duties, a journalist should always have regard for the public interest. Truth is the cornerstone of journalism and every journalist should strive diligently to ascertain the truth of every event. Conscious of the responsibilities and duties of journalists as purveyors of information, we, Nigerian journalists give to ourselves this code of ethics. It is the duty of every journalist to observe its provisions.

- a. Editorial independence: Decisions concerning the content of news should be the responsibility of a professional journalist.
- b. Accuracy and fairness:
  - i. The public has the right to know. Factual, accurate, balanced and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and the basis of earning public trust and confidence.
  - ii. A journalist should refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information. Where such information has been inadequately

published, prompt correction should be made. A journalist must hold the right of reply as a cardinal rule of practice.

- iii. In the course of his duties, a journalist should strive to separate facts from conjecture and comment.

C. privacy: As a general rule, a journalist should respect the privacy of individuals and their families unless it affects interest.

- i. information on the private life of an individual or his family should be published if it impinges on public interest.
- ii. publishing such information about an individual an individual as mentioned above should be deemed justifiable only if it is directed at:
  - Exposing crime or serious misdemeanour.
  - Exposing anti-social conduct.
  - Protecting public health, morality and safety: and
  - Preventing the public being misled by some statements or actions of the individual concerned.

D. Privilege/ Non-Disclosure

- i. A journalist should observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.
- ii. A journalist should not breach an agreement with a source of information obtained as “off-record” or as “background information”.

E. Decency:

- i. A journalist should dress and comport himself in a manner that conforms to public taste.
  - ii. A journalist should refrain from using offensive, abusive or vulgar language.
  - iii. A journalist should not present lurid details, either in words or picture of violence, sexual acts and abhorrent or horrid scenes.
  - iv. In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries should be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion.
  - v. Unless it is in the furtherance of the public's right to know, a journalist should generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime.
- F. Discrimination: a journalist should refrain from making pejorative reference to a person's ethnic group, sex or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.
- G. Reward and Gratification
- i. A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribes, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information.
  - ii. To demand payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as a fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.
- H. Violence: A journalist should not present or report acts of violence, armed robberies, terrorist activities or vulgar display of wealth in a manner that glorifies such acts in the eyes of the public.
- I. Children and minors: A journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning

sexual offences, crimes and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witnesses or defendants.

- J. Access to information: A journalist should strive to employ open and honest means in the gathering of information. Exceptional methods may be employed only when the public interest is at stake.
- K. Public Interest: A journalist should strive to enhance national unity and public good.
- L. Social Responsibility: A journalist should promote universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equity, peace and international understanding.
- M. Plagiarism A journalist should not copy wholesale or part, other people's work without attribution and consent.
- N. Copyright:
  - i. Where a journalist reproduces a work, be it in print, broadcast, artwork or designs, proper acknowledgement should be accorded the author.
  - ii. A journalist should abide by all rules of copyright, established by national and international laws and conventions.
- O. Press Freedom and Responsibility: A journalist should strive at all times to enhance press freedom and responsibility.

### **Ethical Tenets or Standards of Journalism**

There are standard principles which are considered appropriate in the practice of journalism the world over. Josephson institute (2003) cited in Okoye (2007, p. 10-11) identified the principles as:

1. Honesty

2. Integrity
3. Promise – keeping
4. Fidelity
5. Fairness
6. Caring for others
7. Respect for others
8. Responsible citizenship
9. Pursuit of excellence
10. Accountability

**Honesty:** The act of saying the truth always. It is the capacity of the journalist to hold on to what is based on fact. Truth is a virtue that a reporter can wear as a garment and promote always. Traber and Davies (1991) cited in Okunna (1995, p. 41) noted that “an inherent part of the general journalistic ethic is a commitment to telling the truth”. Ilorin declaration; states that “truth is the cornerstone of good journalism and every journalist should strive diligently to ascertain the truth of every event.

**Integrity:** To be free from guilt or stain. To have an unblemished record of wrong in the conduct of one’s affairs as a journalist. Integrity helps the reporter not to succumb to the pressures of bribe, blackmail and slanting stories to favour certain interest.

**Promise keeping:** To keep to one’s word, keeping to time and doing your job as a journalist.

**Fidelity:** faithfulness to the tenets of the profession and your beliefs

**Fairness:** to treat two persons in a case equally, the ability to report the account of an event objectively without taking side with a party, it is synonymous with balance

**Caring for others:** showing human kindness and a sense of generosity to people. This is what a reporter can do by drawing public attention to the plight of those suffering, homeless and hungry. Putting oneself in the position of others.

**Respect for Others:** It is a mark of humility. Giving regard to whom it is due, treating others fairly without looking down on them.

**Responsible citizenship:** Keeping to the rules and regulations that guide the media organization, state or country where the reporter works, fulfilling your obligation as a citizen by paying your tax, register to vote, maintaining traffic rules, obedience to constituted authority and striving for good neighbourliness and friendship.

**Pursuit of excellence:** It is the avowed commitment to the ideals of the job, and one's personal life. Doing your work to the best of your ability without compromising standards. It is holding unto the upward prize and making personal sacrifice to get job done. To keep one's views and promotions out of an event by being impartial.

### **Ethical Issues in Investigative and Interpretative Journalism**

They are those issues that bother on morality. It is very serious because it has to do with credibility and everything you write either in radio, TV or newspaper has one plan which is centred on credibility e.g. If you accept money from anybody when you are fully employed, if you collect money from a politician without telling your editor and you decide to write the story either for or against him has a moral question around it.

In spite of the functional relevance of ethics to journalism, the Nigerian situation is vitiated by a number of problems and issues, some of these are:

- **Junketing:** It is a strategy employed by public relations specialist to sponsor a journalist free to an event, a conference at the cost of the public relations practitioner's organization. While this may be considered acceptable it has implication for ethical practice. How well can a reporter investigate an organization that sponsored him to an international event that cost millions of naira? In all honesty, certain facts will be hidden from the public because of the reporter or media organization's interest. This is an issue and a problem.
- **Brown envelope syndrome:** it is the act of a journalist giving out or collecting money to get stories or publish stories. The impact of this problem is that individual interest is served to the detriment of public interest.
- **Conflict of interest:** Many media organization prefer the advertisers' interest to the public interest. The much-publicized governor Ayodele Fayose advertisement on the cover page of *The Punch* newspaper of January 20, on presidents who died in office and the question of Buhari's age and real health status raise questions about the level of ethical orientation of the advertising agency and the media organization that carried the advert. Thus, the organization was more deposed to the financial benefit to the organization than the public taste of decency. Many governors pay monthly emoluments to reporters' in government to secure favourable coverage. Some governors have retainership agreement with media houses, as a result, corruption and

ineptitude perpetuated by such governors are never reported or under reported.

- ***Sycophancy:*** it is the act of praise singing individuals, government or organization in order to curry favour or gain undue advantage. One way some Nigerian journalist do this is to write columns that ex-ray the potentials and contribution of the individual to society; when in actual fact he lacks the capacity to manage the organization. This has assumed a dangerous trend with the organization of awards duly paid for by the recipient but is made to emanate from the media organization.
- ***Plagiarism:*** It is the presentation of other people's work or words as if it is the reporter's own. It is failure to give credit to the author or source of a work or idea. Many journalists create the impression that the thoughts expressed in their articles came from them, when in actual fact, they were culled from a book, interview or other materials. Once a journalist fails to quote a source verbatim and uses the sources words as his own, plagiarism is therefore not far from this.
- ***Sensationalism:*** it is the undue emphasis on the strange things happening in the society. It means playing on the people's intelligence by emphasizing the unimportant. A newspaper like the *Sun* newspaper uses sensational pictures and headlines to herald the news. Many newspaper headlines are usually sensational in outlook, the headlines have no concrete relationship with the lead. The essence of sensationalism is to stimulate public attachment to the society.

- ***Corruption:*** Many proprietors collect monies from advertising agencies but fail to pay the workers. They pursue the economic logic to the detriment of their social responsibility. When the reporters work without pay and they are made to believe in their abilities to find their way out; it promotes political partisanship, hyper commercialism, hero worship, sycophancy etc. The level of corruption in Nigeria has become so obvious that editors' have bias for certain political parties and personality. They are sometimes paid to rubbish the integrity of opponents. Accepting gift either in money or in kind leads to conscience compromise.
- ***Confidentiality of Source:*** Revealing sources of information leads to loss of trust.
- ***Exaggeration*** — over stating the truth of a matter. Don't distort the facts of a matter about the issue in question.
- ***Over simplification of facts*** — making it look watery.
- ***Political partisanship*** — Do not join any political party, because you will be constrained by your membership. It will impede on your conscience.
- ***Objectivity*** — non-bias, removing yourself from any situation, or else it will lead to slant and colouration. Have no friend, no foe when investigating an issue. You should be able to deal straight or equally among the subject.  
Direct and concrete evidence; vagueness is not allowed because all evidence in the report must be direct and concrete.  
Non-attribution — following this matter or vagueness you must quote names and officials, fabrication and forgery not allowed.

Know your subject area — ignorance is not an excuse, you must know your subject, research before carrying out your report.

Do not accept freebies — this has to do with free accommodation, lunch, brown envelopes etc. for such things influence the report.

Irresponsibility and breaking the law — When you break the law you become part of the country's problems. So, you must use legitimate means to get information.

Fair-play — Give chance to your subject to defend himself. Be fair and just, or else the society will doubt you, and your credibility will be brought to question.

- ***Divided Loyalty*** — sometimes you serve two masters e.g. a campaign in which the reporter is made the public relations officer to such campaign. Be loyal only to your media organisation.
- ***Sexual matters*** — It is unethical to have sexual relationships with your source or your subject.

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**PART 111**  
**CRITICAL WRITING**

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR CRITICAL WRITING**

#### **Introduction**

Every communication scholar worth his or her onions must have the necessary skills required for effective communication. Generally speaking, communication skills can be divided into two; productive skills and receptive skills. Productive skills are those skills that task the innate ability of the communicator in terms of the communicator's ability to write and speak. The skills under this category include writing skills and speaking. Receptive skills are those skills that do not require the communicator's effort to initiate the communication process. The skills in this category include listening skills and reading skills.

#### **a. Writing skills**

Writing according to Gbenedio (1996, p. 120) is a means of communicating to people who are not around us face to face. She goes further to say that it is an externalization, an expression, of what has been internalized. She noted that writing can be an act or an art. Writing as an act involves the ability to use the hands or legs to put down or represent a thought meaningfully. Simply called hand writing, While, writing as an art is the ability to compose what is written. This flows from the mental or cognitive state of the writer. It is guided by rules. The degree to which a writer communicates meaningfully depends on his language skills, knowledge of sentence construction, syntax, composition and grammar.

You can develop your writing skills through the following:

- Reading columns and literary works.
- Writing stories about events, places and people.
- Attending writing workshops.
- Have a mentor who could possibly groom you.
- Correcting or editing others' work.

**b. Speaking**

Although language learning begins with listening, the end product is to communicate by way of speech. Speech is the ability to express oneself in oral form. In spoken English, the speaker must pay attention to the sounds, words that sound alike and their stress pattern, rhythm and sentence stress, intonation, knowledge of vowels, diphthongs and consonant clusters. A good mastery of the spoken language of English would help in no small way in interpersonal interactions and public speaking. The speaker should understand that the tone of his speech conveys different meaning to the listener. Although, there are individuals with special oratory abilities, nevertheless, you can learn the art through practice.

Speaking skills can be learnt through:

1. Through personal practice.
2. Engaging in dialogue with experts
3. Identifying the different sounds in a sentence
4. Practicing intonation and stress pattern.
5. Identifying speech situations and what methods should be adopted in addressing them

6. Developing a speech purpose.
7. Developing speech strategies using any of the five distinct tasks suggested by Gbenedio (1996)
  - a. Building personal appeal
  - b. Gaining attention
  - c. Sustaining interest.
  - d. Tapping motivation
  - e. Insuring recall
8. Engaging in debates.
9. Attending workshops, seminar.
10. Participating in story-telling.

**c. Listening Skills**

Gbenedio (1996, p.24) defined listening as the process of hearing, identifying, understanding and interpreting spoken language. She observed that listening involves four basic stages; hearing, listening, auding and cognizing. Hearing according to her is the process by which speech sounds are received and modified by the ear. She conceives listening as the process of identifying the component sounds and sound sequences whereby known words are recognizable. Auding. She noted is the process by which the continuous flow of words is translated into meaning. While cognizing is the various aspects of knowing characterized by different conceptualizing experiences among which are making comparisons, drawing inferences, categorizing and forming sensory images.

It is difficult to master the art of listening. This is as a result of the different distractions that could prevent the listener from paying attention to what is being said. When the time spent listening to a speaker gets too long, the listener's interest will wane. Therefore, listening requires a lot of discipline to get the best out of a speaker.

There are different types of listening

- a. Intermittent listening.
- b. Half listening
- c. Passive listening,
- d. Narrow listening.
- e. Critical listening
- f. Appreciative listening and
- g. Creative listening.

Gbenedio (1996, p. 25-26) further classified listening into:

- i. Social listening: This type of listening involves the following.
  - ii. listening courteously and attentively to conversation in social situations with a purpose.
  - iii. understanding the roles of the speaker and listener in the communication process.
- ii. Secondary listening
- iii. listening to music that accompanies rhythms or folk dances.
- iv. Enjoying music while participating in certain types of school activities such as painting, working with clay, sketching, and handwriting practice.

- v. Aesthetic listening
  - i. listening to music, poetry, choral reading, or drama heard on radio or on recordings;
  - ii. enjoying stories, poems, riddles, jingles and plays as read or told by the teacher.
- vi. Critical listening
  - i.) Noting correct speech habits, word usage, and sentence elements of others.
  - ii.) Listening to determine the reason “why”
  - iii.) Listening to understand meanings from context clues;
  - iv.) Listening to distinguish between fact and fancy, relevance and irrelevance;
  - v.) Listening to draw inferences
  - vi.) Listening to make judgments,
  - vii.) Listening to find the answers to specific questions which require selectivity and concentration;
  - viii.) Listening to interpret idioms and unusual language;
  - ix.) Listening objectively and appraisingly to determine authenticity or the presence of bias and inaccuracies.
- vii. Concentrative listening
  - i.) Listening to follow instructions;
  - ii.) Perceiving relationships such a class, place, quantity, time, sequence, and cause and effect.

- iii.) Listening for a definite purpose to elicit specific items of information;
  - iv.) Attaining understanding through intent listening;
  - v.) listening for sequence of ideas;
  - vi.) perceiving speakers' or a group's main objective and organization of ideas.
  - vii.) Taking note of important facts.
- viii. Creative listening
- i. Associating meanings with all kinds of listening experiences.
  - ii. constructing visual images while listening.
  - iii. Adapting imagery from imaginative thinking to create new results in writing, painting, and dramatizing.
  - iv. Listening to arrive at solutions for problems as well as checking and verifying the results of the problems solved.

Since the task of listening is a little difficult the aspiring communicator can go a step further to acquire the skill through:

1. Listening to language learning from tapes.
2. Taking dictation exercise.
3. Listening to reading exercise
4. Story telling format
5. Attending training programmes.

A good listener does not talk to or with people always but also allow others to talk to him or her. In the process, there is a role reversal intended to make you

listen to others while they talk. The tone of a speaker, the pitch of his voice, and the speed at which he or she speaks can be avenues to determine how well you have listened. If you must ask questions in a learning situation, you need to be a good listener. This would help you in framing questions or clarifying issues that seem confusing.

### **General rules for effective writing**

At the heart of journalism is the ability to write for both the print and broadcast media. The goal of journalistic writing is to communicate effectively. This effectiveness comes from the writer's knowledge of the subject, the available facts to support the writing and how the writer puts his thoughts together to make for a meaningful reading. When a reader makes sense out of a write up, the communication experience between the writer and the reader becomes a common experience. When this is lacking, the write up becomes ineffective and the writer has failed in his or her communication effort.

Okunna, Omenugha and Ebeze (2002 p. 233) provide certain important rules regarding effective writing. According to them, to write and communicate effectively, the writer has to:

1. Understand fully the theory and practice of effective communication
2. Bear the target audience continually in mind and place himself/herself in their shoes.
3. Avoid semantic noise; this refers to any distortion of the encoded message arising from the meaning of the words or symbols used in putting the message together. This noise, could arise from:

- Poor word choice
  - Wrong use of words
  - Flamboyant and ambiguous expressions
4. Be familiar with and respect common elements of style, such as accuracy, precision, clarity, originality, vividness, simplicity, coherence, brevity and good use of figures of speech and idioms.
  5. Have a good command of the appropriate vocabulary for the topic being handled. This should emanate from proper knowledge of the topic.
  6. A good knowledge of sentence forms, patterns and common errors in sentence construction and paragraphing.

These suggest that effective writing requires a mastery of the language of communication and a deeper understanding of the subject matter and the media of communication.

With specific reference to newspapers and magazines, the following rules of writing are very important.

1. The use of contractions; spoken English differs considerably from written English. While it is permissible in spoken English to use contractions such as can't, couldn't, he's but in formal writing, it is compulsory to use the standard form of these words – cannot, could not, he is etc. the aim is for emphasis.
2. Themes and titles; the names of individuals or places involved in a story determine the level of attention people will pay to the story. Thus, when, a phrase such as “Fashola in multi-billion-naira mess”, when used in a story it

commands attention. Where the individual involved in a story is not a known name, the age can serve as a pointer to the importance of the story. For instance, 16, stabbed man to death may not make any meaning. Put as a lead, a 16 years old boy, Chukwudozie Nnadi yesterday stabbed his mother to death in their two-bedroom apartment in Nnebisi road Asaba, Delta State.

In some newspaper houses, titles of individual are usually not mentioned, rather only the names are mentioned. There are exceptions, while, titles such as chiefs, professor, etc may not be permitted, the office the individual holds will be stated. However, there are newspapers where the titles such as chief (Dr) or Mrs. Are usually stated, in writing titles relating to religious, military and paramilitary officers, it is necessary to state their ranks or position. Another point to note is that titles are written in capital letters while the names that follow are written in lower case.

3. Numbers and statistics; in writing columns, article or stories in newspapers, statistical and numerical figures are usually stated as follows: (i) numbers from one through nine are spelt out. While numbers above 10 use digits. There are exceptions to this – number used at the beginning of sentences are spelt and ordinal street names should also be spelt out, instead of ‘third, write 3<sup>rd</sup> with the exception of certain figures should be used for whole and fractional numbers, e.g. 62, 2 ½ etc. spell out fractions, except after whole numbers. Write out dates as 10 September 1992, instead of 10<sup>th</sup>, or 2<sup>nd</sup> or forth etc. Don’t use a.m. or p.m. rather this morning or afternoon. Except where necessary, don’t mention exact time.

4. Quotations; where it is important to state someone else's opinion, put his/her words in quote with quotation marks signifying or indicating that.
5. Punctuation; the skilled writer, should understand and master the uses of punctuation marks.
6. Tenses; print writers use the past tense but casting of headlines is usually in the present perfect form.
7. Pronouns; the importance of pronouns in writing cannot be over emphasized. This is because, pronouns help to make for better agreement between the subject and object been referred. E.g. the House of Assembly voted no in the bill seeking to legalize abortion. It passed the resolution after --- unfortunately, some writers will write 'they passed the resolution.... (reason been that the assembly is a group)

### **Skills for effective writing**

Every communication piece employs a unique language to reach the audience. The way and manner language is handled determines the effectiveness of the speech or writing. Beyond language, the mastery of the subject, appropriate grammar, the audience cut the occasion of the story any influence the effectiveness of a good write-up.

However, a detailed look at each of the skill is of importance here.

1. **Language Skills:** The way a writer uses the key terms in a language affects considerably the effectiveness of a speech or report. David Shaw enumerated the following list, after interviewing, editors in the United States.

- bad grammar
- misspellings
- incorrect punctuations
- poorly constructed sentences
- misused words
- mixed metaphors
- non-sequiturs
- clichés
- redundancies
- circumlocutions
- imprecision
- jargons (see Melvin Mencher 1983, p.233)

Whatever the objective of a speech may be, a careful application of the right use of these lists is key to effectiveness. For instance, grammar in English contains, subject, verb, adverb (or verbal) some verbs can be;

- Gerund – verb that end in ‘ing’ and functions as a noun, e.g. borrowing is a mistake, drinking before driving is dangerous
- Participle – a verb form that may function as a part of a verb phrase (was laughing, had finished) or a modifier – a finished product.
- Infinitive – a verb used primarily as a noun, visually in present tense and usually preceded by the word to, e.g. John wanted to open the present. Cynthia failed to stop on time.
- Pronoun – words used instead of a noun. He, she, it, they, we, etc.

- Relative pronoun – pronoun that refers to a noun elsewhere in the sentence e.g. – Leslie is the one who likes to build.
- Antecedent – a word or group of words to which a pronoun refers, e.g. like their trainers, animal can be polite or rude.
- Agreement – correspondence in number or person of a subject and verb, e.g. a boy asks, boys ask
- Clause – a group of related words that contain a subject and a verb.
- Independent clause – a clause that can stand (main clause) alone in its meaning
- Dependent clause – a clause that serves as an adverb, an adjective or a noun in the sentence
- I want to go to Ring road because I need to be independent, (dependent clause).
- Conjunction – to connect or join two words
- Modifier – a word or group of words that describes, writes or modifies another, e.g. he studied rigorously into the night.
- The blue sky encouraged us.
- Parallelism – a grammatical form that uses equal and corresponding words or word together in a sentence or paragraph, e.g. she likes running, cooking and swimming.

Care must be taken that choice of word is not misplaced e.g. pairs/groups, adapt/adopt, cute/sight/site, loose/lose, role/roll.

It is also important to note that wrong word usage could send a wrong message to the reader.

1. E.g. there was a fatal accident at the main gate, though no life was lost.  
(something fatal will results in death)
2. He is a notorious boy on campus (when you meant popular)

Handling these pitfalls rest in regular consultation of the dictionary for appropriate spellings, word usage and grammatical form.

Be language, sensitive: sexist pronouns – sexist pronouns, titles, stereotypes, handicaps, descriptions should be avoided.

## **2. Understanding of the subjects**

A sound knowledge of the subject or topic been discussed is of prime importance to effective writing. To dabble into an area where a writer has little knowledge about is like giving a teaser to a programme. According to Alimole (2002, p.13) “the depth of the --- writer’s works will depend on the breath of his reading”. This suggests that writers must be readers and researchers, it is the negligence of these two important aspects that make today’s writers’ less authoritative in their columns.

As an upcoming writer, David Wainwright (1972 p. 10) advice is of relevance here, according to him, the reporter “has to try to assimilate a vast mass of conflicting fact (sic) much of it highly technical and detailed”. In other words, master the jargons associated with the field and explain it in a language that is clear to all.

He must avoid what David Mellinkoff (1978, p.177) calls planned confusion, according to him planned confusion takes two major forms;

- Saying nothing and making it look like something and
- Saying something and making it look like nothing or like something else

To avoid confusion, let the subject be based on purpose – entertain, educate, inform and persuade. At every point in the writing make reference to the purpose. This can be easily done by writing out the points and ensure that the work does not drift.

To make the work comprehensive, use primary and secondary materials, that is your personal observation, interview experts, use newspapers, books and other reference materials, depending, however on what the topic or subject is and the occasion in which the topic is being used.

Ohaja (2005, p. 232) points out the problem associated with knowing too much about a subject.

- Exceeding the required length through the addition of too much fact, opinion, interpretation and detail, or
- Writing over the receiver's heads through the use of complicated material and jargon. In either case, the likely results would be boredom and confusion.

### **3. The audience/readers**

The writer's knowledge of the demographic and psychographic characteristics of his audience is required for effective writing. Why? Educated people are less persuaded than less intelligent and educated people.

The cultural background of a people influences their interpretation or understanding of a message. In addition, the social group one belongs, area of residence (rural or urban) also influences an individual's appreciation of a piece of writing. Thus, the onus is on the writer to tailor his piece to suit the particular group he is writing for.

#### **4. Understanding the occasion/nature of the publication**

There are different seasons and calendar of events in the world. Each season is an occasion for a particular event. Every writer must be sensitive to the mood of the occasion and the nature of the publication in which his works would be published. There are solemn as well as boisterous occasions and the same type of speech or writing will not be suitable or appropriate for both of them. E.g. a burial ceremony and a marriage ceremony.

The nature of the publication has to do with the class or category of the newspaper. For instance, the *Guardian* has taste for literary and elitist approach to writing. *City People* and the *Sun's* approach are from the entertainment and human emotions angles.

### **Elements of Style**

Elements of style can simply be regarded as the basic elements of good writing. Style as noted somewhere in the next chapter, is the columnist or writer's approach to the issue or topic been discussed. It is the signature tone or mark of identification of a writer. Style grows with practice. The elements as suggested by Ohaja (2004) are:

1. Simplicity

2. Directness
3. Vitality
4. Accuracy
5. Clarity
6. Brevity
7. Elegance
8. Unity
9. Correctness.

**Simplicity;** In article writing, the language is usually terser than the simple news writing story. However, columnist must avoid the Soyinka and Obayagbon's type of English. Ohaja (2004, p. 11) observed that the masters of style; Willian Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, advised writers to: "avoid the elaborate, the pretentions, the coy, and the cute. Do not be tempted by a twenty-dollar word when there is a ten-centre handy" she also noted William Zinsser (1994) thought on *Writing Well*; when she said "don't dialogue with someone you can talk to. Don't interface with anybody."

The bottom-line of these experts' view is that big words are not bad per se, but overloading the entire work with such high-flying words is the issue. Write in simple and clear English, avoid sounding impressive, and remember that the 'best writing is that which the reader follows without being distracted by the writer's words' Ohaja (2004, p.12).

**Directness:** Although, there is no specified order for writing articles, disorderliness, beating about the bush, and nuclear thought must be avoided. An improper introduction will make the article less interesting to read. Whatever, the nature of

the introduction, it must be arresting. Let the story move progressively till the point of conflict and its possible resolution.

**Accuracy;** the primary goal of a media writer is accuracy, that is, he must ensure that the writing is factually correct and expressed appropriately. Accuracy is important for the following reasons;

- i. People place premium on truth and honesty
- ii. It is a moral burden on the part of the writer.
- iii. A writer can attain accuracy by spelling names correctly, quote correctly, get information from both sides to a story (fairness) do the maths or statistic correctly.

**Clarity;** Facts that are unclearly presented are of little use to the reader. By clarity, it means, it is not ambiguous or obscure, obscurity can be by negligence or by wilfulness so says Somerset Maugham on negligence, it may be that;

*The writer is himself not quite sure of his meaning. He has a vague idea of what he wants to say, but has not, either from lack of mental power or from laziness, exactly formulated it in his mind, and it is natural enough that he should not find a precise expression for a confused idea. (cited in Ohaja 2004, p.20-21)*

This means that the writer says something other than what he meant. By wilfulness, the writer intentionally mystifies his subject through the use of meaningless words used to impress. This approach can be the writer's distortion of the facts and information to create confusion. Clarity can also be compromised through what Fedler (1984) calls leapfrogging. - it simply means lack of identity of a source mentioned in a story. e.g. here is another example from Ohaja (2004, p.22)

*One of the candidates in the forthcoming National Assembly election has condemned the Federal government for “unduly interfering in the transition to civil rule programme” Dr Ike A. Okpara, an Owerri-based legal practitioner, warns that this trend may abort the Fourth Republic.*

The problems she identified with this passage are

- a. Which house is the man running for?
- b. Is Dr. Okpara the candidate referred to in the first paragraph?

The index for measuring clarity at the end of an article according to her lies in “Are there unanswered questions and mysterious person, objects or circumstance that the reader has to grapple with? If ‘yes’ the article is unclear”. The opposite of clarity is confusion, one major source of confusion is poor understanding of the subject of discourse.

To achieve clarity, the following tips are essential;

1. Keep it simple
2. Avoid all kinds of jargon
3. Be specific
4. Check the sequence
5. Include transitions

**Brevity:** Brevity according to Ohaja (2004 p. 20) means writing tightly, writing in such a way that the article makes the point quickly and highly in the minds of readers. A writer must avoid being long – minded. He should remove the well-turned phrase that is unnecessary and eliminate redundancies.

## **Tips for Brevity**

- i. Get to the point – that is what the story is all about
- ii. Use simple sentences.
- iii. Use active voice instead of the passive
- iv. Watch out for redundancy and repetitions – examples of redundancy  
Easter Sunday, stand up, component parts, still yet, advance notice etc. it  
shows a lack of discipline thinking. Facts can be repeated for clarity’s  
sake, avoid repeating a verb from sentence to sentence e.g. he said in
- v. Use positive rather than negative sentence e.g. negative sentences
  - He was not welcoming
  - He was indifferent to the issuePositive sentences
  - He is unwelcoming
  - He does not care

**Vitality:** Means writing in concrete rather than abstract language. Concrete words help the reader to see clearly the subject of the article. That is to say, concrete writing presents “all the significant details ---- with such accuracy and vigour that the reader, in imagination, can project himself into the scene” William and White (1979) cited in Ohaja (2004, p.17).

Write from the point people can identify with the topic or issue you are writing about. When the topic becomes imaginary, the reader will find it difficult to figure what your ultimate goal is. To make a written piece vital, Ohaja (2004) suggestions are also considered.

1. Use active verbs to paint sharp and graphic picture ‘say’ is vague but ‘admit’, ‘confess’, ‘contend’ are more exact. ‘kill’ is broad but ‘shoot’, ‘stab’ ‘strangle’ are more precise.
2. The use of paradigms to stimulate emotions. i.e using life experiences to paint a story.
3. Include people in your story, though there are cases where paradigms used may not be humans.

**Elegance;** Has to do with those things that make the writing unique, impressive or loved. It is the beauty that invites the readers into it.

They are:

- i. Freshness of expression; originality of thought impresses the readers, even when clichés and borrowed expressions are used, they should be sparingly used. The extensive use of clichés will make the writing lack freshness.
- ii. The use of figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, antonomasia, hyperbole, litotes, homonym, metonym, synecdoche, alliteration, onomatopoeia, euphemism, irony, antitheses, paradox, oxymoron, literary allusion, parody; make for good reading but should not be over – used.
- iii. The use of humour and wit: This is because laughter helps to lessen the tension within.

**Unity:** the idea of unity has to do with coherence. That is, how the parts agree to make a complete sense or story. This could be achieved when sentences are

related and one thought leads to the other or reinforces what was earlier said.

Unity can be achieved by;

- a. Sticking to the purpose of the write up. By this we mean what the write up is intended to achieve. Is it entertainment, information, education, exposition etc.
- b. Unity of pronoun. How do you want to address the reader and what do you want the reader to say about you? Do you want to write from experience as in using the pronoun “I”, “we”. Or you want to tell another story by using the third person pronouns “he, she, they”? Do you want to address the reader directly?
- c. Unity of tense: This has to do with the timing of your story, is it a past, present or future event?
- d. Unity of mood: what type of mood do you want to depict? Serious? Playful? Informal conversation or officious?

**Correctness:** the use of appropriate register of the subject being written about is what this element is all about. It also has to do with the appropriate rules of grammar. Everything you need to know about punctuations, adjectives, verbs, spellings, sentences, vocabulary all comes to mind here. The whole essence is to ensure that your work meets public expectations.

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## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

### **COLUMN, COLUMNIST AND STYLE**

#### **Column and Columnist**

Columnists in newspapers and magazines have created a mileage for themselves as a result of their approaches or style of writing. These columnists often make meaning out of ordinary situations as a result of their creative dexterity and power of the pen. The basic focus of this chapter is to provide the journalist with the basic skills he needs to be a sound writer (columnist) and to develop critical abilities as he probes into events around him. Acquiring the skills require regular practice while at the same time developing a particular style which distinguishes him from other writers. However, the columnist should follow certain general writing requirements of a given median. This is because writing is a means of communication. Communication according to Nwosu (1996 p. 2) refers to sharing of meanings, ideas, thoughts... From person to person, from person to group, or even from group to group in especially social communication which involves writing.

The person who writes a column is called a columnist. Columns are opinion or personal journalism that appear in a paper once a week. It is usually constant, it is not compulsory that they must appear but a matter of convention. If there are no special dairy allotted to a columnist, occasional buyers of their newspaper may not know when to buy and read their popular columnist. It is also conventional that columns appear on a panel. A panel is a graphic and pictorial design, which enable us display our materials on paper. They are usually enduring because they stay for a long time and enable readers to know where to find and read their columns.

Many journalists regard columns as personal journalism because they contain views, opinion and interpretation of the writer. It is still Journalism as it is based on fact and figures, and usually has a news peg. That is, columns must be written on things that are topical and current, things that have happened which are of significance to the people, and must be capable of educating and given them a personal viewpoint on issues. Columns will normally entertain, inform, condemn, arrest, persuade or dissuade. The purpose of a column generally is to enlighten readers in all its ramifications.

A columnist therefore must be very knowledgeable, experienced, and be versatile. He or she is a teacher and an entertainer and must not be partisan or be, wayward in the choice of words. He or she must be all, help the people to discover themselves.

The columnist must be research oriented, analytically placing facts and figures in true perspective and sentiments. He must also be familiar with and must link facts to action because he must track things and remind the people of what has happened. He must be able to interpret issues logically by explaining things. The columnist should be matured enough to accept criticism and must be open minded.

### **Style**

Style is the way in which a writer writes. It is the mark of identity or signature tune of the writer. It is what distinguishes one writer from the other. In a way, it is the writer's approach to writing. According to Ekwelie (1992 p. 56) "An Aspiring writer has to contend with three styles:

1. His own emerging style which will eventually make his writing distinct

2. The style of his times with regard to sentence construction, diction as well as syntax
3. The style of his medium which is a hybrid between the learned and the idiosyncrasies of language. – Journalistic style

Succinctly put, the style of a columnist or column is the way the “Intensely personal- hence, subjective- message of journalism is fashioned, how it is crafted, how it is written”. In other word, it is that unique approach to working that has been so mastered and which has carved a niche for the columnist or writer. Some scholars opine that “it is usually understood to mean the way in which writers employ their words, phrases, and sentences to achieve the desired effect” it also “may be used loosely to comprise the writer’s entire craft”

Roberts (1977 p. 200-202), Identifies few ingredients of style. Uyo (2000 p. 9) adds a fifth. They are: (1) Diction (2) Grammar (3) Rhythm and sound (4) Rhetoric (5) Logic

1. **Diction:** This has to do with the choice of words: The usage of such, whether standard and substandard, formal or informal, general and specific words. The underlying question in diction is whether the choice of words is appropriate for the audience and situation or context.
2. **Grammar:** This hovers around syntax, parts of speech, lexis and structure, punctuation and word study. In lexical relationship, consideration is often given to synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, coinages, acronyms etc. while in syntax, the sentence elements, their coordination and subordination, categories, length, structure (simple, complex etc) pattern (Normal/ loose, periodic, parallel and

balance). In grammar, the stylist seeks to ensure that he communicates clearly, effectively, efficiently interestingly but with a variety.

3. **Rhetoric:** Rhetoric is the study in communication that is concerned with persuasion. It involves the use of imagery and figurative expressions aimed at persuading the reader. It can be the use of dramatic expression, proverbs, rhetorical questions and some figures of speech aimed at stimulating the reader to the line of thought of the writer.
4. **Rhythm** and sound: Involve the use of poetic elements to make the write-up interesting. It may be the use of certain rhyme pattern or the choice of words to elicit emotional or solve reflection or reaction basically, it means making the column interesting by varying the sentences and using words that connect the imagery of a poet or artist.
5. **Logic:** The presentation of the write-up in a correct reasonable way or manner. By employing correct arguments (their premises and conclusions), deductive and inductive reason, using valid and sound arguments, handling fallacies. The aim is to make the critical claim in the column stand.

### **Approaches to Style**

Adidi Uyo (2009 p. 11) provides three broad approaches for style

1. Being serious- but playful: saying something serious but in a playful manner. Reuben Abati uses this style in his column cross fire in the *Guardian* newspaper
2. Angry- but compassionate: It is the expression of one's displeasure with the state of things, at the same time offering solutions that can make the society better.

3. Plain – but sarcastic: Saying things the way they are without mincing words or bending the truth. It can be through the use of innuendos to convey the truth. It is a satirical approach to the truth. For instance, a reporter can decide to ridicule government shoddy jobs by saying “this road was constructed just few months ago but one wonders if it was supervised at all”. This suggests that the job was poorly done or the road has gone bad after few months when it was commissioned.

He represents these approaches with the acronym SPACPS (Serious – playful, Angry- compassionate, Plain – sarcastic). It is important to note that the subject, situation and angle to an issue determine which of the approaches to adopt.

### **Steps in Column Writing**

Ekeli (2005) identifies the following steps:

1. The column must follow a news peg, on something that has happened
2. Selecting a topic
3. The columnist must present the story as briefly, entertaining, and as objective as possible.
4. He must explain the facts of the story so that people can understand.
5. Thrashing out the problem/issue/ challenge
6. Deciding the stance, purpose, audience
7. Formulating the theme
8. Generating ideas/Gathering information
9. Deciding the approach
10. Resolving the title

11. Tag the story to similar incident that must have happened. It is necessary as people easily forget things
12. The columnist must then give his/her view on what has happened (personal Journalism) in other word the way he perceives the issue and the likely repercussion.
13. Composing the introduction, body and conclusion.

### **Guidelines for Column Writing**

Ekeli (2005) noted that in writing a column, the following should be taken into cognisance:

1. Do not write about a subject or issue you do not know or understand
2. Be consistent in your views.
3. Support your position with sound arguments and/ or solid facts.
4. Facts are different from 'statements of fact'.
5. Do not claim to know all-come on, you are fallible and can be stupid
6. Worship Truth and the public interest.
7. Retract or correct a statement whenever you discover that you have erred.
8. Choose words and construct sentence that make your thoughts clear
9. Be decent in your use of language
10. Avoid errors of grammar, of rhetoric, and of logic, to wit, fallacies
11. Vary your choice of subject or topic: Don't get stuck in a groove.

### **Forms of Columns**

There are different forms of columns, Ekeli (2005) categorized them into:

1. **Public affairs columns:** These dominate newspaper editorial pages as well as the pages opposite them. Public affairs columns need not be couched in such sober phrases so as to scare off many readers. Self-consciousness seriousness should give way often to lighter presentations.
2. **Advice and forum column:** Many advice columns are turned into forums, with readers invited to respond to letters from other readers, or to relate their own experiences. Forums also include letters to the editor, poetry corners, Jokes, anecdotes contributed by readers.
3. **Anecdotes, gossip, paragraph columns:** Anecdotes columns are free fledge with little stones about people. Whereas, gossip items sometimes consist of only few words, about well know persons, paragraphing is a very brief editorial expression usually two or three lines, making subtle and usually surprising current. It is usually too humorous, not often satirical or inspirational.
4. **Entertainment columns:** Entertainment covers a wide range of subjects and many newspapers now devote a page or more to cater for the entertainment needs of its readers. Editors of the page are now referred to as entertainment, life and style editors. This column offers tributes on current, music, fashion, films etc as well as interview and critique artiste and their performances.
5. **Essay humour columns:** The leisurely informal essays are fast disappearing on the pages of newspaper. Most editors prefer that columnist use the little space they have, for commentary that makes it profit immediate. Many personal essays that explore the writer's psyche are now more often presented as humours. Sometimes the columnist can use ordinary events as basis for comments,

however sharing his disgust in his commentary on the event. It may not be easy to propound rules for writing columns, because of the variety in columns. However most of the basic standards for reviewing and writing editorial also apply to many columns.

Reporting is the basic of most effective journalism and this also holds for writing columns. It is most appropriate for a column writer to investigate first, think and then write, since most columns come alive through reporting. It is pertinent to note that merely reporting is not a guarantee of quantity. When all the lessons about writing techniques and about the value of reporting have been absorbed, it remains essential for the columnist to write about what he knows.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### COMMUNICATION CRITICISM

#### Introduction

Communication criticism dates back to oral tradition, when speeches, festival, plays and public recitations of epics were central to life in the pre-alphabet societies, most especially Greece. However, a formal approach to criticism could be traced to Greece, where analysis of speakers in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* or to commentary on classic plays, lyric poems, and epics were dominant. Scholars also traced the first systematic study of speech criticism, to Cicero's *Brutus*, or Plato's attacks on poetic discourse, especially in the Republic. In seventeenth-century Great Britain, the liberal and conservative critics contentiously engaged each other in writing and speaking styles to the point they tore at each other's prose and poetry. This "Battle of the Books" marked significantly known formal approach to criticism though from the western perspective.

Although, communication criticism is an age long practice, it is at best seen as judgmental, perhaps, because the concept is yet to gain serious communication scholarship in our part of the world. Essentially, it is an activity that describes, interprets and evaluates a piece of work. This is the gamut of communication criticism. However, scholars have deepened this concept further at least by way of definition. Rhetoricians see communication criticism as a means of understanding how a piece of discourse worked politically, by studying the speaker-writer's audience. The occasions for speaking or writing, arrangement patterns, modes of expression, methods for preparing and then delivery of speeches or presenting

written work publicly, and what the actual effects of the discourse were. (See Sillars and Gronbeck, 2001 p. 13).

The above definition incorporates the procedures and standards for analysis of a piece of work and its effects as the hallmark of communication criticism. This approach was the dominant method of criticism in the 1950s-60s. According to Black, a formalist, sees communication criticism as a discipline that through the investigation and appraisal of the activities and products of humanity... seeks as its end the understanding of ... peoples themselves. In other word, the goal of communication criticism is to make a piece of work better read and understood.

These definitions suggest there are approaches to communication criticism. Of course, there are three main traditions regarding communication criticism, each having distinct approaches to it. They are the Rhetorical Traditions which incorporates accurate interpretation, formal criticism and neoclassical criticism. The Social Tradition which employs semiotic codes and social criticism and The Cultural Tradition in which value analysis, narrative analysis, psychoanalytic criticism and ideological criticism are the approaches.

Although reference has been made to communication criticism as an activity primarily designed to analyse, interpret and evaluate a work of Art, it is however not an entire work that is the focus, but an aspect of a work, known as text. The term “text” emanates from the Latin verb texere, meaning to weave, in other words texts are aspects of a work and its various components and context that are of special interest to the critic or analyst. Cockelreas and Longman (1971 p. 1) support this notion of a text when they assert that:

Critical analysis is not an attempt to discover what is wrong with a work, but rather a process by which the whole is separated into its parts and those parts examined to discover their nature, function, and relationship, when you read a work of literature critically, your goal is to discover it: to find the broad outlines of its form, to pinpoint its areas of excellence and to seek out qualities that enrich it with meaning.

The extent to which a piece of work fulfils the three-prong activity of interpretation, analysis and evaluation depends on the critical argument that justifies the statement. Hence, critics use the clauses, ‘as a result’, ‘because of’ to support their critical claim. The completeness of a critical work rest on the type of theme highlighted, the introductory paragraph stating the critical claim, the arguments weaved into the body of the work to support the critical claim and the critic’s position on the work. This procedure is however depended on the creative abilities of the critic.

Fundamentally, communication criticism helps our understanding of a piece of work. It breaks the fog or the mist that hinders our sights from seeing what the actual picture of a thing is. Furthermore, it is to clarify and uphold societal expectations. It helps to make judgment about a piece of work. Such judgment brings to the fore the inherent strengths and weaknesses in the work. The critics sense of judgment may be motivated by how the work show accuracy, how it represents social group or values, the appropriate technicalities used or involved in the work. It could

emanate from the language norm, the consistency of the arguments, its relatedness and coherence. One important function of communication criticism is that, it provides a measure of guidance for producers and creators of works of art.

The procedure for analysing a piece of work may be influenced by the creative dexterity of the critic, nonetheless, an appropriate procedure could be the following:

1. Identify the theme - Every work of art has a central idea upon which the various elements are weaved. The first thing a critic should do after going through such a work is to identify or state the central or pulsating idea regarding the work. The theme will help him in developing relevant claims in the work to justify the theme.
2. The second step is to state the critical claim(s) about the work. This could be a sentence or two cleverly built into the body of the critic's work. The placement may be the introduction. The concluding paragraph, depending on the critics' prowess.
3. To point out relevant facts or evidence inherent in the work to justify his critical claim. That is, the statements supporting his arguments.
4. Relate the arguments to other contexts in which they have been used or relate the work to other contextual works.
5. Your evaluation of the work, by way of stating your general assessment.
6. Recommendation: what others should learn from the work and how the work can be improved upon.

A communication critic makes an argument that describes, interprets, or evaluates the messages to which people are exposed in public or collective ways.

The basic objectives of communication criticism are:

1. To clear misunderstanding by describing
2. To interpret a work of art
3. To provide evaluation or Judgment

In critical writing, it is not the entire work that is the focus, it is the part of the work that is of interest to the reporter. A critic analysis text. That is, it can be the theme, the language, the historical dimension etc. in other words, a text is made out of a piece of work. According to Sillars and Groenbeck (2001 p. 9) it is a set of meaning constructed out of (usually) portions or aspects of works. One can regard Shakespeare Macbeth- As ‘vaulting ambition’, ‘Things fall apart’ as the clash of cultures. whatever the interpretations, it is the weaving and reweaving of a work. For instance, a person interested in examining Shakespeare understanding of the psychology of murder will look particularly at some parts of the work Hamlet (probably the soliloquies and Hamlet’s talk with the grave-digger). Therefore, a text, are the portions of a work and its various contexts that are of particular interest to some analysts. The basic goal is not to deviate from the work but how you came to understand the work and what some of the implications of various understanding are.

However, to react critically, one must textualize such phenomenon, identifying a series of features of those phenomena worth thinking about, analysing and judging.

### **Textualization**

This involves making a text out of a work so as to provide readers with critical understanding. To get a part out of a work the following question must be answered

1. What aspects of the speech or work are interesting to me?
2. Why should anyone else be interested in those aspects of the speech or work
3. What features of the work (the quoted parts of the speech) can serve as grounds for critical arguments, might wish to make
4. What aspect of historical or contemporary contexts are relevant to what you want to say about this speech

### **Analysis**

Analysis is the making of a critical claim by providing the reasons for such. That is, the facts in the work that point to your statement of claim, and the argument you weave around such a statement. Sillars and Groenbeck (2001) noted that in analysing a work there are many issues that may be considered.

1. Themes- statement that indicate a point of view
2. Attributions - characterizations of persons, places or things
3. Subjects mater- characterization of what subject is being discussed or of its contrast with the same or similar sources at another time or place.
4. Probable cause- statements that were likely caused by another phenomenon, statements that are likely to cause another phenomenon
5. Stylistic features- destructive syntax, word choice, figures of speech, one style compared with another
6. Values, attributes, beliefs- speaker or cultural patterns

7. Intentions, psychological states- statements that react a communicator's inner state or intention
8. Argumentation features- arguments forms, evidence
9. Political relations- statements that reveal political or power relations.

Although there are other issues that may be considered. What you look out for in a textual analysis depends on what you want to find out, what your outstanding claim will be. The procedure for analysing a text therefore, is, selecting a topic out of a work for critical claim, secondly, a well concerned text and thirdly sound of relatively systematic way of analysing that text often with a specialized vocabulary,

### **Interpretation**

Interpretation is making meaning out of a text. The meaning is not found in the work but in the person doing the interpretation. Interpretations are what- this- text means- to me /us/ them. Sillars and Groenbeck (2001) assert that the following must be taken note of:

1. Interpretations are contextual
2. Interpretation can be based on 'interpretive communities' (groups of people who have similar interests and rely on social-cultural stereotypes on assigning meanings to objects or other phenomenon)
3. Interpretations can, at least in part, be grouped into symbolic categories. (take the case of abortion- legally it will be seen as (murder or not), religiously (sinful or not) psychologically (carrying a child against your will) sexually (whether a woman has a right to control her body). Socially (is life devalued if a society approves of abortion?))

## **Judgment**

In evaluation or judgment, people often say ‘I liked it’, ‘I hate it’, ‘it was beautiful’ etc. for some, judgment is not an essential critical activity, criticism can end in interpretation. To others, judgment is the final activity that makes a critic a special observer and commentator on the world.

Communication scholars have made the observations regarding judgment. It should be a communal activity- that is the community where one comes from and return their judgments to the communities whose problems are being addressed. The second aspect is that the critical criteria should be clear and accessible to readers and listeners. If you say a play is bad, you should be able to provide reasons.

The general or some criteria for judgment are:

1. Language Norms- Reference must be made to standards of the time and place where it was used.
2. Consistency- That is, the critic must be consistent in his claim or arguments.
3. Generic Appropriateness- This means the appropriate genre or register
4. Coherence- To cohere is to have all of something’s parts fit together into a recognizable whole.

## **Writing A Critical Article**

1. Determine your critical claim and how well you can sustain an argument for it. This can be called the analysis stage. This can be done by finding the work first, a speech, an article etc and your reaction to it. Note when you find a work that arouses your interest and leaves you with a general question, this is the start

toward a critical claim. You must refine that general question until you came to a critical claim.

2. Look carefully at the work and its context, what individual elements do you find there that contribute to your ability to answer the general question? What is your answer to the general question that attracted you to it in the first place?
3. Your critical claim should be stated in a single sentence
4. Weave arguments around your critical claim based on your text. Making arguments also requires that you have a warrant. That is, on what bases do the ground you have found justify the critical claim? Thus, to make critical arguments, you need a critical claim, sub- arguments that are rooted on the grounds or text and context, and a warrant that justifies linking grounds to claim.
5. Structure your work either from the traditional approach or the delayed approach. In the traditional approach- (1) the introduction which is usually in form of a story, quotation, visual image or other item of interest that reflect the work under consideration.
6. The historical, textual and cultural context necessary for the reader's understanding of what it is all about
  - i. State the critical claim
  - ii. The body- states and develops the arguments
  - iii. The conclusion- summarizes and reinforces the argument

In the delayed approach, criticism is organized inductively, in other words, the introduction gives a general idea of what will be discussed, a general question

perhaps and then uses the argument in the body as a series of rung as in a ladder to build to the conclusion where the critical claim is completely exposed.

### **Approaches to Communication Criticism**

Sillars and Groenbeck (2001) noted that there are three traditions regarding communication criticism, but each tradition has basic approaches. They are the rhetorical tradition, the social tradition and cultural tradition. However, only rhetorical tradition will be considered. The approaches under this tradition are:

1. Accurate interpretation
2. Formal criticism
3. Neoclassical criticism

### **Accurate Interpretation**

Sillars and Groenbeck (2001) contend that the hallmarks of accurate interpretations are truth, fact, knowledge, accuracy and objectivity. For instance, one media critic criticizes the media for presenting unverifiable claims to the public this is because such reports were not based on facts quoted from a source. Again, when a social health crusader raises objection about cigarette advertisements, it is because he knows it is injurious to health by and large, the concern of accurate interpretation is what people know to be truth. That is, the degree a text corresponds to the natural or social worlds. There are certain assumptions about accurate interpretation:

1. That human beings are essentially reasonable
2. Reality is external- that is there is a reality that exist beyond human opinion of which the critic accesses to evaluate a text

3. The best interpretation of reality is systematic, that is a reasonable way of looking at an issue. For instance, Journalist would always look for two sources to a story. In order word, it is based on rules.
4. There can be a near separation of facts and opinion. – News stories are normally based on facts; opinion often flows by way of editorials or columnist views. However, there are views about what we know as fact- based opinions that have become belief.

### **Standards of Accurate Interpretation**

1. Being truthful
2. Communicating information
3. Maintaining objectivity
4. Treating others fairly
5. Supporting freedom
6. Accepting responsibility

These standards are rooted in the codes of journalism practice. They are canons on which journalism rests. When doing interpretation therefore, consideration of the above standards will go a long way in measuring the accurateness of the work.

### **Example of a speech**

#### ***A New Dawn Beckons***

Twelve months ago, no one could have predicted the series of stunning events that made it possible for democratic elections to be held at the local government level, the state level, and culminating in the National Assembly elections. Thereafter, you, the good people of Nigeria elected me,

a man who had walked through the valley of the shadow of death, as your President, to head a democratic civilian administration. I believe that this is what God Almighty has ordained for me and for my beloved country Nigeria and its people. I accept this destiny in all humility and with the full belief that with the backing of our people we shall not fail.

I wish, at this point, to thank all you good Nigerians for the confidence reposed in me. I wish to pay tribute to the great and gallant Nigerians who lost their lives in the cause of the struggle for liberty, democracy and good governance. They held the beacon of freedom and liberty high in the face of state terrorism and tyranny.

We thank God that their sacrifice has not been in vain. We will always remember them. Our thanks go also to the friends of Nigeria in many lands for the commitment and unrelenting support they gave throughout the dark, ominous days of the struggle.

Nigerians living in foreign lands deserve special tribute for not forgetting their fatherland and for making their voices heard. Persistently in defence of freedom. And I must commend you my home-based fellow Nigerians for the way you bore unprecedented hardship, deprivation of conceivable rights and privileges that were once taken for granted.

Nigeria is wonderfully endowed by the Almighty with human and other resources. It does no credit either to us or the entire black race if we fail in managing our resources for quick improvement in the quality of life of our people. Instead of progress and development, which we are entitled

to expect from those who governed us, we experienced in the last decade and a half, particularly in the last regime but one, persistent deterioration in the quality of our governance, leading to instability and the weakening of all public institutions. Good men were shunned and kept away from government while those who should be kept away were drawn near. Relations between men and women who had been friends for many decades, and between communities that had lived together in peace for many generations, became very bitter because of the actions or inaction of government. The citizens developed distrust in government, and because promises made for the improvement of the conditions of the people were not kept all statements by government met with cynicism.

This is the challenge before us. Fellow Nigerians, let us rise as one to face the tasks ahead and turn this daunting scene into opportunities in a New Dawn. Let us make this the beginning of a genuine Renaissance.

Fellow Nigerians, the entire Nigerian scene is very bleak indeed. So bleak that people ask me where do we begin? I know what great things you expect of me at this New Dawn. As I have said many times in my extensive travels in the country, I am not a miracle worker. It will be foolish to underrate the task ahead. Alone, I can do little.

You have been asked many times in the past to make sacrifices and to be patient. I am also going to ask you to make sacrifices, and to exercise patience. The difference will be that in the past sacrifices were made and patience exercised with little or no results. This time, however, the results of

your sacrifice and patience will be clear and manifest for all to see. With God as our guide, and with 120 million Nigerians working with me, with commitment, sustained effort, and determination, we shall not fail. On my part, I will give the forthright, purposeful, committed, honest and transparent leadership that the situation demands.

I am determined, with your full cooperation, to make significant changes within a year of my administration. Together we shall take steps to halt the decline in the human development indices as they apply to Nigeria. All the impact of bad governance on our people that are immediately removable will be removed, while working for medium – and long-term solutions.

**Corruption:** Corruption, the greatest single bane of our society today, will be tackled head-on at all levels. Corruption is incipient in all human societies and in most human activities. But it must not be condoned. This is why laws are made and enforced to check corruption, so that society would survive and develop in an orderly, reasonable and predictable way. No society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to become the full-blown cancer it has become in Nigeria. One of the greatest tragedies of military rule in recent times is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged, and unchecked, even when it was glaring for everybody to see. The rules and regulations for doing official business were deliberately ignored, set aside, or by-passed to facilitate corrupt practices. The beneficiaries of corruption in all forms will fight back with all the foul means

at their disposal. We shall be firm with them. There will be no sacred cows. Nobody, no matter who and where, will be allowed to get away with the breach of the law, or the perpetration of corruption and evil. The public officer must be encouraged to believe once again that integrity pays. His self-respect must be restored and his work must be fairly rewarded through better pay and benefits, both while in service and in retirement.

### **Restoration of Confidence in Government**

I am very aware of the widespread cynicism and total lack of confidence in government arising from the bad faith, deceit and evil actions of recent administrations. Where official pronouncements are repeatedly made and not matched by action, government forfeits the confidence of the people and their trust. One of the immediate acts of this administration will be to implement quickly and decisively measures that would restore confidence in governance. These measures will help to create the auspicious atmosphere necessary for the reforms and the difficult decisions and the hard work required to put the country back on the path of development and growth.

### **Priority Issues**

I believe that this administration must deal with the following issues even in these difficult times of near economic collapse:

The crisis in the oil-producing areas, food supply, food security and agriculture, law and order with particular reference to armed robbery, and to

cultism in our educational institutions, and exploration and production of petroleum, among others.

### **Cabinet**

I will need good men and women of proven integrity and record of good performance to help me in my cabinet. I appreciate that the quality and calibre of the members of my cabinet and top appointments will send a positive or negative signal to Nigerians and the international community as to the seriousness of the administration to make salutary changes. In our difficult and abnormal situation, great care and circumspection are called for in appointments to the cabinet and high public positions. To be appointed a minister or to any other public office is not a licence to loot public funds. It is a call to national service. It is one of the best ways of rendering dedicated service to humanity. In this administration, being a minister or holding any other public office will not deprive you of what you have before you come into office but you will not be allowed to have conflict of interest, abuse of office or illicit acquisition.

Regular weekly meetings of Cabinet will be reinforced to enrich the quality of decisions of government through open discussions of memoranda in council. Before any issues are introduced to the cabinet, the time-tested procedure of inter-ministerial consultations would have been made. The conclusions of council, circulated to all ministers and permanent secretaries, will, as used to be the practice in the past, be the authority for executive action and for incurring expenditure of public funds. This will help the

cohesion of the government, ensure discipline, and hinder corrupt intentions since all major contracts must go to council for open consideration. A code of conduct for ministers and other public offices will be introduced. Other measures for individual and collective self-control and self-discipline of ministers and other public officers will be introduced.

### **Public Reconciliation**

I am determined to stretch my hand of fellowship to all Nigerians regardless of their political affiliations. I intend to reconcile all those who feel alienated by past political events and I will endeavour to heal divisions, and to restore the harmony we used to know in this country.

### **Crisis in the Niger Delta**

A bill will be forwarded within weeks of the inception of the administration to the National Assembly, for a law providing for 13 per cent derivation in Revenue Allocation to be used for ecological, rehabilitation, infrastructural and other developments.

A competent group will be set up immediately to prepare a comprehensive Development Plan for the Niger-Delta area. Dialogue will be held at all levels with the great representatives of all sections of the oil-producing communities to improve communication and better mutual understanding. The responsibility and initiative for resolving the crisis rests with the government.

## **ECOMOG**

Nigeria has over the years played a very active role in ECOMOG for the restoration of peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Our national interest requires the establishment and maintenance of peace and stability in the West African sub-region. Specifically, in the case of Sierra-Leone, we shall endeavour to ensure a quick resolution of the crisis by dialogue and diplomatic means by increasing activity on the second track of peace and reconciliation. This will enable us reduce our commitments in both theatres but particularly in Sierra-Leone.

### **External Relations**

Nigeria, once a well-respected country and a key-role player in international bodies, became a pariah nation. We shall pursue a dynamic foreign policy to promote friendly relation with nations and will continue to play a constructive role in the United Nations and the (African Union) and other international bodies.

We shall continue to honour existing agreement between Nigeria and other countries. It is our firm resolve to restore Nigeria fully to her previous prestigious position in the coming of nations.

Let me, once again, thank our international friends who fought for democracy alongside with us. Today, we are taking a decisive step on the path of democracy. We will leave no stone unturned to ensure sustenance of democracy because it is good for us. It is good for Africa, and it is good for the world. We call on the world particularly the Western World, to help us

sustain democracy sharing with us the burden debt which may be crushing' and destructive to democracy in our land.

### **The Nigeria Armed Forces**

The incursion of the military into government has been a disaster for other country and for the military over the last (30) years. *esprit-de-corp* amongst military personnel has been destroyed, professionalism has been lost. Youths go into the military not pursue a noble career but with the sole intention of taking part in coups and to be appointed as military administrators of states and chairmen of task forces.

As a retired officer, my heart bleeds to see the degradation in proficiency of the military. A great deal of reorientation has to be undertaken and a redefinition of roles, retraining and re-education will have to be done to ensure that the military submits to civil authority and regains its pride, professionalism and traditions.

We shall restore military cooperation and exchanges with traditional friends. And we will help the military to help itself

### **Harmony with the three arms of Government**

It is my resolve to work harmoniously with the legislature and the judiciary to ensure that Nigerians enjoy good and civilised governance. I am also determined to build a broad consensus amongst all parties to enhance national harmony and stability and thus ensure success in the long struggle ahead.

Politicians have a duty, in whatever capacity they may find themselves, whether as legislators or ministers, to be committed and be seen to be committed to the public good. Politicians must carefully examine the budget to ensure that public funds are judiciously spent. They must avoid damage to their own credibility and not vote for themselves special privileges. They must join the campaign against corruption and help re-establish integrity the conduct of public affairs. I assure you all that it is the policy of this government to ensure fair remuneration in service and in retirement to public servants, including legislators, civil servants, the police and members of the armed forces, parastatals and the public-owned educational institutions. I call on all Nigerians, in particularly on our religious leaders to pray for moral and spiritual revival and regeneration in our nation.

**An Accurate Interpretation of President Olusegun Obasanjo's Inaugural Address to The Nation on May 29, 1999. Entitled: "A New Dawn Beckons"**

About 11 years ago, precisely on the 29th of May 1999, the nation returned to democratic government following long years of military interregnum, occasioned by human rights violations, harassment, killings, ineptitude, brazen corruption and state sponsored terrorism. President Olusegun Obasanjo who survived the jugular of the military onslaught by divine intervention rose shortly to be the second elected president of the federal republic of Nigeria. In an emotion laden opening paragraph of his inaugural speech 'A new Dawn Beckons', He described his experience as "a man who had walked through the valley of the shadows of death".

Although, the speech lacked the soaring rhetoric associated with the likes of Martin Luther King, Bill Clinton, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Barack Obama and Adams Oshiomohle, it however brings to the fore the ‘cancer’ that has eaten deeply into the fabric of our national values and offered a ray of hope for a people who have been long traumatized and deprived of the capacity to achieve their full potentials.

The key message in the speech is that corruption is the greatest single bane of the society’s progress. This is true because, reference to corruption and its impact appears in not less than nine paragraphs of the speech. Specific facts from the speech show that, corruption has brought about distrust, persistent deterioration in the quality of governance, instability, weak public institutions, and that people now see public office as a means or licence to loot the common wealth. The height of it all is that the “rules and regulations for doing official business were deliberately ignored, set aside, or by-passed to facilitate corrupt practices”.

What could be truer, every year, the country’s national budget and state budget run into billions of naira, but do not translate to real development for the people. The indices of underdevelopment continue to stare the nation in the face, in spite of the growing indices of the economy. Worst still, the blessings of God upon the nation (human and natural) have not been allowed to achieve their potentials. This concern re-echoes when he says “no society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to become the full-blown cancer it has become in Nigeria”.

Recognizing the fact that the successful return of the country to democratic governance was not his effort, he pays glowing tribute to God who has elevated him

and to Nigerians who have sacrificed their lives and have been very patient. He points out that the Niger Delta people who have been long neglected need special intervention by allocating 13 percent of the derivation fund to them and a development commission to address their needs.

In a way, some may consider this proposed allocation as infinitesimal and unfair, it is a step in the right direction, as it would offer a ray of hope for the people of the area, on whose shoulders the monolithic economy is built. This shows that he supports a just and egalitarian society and not the divide and rule system. It also suggests a change from the gun boat diplomatic approach to the management of the issue which has been the lot over the years.

The speech has a bias for corruption and its impact but he failed to make a personal commitment to it, the third person plural pronoun 'we shall' instead of 'we will' is cleverly employed to avoid serious commitment. Whereas, the first-person singular pronoun, 'I' echoes in virtually every other area mentioned as a commitment to the issues raised in other areas. It is at best one of the oratory gimmicks of a politician on a soap box aimed at eliciting applause. He failed to accept responsibility for the change the nation needs. But calls for prayer for attitude change and regeneration.

Stylistically, it is a simple speech, devoid of high-flying words and innuendos. It is like a prose narrative, but laced with a lot of alliteration (e.g. redefinition of rules, retaining and re-education. We call on the world the western world. The conclusions of council, circulated).

The beauty of the speech is that it symbolically marked the end of the pariah status of the nation and the palpable fear that have been the hallmark of the military intrusion into politics. Given these conditions, Nigerians can indeed hope for a new dawn of change where the dreams of the founding fathers could possibly be realized. It is rather sad, however, that he tactically, avoids mentioning the aborted June 12 presidential election. This obvious neglect puts a question mark on his democratic posture. Let's watch and see.

### **Formal Criticism**

This approach is concerned with how the forms the text takes leads to aesthetic worth. For instance, in looking at a tragic play, the elements of tragedy must be visible that is plot, character, thought, language, song and spectacle. Form according to Plato is the essence of something. In literature, the three genres have peculiar standard of measuring them, to deviate is to have fallen short of the rudiments, form, therefore, can be regarded as the structure or the way of shaping of the content of a work of art. It focusses is not on external reality but it emphasizes the centrality of works rather than on external reality or audience response, (Sillars and Groenbeck 2001).

### **Assumptions**

1. Human beings are essentially reasonable: In formal criticism, there are sets of standards people (educated) have refined for several years for measuring or evaluating a work. The reasonableness means that people must be prepared or willing to learn the methods of textual analysis.

2. Properties are inherent in works not ascribed by readers. This means you cannot judge a wonderful work of art by what you think but by the aesthetic worth within the work. What makes a good book is the content not the cover or title.
3. Artistic merit is the aim of formal criticism. This assumption emanates from the fact that formal criticism has been developed by artistic and literary critics, hence it emphasizes aesthetic excellence, in other words, it should provide an in-depth discussion of how a particular film or work of art appeal to the intelligent filmgoers or readers, interpret motifs and symbols in different films and film makers on traditional aesthetic principles.
4. Form subsumes content: Content refers to ‘ideas and emotions’ communicated by a message, form includes “all linguistic (and visual) elements by which the content is expressed. It is form that puts the various ideas and emotions into relationships that permit them to have force in the lives of readers.

### **Principles of Formal Criticism**

1. Theme: theme is the recurring, unifying idea, modification or value of the message. The richness of a theme is judged by how well the form of the text gives the theme a complex application to circumstance other than the immediate context of the subject matter, how probable it is and the density of its development.

Theme can be judged by its general applications, probability (what is not revealed), density- (detail that is adequate in event and quantity to review the complexities of the theme).

2. **Structure:** This refers to how elements of a work are put together so as to reveal the theme in the most aesthetically coherent way. Structure is influenced by two factors. Order and honesty. Order simply means the work should have a beginning, middle and end. Unity refers to how well text coheres so that its receivers can understand the theme.
3. **Characters:** The characters help to support the theme. Characters determine men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Character therefore, is the thinking being who acts to forward the theme. Character development can be judged using three criteria. Does the character have an appropriate role? Is the character believable? What does the character say?
4. **Style:** This means the deployment of language in correct, clear, appropriate, and impressive ways to develop a theme.
5. **Spectacle and song:** song is an embellishment that creates emotional value to a piece of work. Spectacle is a stage machinist, that a creative artiste uses to make the feeling of such real. A ghost, kings etc. that is, the visualization of ideas, feelings, and themes.

**Example: A Formalist Review of Asa**

Asa is an 11-track album released on 12th May, 2008 by petit Nigeria French born singer, Bukola Elemide, who operates under the pseudonym, Asa. born in 1982 in Paris, France. The artiste released this explosive album under Le'chantier recording label. Asa appears strong, with gorgeous vocals and charmingly naive in her delivery. She sounds unspoilt and philosophical. Her genre may not fit

completely into any existing category but revolves around soft reggae, soul and African folktale narrative performance. The sound of her music is devoid of the usual 'noise' associated with Nigeria's contemporary artistes.

The 11-track album comprises of seven (7) English tracks and four (4) Yoruba tracks. Although the Yoruba tracks may not make meaning to non Yorubas'. Nevertheless, the musical arrangement and the breath-taking quality of Asa's voice sets you in a nostalgic mood, thereby creating an instinctive awareness of the essence of her songs. From the track Mr. Jailers to Lba's. Various themes resonate. However, the track '*fire on the mountain*' is the text for analysis. 'Fire on the mountain' track brings to the fore the general level of social decay and the attendant neglect or indifference of modern society to the events around them. Her choruses, points to the danger inherent in the society's indifference which can boomerang in the near future.

The key message in the track is the indifference of modern society. This is because, from her opening chorus to the stanzas, the theme of indifference vibrates clearly. She paints the picture of an innocent child's blood, an army man who mobbed an innocent man, without any one reacting. This suggest the level of society's indifference to the problems around, she also voices the conscienceless nature of modern man and the high level of parental indifference to the training of their children, leaving them to learn values alien to society from other sources, which results into teenage promiscuity.

The theme has a universal application. The harsh economic realities of the world have subjected couples, the divorced and unmarried to a primordial concern for self, and indifference to others. Modern man has moved from community

consciousness to individualism. This accounts for why the values that were of common concern in those days are now treated with levity. The density of her theme re-echoes in the instances she employed to drive home the issue. What more suggests this universal theme than the last line “fire in African oh, oh, everywhere”

The stanzas are well ordered, such that the chorus easily flows to the stanzas. The track has its distinct features, the lyric and the instruments unite in complete rhythms that make for aesthetic appreciation. The unity of the stanzas with the chorus helps in bringing out the central theme vividly.

She uses the imagery of the ‘innocent child’ to represent the oppressed, ‘nobody’ to stand for indifference, ‘soldier man’ as oppressors, ‘lover man’ and ‘she’ to represent the youths who have become indifferent to moral values. These characters help in realizing the objective of the track, which is to bring to common awareness, the level of indifference of the modern man.

Her style is not terse; she uses a combination of standard English and Nigerian English to make the message sellable to both her local and international audiences. The lyric contains a lot of innuendos. Although some of the innuendos may not be easily understood by individuals with low little understanding of literature or traditional proverbs. However, the perfect use of alliteration, repetition and metaphors point to her literary prowess and use of language. The chorus is deliberately repeated to emphasize the theme. The imagery of the soldier man, lover man, the violated teenager reflects the commonness of the issue that ought to be of concern.

The songs in the album and this track in particular, create deep imageries of the various scenes she paints. Her use of the pronoun ‘I’ and ‘you’ make the track very conversational and real. Thus, the lyrics creates the mood of helplessness in the minds of those who listen and awakens their consciousness to the need to show concern about the plight of those helpless and those losing their sense of responsibility amongst others,

‘Asa’, the striking album is pleasant to listen to. The punching lyrics are very unique. Asa represents the bundling social crusader of attitudinal change, lets join her in preaching the common good rather than been indifferent.

### **Neo-Classical Criticism**

This is the dominant method for examining speeches or any other persuasive message forms. E.g. essay, pamphlets, editorials advertisement, claim of value, fact, policy etc.

There are assumptions regarding neo-classical criticism which Sillars and Groenbeck (2001) enumerated as:

1. Human beings are reasonable: That human being can make sense out of situation
2. Audience response: Its effectiveness can be viewed from six perspective
  1. Long –range effects upon the social group
  2. Long –term consequences of ideas a speaker articulated.
  3. The impact of the work on a speaker’s or writer’s own thought and reputation
  4. Impact of one work on later works.

5. Artistic qualities of a work in spite of the fact that it seemingly has little direct impact on anyone.
6. How well the speaker considered the circumstances, not by the actual changes in any audience.
3. The type of argument made.

### **Steps in Neoclassical Analysis**

1. Look at the work in relations to its context.
2. What is the nature of the audience (knowledge, group identification, receptivity)?
3. Structure of the message (unity and order).
4. What arguments are used in the message.
5. What values are developed in the works?
6. What ethos is developed in the work – (good sense, good morals and goodwill)
7. What is the verbal and physical style of the work? (choice of word, grammar etc).

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## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

### **REVIEW WRITING**

#### **Introduction**

Sometimes you can be invited to review a book, a play and any other work of art. What would necessarily come to your mind? What are you expected to do to the work? Your knowledge of review writing would help in this regard.

In a simple sense, a review is an assessment of a work of art aimed at making evaluation or judgment based on the inherent strength or weaknesses of the work. Reviews differ from critical writing, in either case, both are critical writing. Every critic or reviewer seeks to provide answers to the following questions raised by Okunna and Omenugha (2002, p.199):

- What is it about?
- How does the author or creator go about it?
- What does the author set out to do?
- With what measure of success?
- How significant is the particular work to the field it belongs?
- The reviewer's opinion, is it good of its kind?
- (sic) the critical reviewer enjoys the work
- Does she think the audience will enjoy it?

The first step into review writing is to go through the work with the mind of establishing what the strength and weaknesses are. The choice of which types of review to be adopted will flow from this initial assessment. Every creative work has set standards or indices to determine its uniqueness. In a drama text or play;

knowledge of the playwright or director's intention is germane to its review. Stage management techniques and its uses are crucial. What is the central theme of the play, what genre does it belong to? Are the elements peculiar to the specific genre noticed and effectively used? What is the nature of the suspense; Dialogue, Comic relief and flashback? Do the costumes help in realizing the character traits? Is the stage mechanist real? What type of plot structure was employed? Do they help in realizing the central theme of the play?

If it is a book, what type of book is it? What background information are provided? Is it a Fiction, non-fiction or specialized? What central issue is discussed in the book? How is the language structure? Is it very strong or mild? Who are the characters in the book in case of a novel? What type of plot structure is employed? In what setting or locale? What moral has been learnt?

Is the book current? Are concepts and the ideas portrayed in line with traditional thinking from the field? What areas of difference and new thinking are canvassed?

In case of a film, what dramatic and filmic components are employed? Do the dramatic elements help in realizing the theme? What of the filmic components, do they help in creating the image of reality? Does the film have aesthetic value? Are the rules of transition, camera movement, shots and angles of view dramatically used to create the right illusion?

What if the work is a musical piece? Which music category does it belong to? Reggae, rhythms and blues, hip hop, afro-hip hop, high life, jazz, juju, remix etc?

What is the central message? Rhythm, instrumentation and lyrics? Do they help the listener to respond positively? What values are promoted?

Answers to these questions are crucial to the review.

If it is in the area of fine and applied arts, what sort of art work? is it an exhibition? Solo or group? What times is the work be referred? Contemporary or historical? What message is the artiste sending across?

Reviews are written in the present tense. Determine from the onset the audience to which the review is meant for. Go through the work for a deeper knowledge of the issues. Determine what your introduction, middle and end will look like. Take time to make your assessment, acknowledge the authors strengths and weaknesses.

There are three types of review; pro review, con review and neutral review.

**Pro review** is a positive assessment of a creative work. This is when the manifest strengths of the work outweigh the drawback or shortcomings in the work. It is a favourable recommendation of the work to the creative community. Ideally, reviews are handled by experts knowledgeable about the subject or work. His or her professional input is required to lure audience into buying the work, reading it or watching it. Unfortunately, reviews are becoming more of a marketing strategy aimed at stimulating the audience into patronizing the work.

**Con review** is the direct opposite of pro review. In this sense, the inherent weaknesses surmount the strong points of the work. What authors try to do to reduce incidences of con review is to send the manuscript or initial work to an expert for comments. The reviewer therefore recommends areas the author needs to rework to have a better

work. Where the reviewer has no formal knowledge of the work before the public review, it is important that care be taken not to totally destroy a creative effort. Nevertheless, a con review will point to the weaknesses in the work.

**Neutral review** is a type of review in which the reviewer takes the middle line approach. It is a little to the right and a little to the left. The reviewer approaches both the strength and weaknesses of the work. the reviewer straddles between the good and bad side of the work. The challenge with this type of review is that it leaves the audience in a position of indecision.

### **Functions of Critical and Review Writing**

1. To recommend the work to the audience.
2. It provides reader or viewer service. In television programming, there are programmes devoted to art and style, music and films etc. These programmes incorporate review elements in their presentations. The essence is to help the viewer follow the latest music album, the uniqueness of the tracks and why the viewer needs to get a copy. Similarly, there are art and life columns in newspapers where review works are done. Such columns and programmes provide reader and viewer service.
3. To mould public opinion about the works. When reviews are done, they help the audience form opinion or modify their existing opinion about the works.
4. They serve the entertainment function of the news media.
5. To provide guidance to creative artiste.
6. They provide understanding to works.
7. To update knowledge about trends in the creative industry.

8. Help to categorize, grade, compare works and the standard required for creative works.
9. To help upcoming writers develop the critical skills necessary for reviews.
10. Critical and review writing help to draw public support for the artiste and his work.

### **Qualities of A Good Critic and Reviewer**

Critical writing skills can be learnt and imbibed if the writer develops the following features:

1. Ability to write meaningfully or effectively.
2. Reviewer's knowledge of the work under review. This can be done through reading of the work.
3. Knowledge of the medium in which the review will be published or aired.
4. Having the audience in mind.
5. Knowledge of the times and context in which the creative work was done.

### **Differences Between Critical and Review Writing**

Perhaps late Professor Paul Ansah's thought on this will suffice for an introduction. In his words, "some people make a distinction between review writing and critical writing. They say that review writing is no more than a specialized reportorial activity for which one needs only a basic knowledge of the cultural activity or genre he is reviewing. Plus, writing skills. For critical writing, one needs much more than writing skills; one need some solid knowledge of the subject, which confers some authority on and entitles him to pass critical judgement on an artistic work" (cited in Okunna and Omenugha 2002, p. 195).

Essentially, the following differences could be deciphered:

**A) Reviews**

1. Reviews are promotional in nature.
2. It is not a regular media activity
3. Reviews ends in judgement.
4. For artistic merit
5. Follows laid down standards in arriving at a decision. E.g. There are standards for measuring a tragic play, such standards is what a reviewer would want examined.
6. It is not a professional activity.

**B Critical**

1. It is an academic and media activity.
2. To provide understanding.
3. It does not necessarily end in judgment but helps to discover the work.
4. Flows from the news or tied to a news peg
5. Personal journalism
6. It is a discipline
7. It is an interpretative activity.
8. To provide guidance for producers and creators of art.
9. Criticism are based on certain traditions- neo-classical, social, and rhetorical.

**Writing a review**

Writing a review comes with a formal knowledge of the work. The reviewer can begin by previewing the work through the preface in case of a book, the opening

montage in case of a film and the tracks in case of a musical album. The preview should necessarily lead the reviewer into introductory reading. In introductory reading, effort is made to understand the author, the issues, the social context of the work and language used.

From the introductory reading comes skimming. Skimming is a form of reading devoted into knowing the thrust of the work, the methodology employed in terms of narration or grammar and the perceived difficulty in work. If it is a film, when you preview the film you want to know the story line, the plot structure, and the semiological undertones inherent in it. In the of case music, skimming will help you appreciate the lyrics better, the central message of the artiste and the aesthetic worth of the album or track.

When this is done, the reviewer can go into the stage of careful reading which involves note taking and attention to details. Barnet and Bodan (1993, p. 100) contend that

As you read the work, underline or highlight key passages and make annotation in the margin. Because you are reading actively or interacting with the text, you will not simply let your eye move across the page, you will underline or highlight what seem to be the chief points so that later, when you review the essay, you can easily locate the main passages. But do not over do a good thing. If you find yourself underlining or highlighting most of a passage, you are probably not thinking carefully enough about what the key points are.

In doing this reading, summarise the key points and then write your review. Although these steps are essential for upcoming writers and reviewers, one can

engage in one time reading and write a beautiful review. It depends on the reviewer's level of assimilation. It is when you are done with the necessary reading that you start writing the review.

Writing a review involves technical identification of the work. First, it is essential to state that the technical identification of a review provides all the technical details by which the work can be identified. In this sense, the title, of the work, the author, the publisher in case of a book, place of publication or place of exhibition in terms of photo or art exhibition, the curator, the price tag of the book or art, the volume of the book in terms of pages. If it is a music work or film, the title of the work, the number of tracks, the record label, the producer, director, marketing or distribution company, the price. In most art exhibition, a background history of the art creator is presented. The curator provides information on the central theme of the exhibition and what each work stands for.

There are two technical approaches to review writing. The headed identification and incorporated identification.

In the headed identification, the basic information about the work is placed as headings before the actual review. Example:

**TITLE Of BOOK:** The Art of News Writing and Reporting

**AUTHOR:** Emmanuel Ufuophu-Biri

**PUBLISHER:** University of Ibadan Press

**PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** Ibadan

**DATE OF PUBLICATION:** 2006

NUMBER OF PAGES: 147

PRICE: 800

REVIEWER: Professor John Sambe.

**Note!** If it is a video disc, the title of the movie, the screen play writer, director, producer, executive producer, marketing and Distribution Company, price and reviewer will come as headings.

The incorporated technical identification builds the headed information into the body of the review. Effort is usually made on time to provide the information without losing these essential facts about the work. This is to enable the audience know on time what the work is all about. Matured writers provide the information in such a way as not to pack every detail in one paragraph. This calls for creativity on the part of the reviewer. When the technical details are carefully built into the opening and succeeding paragraphs, it keeps the audience spell bound and eager to know more about the work. The reviewer will at this junction point to the direction of the review in terms of what type of review the audience should expect.

An example will suffice. *'Habit' the audacious attempt by Boniface Anyanwu the master story teller to unravel the evils associated with cult related activities by students on campus. The movie shot in University campuses and major fun spots in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria re-echoes the need for parents to raise up their children in the fear of the Lord before the evil habits they learn catch up with them. Released from the stable of the House of Macro, at just 400 naira per copy, it is a must watch for parents and youths wanting to know the tricks employed*

*by campus cults and what evil awaits members. Coming at a time when the issues has occupied the front burner in national discourse, Zeb Ejiro the prolific director has again shown his mastery of the art of film making.*

In addition to the above, Asemah (2011, p.205) suggest other ways of introducing a review thus:

1. An introduction of the author telling the readers who the author is, what books he has written.
2. There should be a summary of the problem the author is discussing about. Thus, if it is a book review on “promiscuity among youths” the reviewer can begin with a brief report on the growth of promiscuity and the attempts made to curb it.
3. Use an anecdote or an illustration either to suggest the mood of the review or introduce the author’s attitude towards his subject.
4. There should be a quotation that sums up the purpose of the work.
5. A description of the book in general terms in order to give the reader a brief and comprehensive picture of it.
6. A classification of the book to show how it resembles or differs from others of the same kind.
7. With a combination of two or more of these openings.

### **Guidelines for Review Writing**

Generally speaking, Williams, cited in Obateru (2008) provides a 10-point guide to writing review. They are:

1. **Make yourself an expert:** You can grow to become an authority in writing reviews in any of the genres of arts, the expertise comes from your knowledge and professional handling of previous reviews you have handled.
2. **Do not flaunt your expertise:** don't think you know more than your audience by talking down on them. Provide knowledge by drawing on what they need to know about the work. It is also important that you don't assume too much about what the audience possibly know.
3. **Do not talk down on your audience** but assume that they have the capacity to grasp what you write.
4. **Do not over use plot summary:** present the story or issue in the work without embellishing the narrative, but try and provide clear interpretation of what the works is all about.
5. **Relate the work to life:** what lessons in the work can be related to life situations? What can the audience take home to improve their lives and situations?
6. **Find a strong lead and conclusion:** from your lead, introduce your review with a well written introduction. Let your conclusion force a spontaneous response from the audience.
7. **Cite specific examples to support your views:** Draw specific text in the work that supports your claim about the beauty of the work.
8. **Write well and cleverly:** You are appointed a reviewer because they expect the best from you. Therefore, write intelligently and present your views in a logical manner.

9. **Write with conviction:** As a reviewer, if you are sure about the type of review you are writing; do it with every sense of conviction. The confidence stems from knowledge of the work.
10. **Have a little charity:** every work you review has its own strengths and weaknesses. Don't be quick at drawing your conclusion. Let your position be based on available evidence. However, upcoming artists and writers don't need to be hulled down; they need some support to grow.

**Summary:** Review writing is a critical activity devoted to assessing creative works with the mind of recommending them to the public on the basis of the strengths and weaknesses of the work. It is to provide the reader with a sort of understanding on what a particular work is all about.

The key to review writing is to take a critical look at the work, taking into account the genre to which the work belongs and how well the elements used by the creator meet the standard expected in such work. A lot of creativity is required for a review. The reviewer's business is not necessarily to pass judgment. His job is to point out what is unique about the work or how a work failed in its category based on the inherent properties in the work.

The challenge of a reviewer is the mastery and research into the area which the reviewer has been saddled with. Since the audience first encounter with the work would be based on his intellectual insight. If you fail to stand out in your assessment of the work you would have failed in your responsibility. Therefore, develop a knack for reading and have abroad based knowledge about issues. These could help in your review assignment later.

On a final note, the whole essence of a review is to help the audience make critical decision about a creative work. The way and manner you present the work to them will determine whether they will get a feel of it or not. As an intellectual exercise, you need to be one before you can stand to speak or write about the merits or demerits in a work.

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