



## **Infrastructure Constraints and Capacity Development in Journalism Education in West Africa**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Development of viable infrastructure is one of the essential ingredients for capacity development in journalism education and training in Nigeria. Journalism training has been in practice before they were training institutions to produce journalist. However, evolution and development of infrastructure is inherently faced with diverse constraints which are often shaped and molded by historical peculiarities, political setting, economic space and even environmental factors.

**Objective:** This study examined infrastructure constraints and capacity development journalism Education in Nigeria.

**Method:** Being a position paper, the researcher depended solely on secondary sources of data to arrive at a conclusion. The researcher consulted empirical and theoretical studies from other researchers and scholars in the field of infrastructure, constraints, journalism education and other works related to the topic. Data and conclusions reached were derived from extensive consultations of textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines and other online materials. This helped the researcher to arrive at the conclusions here.

**Result:** The paper observed that there has been so many scholarly works done on journalism. It has been theorized, researched, studied and criticized worldwide by people coming from a wide variety of disciplines. In addition, it also observed that those who contribute occasional articles to newspapers or electronic media are not journalist, at best, they are mere writers noting that Journalism training is effective, only when there is proper infrastructure in place as they both go hand in hand. It also observed that the vital issues affecting journalism training in Nigeria are finance, corruption, politicization of infrastructure projects and international requirement of projects.

**Conclusion:** This study concludes that it is crucial to mention that infrastructure challenges has affected journalism training to a large extent in Nigeria. Despite these challenges, there are various solutions that can be implemented on to improve journalism training in Nigeria.

**Unique Contribution:** The study is significant to journalist, incoming journalist, policy makers and researchers.

**Key Recommendation:** The study recommended that despite these constraints, there are various solutions that can be implemented to improve journalism training in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Journalism, Journalism Education, Infrastructure Constraints, Media, Nigeria



## INTRODUCTION

Journalism is an art of earning ones living through writing for the print and electronic media. According to Akpan, Oloke and Ofulue (2017), journalism is the art and science of gathering, selecting and processing information or ideas, intelligence for dissemination to the public. Discussing further that good journalism consist of the intelligent assembly of relevant facts that is passed to the audience. Daramola (2003) indicated that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the profession of journalism was not recognised and full time reporters who derived their living from writing for the newspapers had not emerged but by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the newspapers had broken the earliest methods of disseminating information. Ojomo (2015) notes that the press began to perform the role of a mouthpiece for the public by projecting their problems, their aspirations and needs. The government was not happy with this, thereby subjecting journalist to suppression. This made journalist to call for freedom to operate and liberty. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a remarkable development in printing technology (Daramola, 2003). By early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the methods and problems of producing newspapers had become correspondingly diverse. Many governments in the developing world revitalised their education systems over the last two decades with a view to meeting goals set by the United Nation (Mukuni, 2019).

Development of viable infrastructure has been identified as one of the essential ingredients for engendering sustainable economic growth and development in Nigeria Sa'idu & Boyi (2021). This could be gleaned from first National Development Plan, 1962-1968 where infrastructure was recognised as a potent tool for laying a solid foundation for the development of the then newly independent Nigeria (Braji, 2014). Thus infrastructure is a vital ingredient to economic growth and development, which is the key to raising living standards. (Henckel, and McKibbin, 2017)

The development of infrastructure world over is a fundamental precursor to economic growth and development. Most developing countries with infrastructural deficit can hardly create a reliable path to national development (Umar, Ogbu & Ereke 2019). For Suliav and Sheffrin (2003) infrastructure is the basic physical and organizational structures need for the operation of a society. Research has also indicated that economic development of Nigeria can only be perfected and secured by the presence of infrastructures. The absence of appropriate and modern infrastructure has been the bane of the journalism training in Nigeria. Taking into account the practical nature of the field, it is clear that without training facilities products of our institutions might end up as misfits in the work place. Very often, several trainees do not get opportunities to see, much less interact with basic equipment until their internships. This leads to the production of graduates with theory knowledge and near zero practical base. (Ojomo, 2015).

Journalism training has been in practice before they were training institutions to produce journalist. Adaba (1989) in Ojomo (2015), note that the first newspaper in Nigeria *Iwe-Irohin* was published in 1859, but a formal training of journalist did not begin until 1954 when a two week vocation course was conducted at the University College, Ibadan. It is now a compulsory part of the curriculum for undergraduate students in journalism to go for training which is intended to balance the theory taught in class with the practical world but there is the issue of



infrastructure challenges being faced by potential journalists. Existing research have focused on different geographical context (Sa'idu & Boyi, 2021), adopted alternative methodologies and examined the issue from other conceptual perspective (Mukuni 2019, Ojomo 2015, Oyedele 2012 & Deuze 2005). However, none may have investigated the phenomenon from the standpoint adopted in the present study. This paper reflects on infrastructure constraints and capacity development journalism education and training in Nigeria focusing on vital issues.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

1) To investigate the infrastructure constraints and capacity development of journalism Education in Nigeria.

### **The Concept of Journalism**

There has been so many scholarly works done on journalism. The concept of journalism has been researched, studied, theorized and criticized worldwide by people coming from a wide variety of disciplines. Indeed, research about journalism and among journalists has been established as a widely acknowledged field, particularly in the second half of the 20th century (Deuze, 2005). Journalism is the activity of gathering, assessing, creating and presenting news and information to the public. It is also an open secret that those who contribute occasional articles to newspapers or electronic media are not journalist, at best, they are mere writers. Daramola (2003) notes that journalism is a profession or business of news writing for radio, television and newspaper. To Oso, Olatunji & Owens-ibie (2014) journalism remains an object of fascination, not only to the ordinary consumers of the news but to politician, corporate barons and public officials. It is an established fact that journalist inform citizens about events in their locality, community, country and the world. Hence journalist help to create what McLuhan has called the "global village." According to Mensing, (2010), for many of the previous 100 years the role of a journalist was to find information, shape it into an accurate story and transmit it as quickly as possible to a mass audience via a mass medium. Today, information is no longer scarce, breaking news is no longer the province of professional journalists, mass media are declining in influence and news is easily personalized and this is where journalism infrastructure and education comes in.

Journalism neighbourhoods in previous centuries relied on physical infrastructures dominated by print and broadcast journalism globally, and national regulated industries to varying degrees (Young & Hermida, 2025). Journalists and journalism education programs cannot exist in a vacuum (Parhak-Shelak & Desai-Chopra, 2011). They are products of their time and are shaped by the worlds in which they grow and function. Journalism education today has to respond to the changing world scenario dominated by globalization, multiculturalism, and exciting new technologies on one side and growing ethnic conflicts, economic inequalities, an endangered environment and threats to world peace on the other and this can only be done through training.



### **Infrastructure: A concept**

The word infrastructure is a combination of the Latin prefix "infra", meaning "below", and "structure". It is an umbrella term for many activities referred to as "social overhead capital" by such Development economists as Paul Rosenstein Rodan, Ragnar Nurkse, and Albert Hirschman (World Development Report, 1994). Like most academically contested themes in development studies, the provision and development of infrastructures have been the subject of much theoretical analysis and empirical studies (Fidelis, Jude & Ighata, 2014). According to Umar, Ogbu and Ereke, (2019) Infrastructures are basic fundamental services that should be put in place to enable development to occur. For Sullivan and Sheffrin, (2003), infrastructure is the basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society like industries, buildings, roads, bridges, health services, governance and so on. (2005). For Ogbuozobe (1997) in Umar et al (2019) notes that infrastructure is an umbrella term for many activities usually referred to as "social overhead capital" by development economists. Effective journalism training requires a robust infrastructure (Multimedia newsroom, digital laboratories and field equipment) which connects the theoretical knowledge to practical, hands-on- production.

The vital importance of infrastructures became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic as critical responses reflected historic national and international health systems and resources. These infrastructures, which took decades to create, shaped how societies thought, behaved and conceived of how it was possible to respond to the crisis (Young & Hermida, 2025). Infrastructures studies has been gaining growing and meaningful attention from journalism studies scholars for the past two decades. Scholars have focused on an extensive range of related topics including: local news infrastructures (Napoli et al. 2017; Sjøvaag, Pedersen, and Læg Reid 2019), inclusive communication infrastructures (Wenzel and Crittenden 2021), fact-checking processes (Graves and Anderson 2020), platforms and platform power (Ananny 2013, 2018; Ferrer-Conill, Sjøvaag, and Olsen 2023; Nechushtai 2018; Nielsen and Ganter 2022; Plantin et al. 2018), innovation as counter infrastructure (Chua and Lee 2022), circulation (Carlson 2020), trust (Moran and Nechushtai 2022), and journalism policy (Pickard 2020; Sjøvaag, Pedersen, and Læg Reid 2019). Precisely, infrastructure refers to a network of transport, communication and public (social) services – all functioning as a system or as a set of interrelated and mutually beneficial services provided for the improvement of the general well-being of the population.

### **Journalism training and infrastructure challenges in Nigeria**

Journalism training and education in Nigeria and the world is flourishing as it is been offered by universities, colleges, institutes and schools, non-profit organisations, media councils, regulators, trade unions, state broadcasters, and the commercial media, amongst others. According to Ojomo (2015), Nwafor (2012), Journalism is a young profession in Africa, but its phenomenal growth has created an increasing demand for trained journalists. Research has also indicated that various interested parties have expressed concern on the need for quality in journalism education. This concern is informed by the strategic roles of journalists in society and governance. In addition, Oso, Olatunji & Owens-ibie (2014); Chibuwe and Nwafor (2014). notes that many



Nigerians have expressed concern over slipping standard of journalism practice due to pressure of commercialization, sensationalism in news reporting and presentation, political and ethnic partisanship and other unethical behaviour. This is where the importance of the journalism training comes in.

Ojomo (2015) notes that

As the fourth estate of the realm, journalists are the harbingers of the ideals of the structures and institutions of democracy. They keep the society and its various parts running through the provision of information needed to make policy decisions. The position of the journalist in society is similar to that of a physician. Without good training and strict professionalism, the client's life is in danger of wrong diagnosis and therapy. An ill-educated journalist could be a problem than an asset to society pp.88-89

Nigeria is the most populous countries in Africa, with a vibrant media landscape that plays a crucial role in informing the public and holding those in power accountable. However, the Nigeria media industry is not without its challenges, particularly when it comes to journalism training. As Carey (2000) has noted, journalism education came to life in the “age of the reporter”, when the role of a journalist was to find information, shape it into an accurate story and transmit it as quickly as possible to a mass audience via a mass medium. While journalism schools have diversified and now graduate a large percentage of students who never pursue reporting, the idealized perception of journalism education still centers on the reporter and the basic functions of information gathering, evaluation, production and distribution. An ill-educated journalist could be a problem than an asset to society. As early as 1964, Nnamdi Azikiwe had noted:

...in order to live up to its highest standards and ethics, there is need in this country for journalists who will take pride in their profession .And develop a sense of duty to the public.... An ill-educated journalist is a liability to the press and to the nation, but a professionally-trained journalist, who is armed with a background of sound university education... will transform the practice of journalism into an asset to the credit of our nation. (p.8).

One of the primary challenges facing journalism training is the lack of adequate infrastructure (Muppidi & Manvi, 2008) Many media organisations do not have the necessary resources to provide high quality for their staff, including access to modern technology, well equipped training facilities and experienced trainers. There is also a shortage of infrastructural facilities, consistent course curricula and a qualified faculty. There is also no training to develop analytical thinking in the classroom. The students are grilled into writing the right way but the content is often undisputed. (Muppidi et al, 2008) The electricity situation of the country is also making it difficult for media organisations to operate at full capacity. For Nigerian journalist to



stand shoulder to shoulder with their counterparts in other countries, there is the need for good training and this can only be achieved when there is proper infrastructure on growth. New technologies keeps coming out on a daily basis, to make the work of an average journalist easy and this is where the issue of training comes in, in addition, the need for adequate infrastructure to facilitate effective training for would be journalist and also journalist themselves. Overall, improving the infrastructure for journalism training in Nigeria is crucial to ensure that the media industry can continue to fulfil its vital role in informing the public and holding those in power accountable.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on Systems Theory and Human Capital Theory. System Theory pioneer Niklas Luhmann in 1995 traced the evolution of the theory along three major paradigms which are 1) part/whole, 2) systems/environment and 3) similarity/difference or classic modern and postmodern paradigm. The theory according to Arnold, Kleve & Pieper (2024) offers a Trans disciplinary approach to comprehending complex communication and social interaction in family business and business families. Systems Theory is used to understand and address the dynamic interplay of various influences or systems in an individual's life—personal, family, friends, community, institutions, and society. Systems Theory explains journalism training institutions as interconnected systems whose effectiveness depends on functional infrastructural components such as technology, funding, electricity, internet access, and human resources While Human Capital Theory pioneered by Economist Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz proposes that an individual's education, skills, health and experience hold tangible economic value and directly increase productivity. Human Capital Theory complements this perspective by emphasizing that investment in journalism education infrastructure enhances professional competence, media quality, and societal development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Being a position paper, the researcher depended solely on secondary sources of data to arrive at a conclusion. The researcher consulted empirical and theoretical studies from other researchers and scholars in the field of infrastructure, constraints, journalism education and other works related to the topic. Data and conclusions reached were derived from extensive consultations of textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines and other online materials. This helped the researcher to arrive at the conclusions here.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Okocha, et al (2025) in the study titled Deployment of Solutions Journalism to promote Rural Development in North-Central, Nigeria notes that the potential of Solutions Journalism in overcoming prevailing challenges and contributing to rural development by spotlighting successful initiatives and bridging the urban-rural divide. Grounded in the Agenda Setting Theory, the research employ qualitative methods, specifically a Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) study design, to gather stakeholder perspectives on deploying Solutions Journalism in North-Central Nigeria. The population of the study consists of participants who meet defined



inclusion criteria: Journalists who cover rural development issues and have knowledge or experience with solutions-oriented reporting, rural residents in regions of North Central Nigeria, development workers involved in rural development initiatives within the same region, and lecturers of Journalism and Media studies. A total of 30 participants were selected through the purposive sampling technique: 13 journalists, 8 development workers, 5 rural dwellers, and 4 lecturers. Through the focus group discussion, the research explores key objectives, such as assessing the level of rural development in North Central Nigeria, ascertaining the impact of solutions journalism in rural development, and examining the challenges and opportunities of solutions journalism in North Central Nigeria. The findings revealed the challenges rural areas face, such as poverty, unemployment, deplorable road networks, lack of improved farming techniques to enhance farm work and improve agricultural produce. The study also revealed the challenges journalists face when reporting rural development issues, including lack of training in reporting solutions-oriented news, funding constraints, security risks, and language and cultural barriers, hindering effective reporting on rural issues, intimidation by politicians, bribery (brown envelope), media organization ownership influence, yellow journalism, poor road infrastructure limiting access to rural areas, poor network coverage, insufficient transportation for journalists, media illiteracy among rural residents, and a lack of reliable data. Despite these barriers, the research points out the opportunities Solutions Journalism presents which ranges from helping the voices of rural communities to be heard, holding leaders accountable, and encouraging development initiatives among those who live in rural areas, by emphasising stories of resilience and ingenuity by members of rural communities, solutions journalism can change public opinion about rural areas, improve policy advocacy, and support sustainable development projects. The study recommends that policymakers prioritise funding and support for Solutions Journalism, ensure journalists receive adequate training on solutions-oriented reporting, and the use of equipment, ensure the protection of journalists, and advocate for ethical communication practices, transparency, and accountability to foster development and build public trust.

Bassey-Duke, et al (2017) in the study titled Challenges of Development Journalism in Nigeria notes that Development journalism is perceived as an alternative journalism that primarily focuses on national development especially in the Third World countries. This paper examines the reasons for dissociation from the advancement perspective of the developed world, the challenges faced by development journalism, and discusses the way the nation should go so as to attain her desire in the committee of nations. Library research was used to generate secondary data for this paper. The discourse is anchored on the theoretical proposition of development theory of the press which persuades the developing nations to engage in development journalism. The paper suggests that the Nigerian press should generate and manage contents to help society build consensus for the needed changes and growth.

### **Vital issues and solutions for journalism training in Nigeria**

Journalism training is effective, only when there is proper infrastructure in place as they both go hand in hand. However this section examines the vital issues and the solutions for journalism training in Nigeria.



## **Financial Issues**

One very vital issue when it comes to journalism training and infrastructure is finance. Infrastructure provisioning is capital intensive and With the world economic recession, the resources for constructing new schools training and employing new teachers and supplying schools with teaching-learning materials have not been adequate (Wamba and M Gomezulu, 2014). The solution to this challenge is for the Nigerian government to prioritize investment in the media industry by providing funding and incentives for media organizations to upgrade their infrastructure and invest in training programmes.

## **Corruption**

It is almost an intellectual treason to discuss challenges of infrastructure development without factoring the phenomenon of corruption (Saidu & Boyi, 2021). This is because; menace of corruption has permeated all aspects of life in Nigeria including the journalism profession. Corruption is a deadly virus that causes setbacks in any country if it is not properly attended to. In addition to this, research has also indicated that employment of incompetent hands to handle contracts is another dimension of corruption in the development of infrastructure because the menace of corruption prevents professionals from handling projects. The solution to this vital issue is that competent hands and experts should be made use of.

## **Politicisation of infrastructure projects**

Politics is a game that is been played almost everywhere whether in organizations or in academics. Hornby (2000: 657) defined politics as the science and art of government. Research has also indicated that politics is one of the oldest social sciences since it is known to deal with terms, organizations and administration of state or part of one and with the regulation of its relation with other states. Politicization of infrastructure projects is a vital issue that the country is facing at the moment. Politicians gets contracts now on party basis and party loyalty. It is also on record that these set of politician are not expects when it comes to procuring all the necessary tools that will enhance journalism practice. The solution to this is that, the government should not politicised infrastructure projects.

## **International requirement of projects**

Studies have established that journalism training in Africa is grafted on western paradigms. Ojomo (2015) aver that from political independence till today, the theories, models and applications of key concepts that guide media practice and education in Africa are steeped in foreign contents. As Chuma (2010) observes, there is little in mainstream journalism training in Africa. The solution to this is for the country to have its own standard too and stop relying on the foreign standards.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is crucial to mention that infrastructure challenges have affected journalism training to a large extent in Nigeria. Despite these challenges, there are various solutions that can be implemented on journalism training in Nigeria. For instance, partnership between media organisation and academic institutions can help to bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing trainees



with access to experienced professionals and providing trainees with access to experienced professionals and cutting-edge technology. Additionally, the Nigerian government can prioritise investment in the media industry by providing funding and incentives for media organisations to upgrade their infrastructure and invest in training programs.

### **Ethical clearance**

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

I declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

### **Authors' Contributions**

Adenike Omotayo Okeya-Olayinka conceived the study, including the design, handled the analysis and interpretation and also wrote the initial manuscript. I have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and am responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

### **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure**

The author(s) declare that no generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing, analysis, or preparation of this manuscript.

### **Data availability statement**

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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