



## ADVERTISING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF APCON'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

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### ABSTRACT

This study is designed to assess and evaluate the entrepreneurship and professional development programmes of the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON). Specifically, it is designed to ascertain the factors responsible for the inadequate number of qualified advertising professionals in Nigeria as well as to evaluate the role of APCON in promoting entrepreneurship and professional development in advertising. This study adopted a qualitative method using in-depth interview with an interview guide. The population of the study comprises advertising practitioners, mass communication lecturers and APCON officials based in Owerri and Lagos. A sample size of 12 respondents were interviewed in Owerri and Lagos, using the research questions. The data elicited from the interview were analyzed qualitatively looking at the pattern of responses from the respondents. The study showed that several factors are responsible for the inadequate number of well-trained advertising professionals, among which is the absence of Degree/Diploma programmes in most tertiary institutions, inadequate funding of institutions, poor staffing and lack of functional entrepreneurship courses in advertising programmes. The study recommends, among other things, that the federal and state governments should assist in funding advertising education in Nigeria; and that universities and polytechnics in the country should mount full-fledged advertising programmes at the various levels such as National Diploma, Higher National Diploma, Degree and Post-Graduate Degrees. It was also recommended that the present curricula for advertising education should be updated and improved by incorporating into it a functional entrepreneurship development content.

**Keywords:** Advertising, Advertising Education, entrepreneurship development, professional development, advertising curriculum.

## **Introduction**

The advertising industry, like every other sector of the Nigerian economy is characterized by graduate unemployment. And in recent time, governments and experts have recommended entrepreneurship as a solution to the unemployment problem. However, many graduates of mass communication do not show interest in entrepreneurship or self-employment. According to Kenekwue, Eze & Abua (2017), “only few media practitioners are willing to create self-reliant careers. Others prefer being employees of the established media institutions.” Surprisingly, many of those who have interest in entrepreneurship or self-employment do not have the entrepreneurial skills to succeed in business. Onuorah (2015) confirms this situation when he laments that “there is, at the moment, a dearth of suitably qualified manpower in Nigeria’s advertising industry arising from the absence, until recently of enough advertising education and training institutions in the country”. According to him, “advertising requires special skills and aptitudes which are not commonplace. There are not enough of such skilled hands to feed the industry”

More worrisome is the fact that while some experts complain of shortage of well trained professionals in the advertising industry, others complain of unemployment and proliferation of agencies in the advertising industry. For instance, Ayozie (2019) states that “the spirally number of unemployed advertising related graduates threatens the very basis of advertising education”. Furthermore, Bardi (2010) states that one of the greatest challenges facing the advertising practice in Nigeria is the proliferation of advertising agencies”. According to him, “some of these new agencies do not have the required expertise to function at a top level”. The issue of mass communication graduates not measuring up to expectation in the field of practice was also raised by some media scholars and practitioners such as Adeniyi (2011) and Ojomo (2015).

Onuorah (2015:37) shares the same view when he writes that the chances of success in establishing and operating an advertising agency depend largely on one’s knowledge and experience in the advertising business as well as one’s professional and entrepreneurial skills and commitment. Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) is the federal government regulatory agency that trains advertising professionals, registers qualified professionals and regulates the advertising industry in Nigeria (Obasi, 2017). APCON is responsible for the regulation and professional development of advertising in Nigeria. By virtue of its mandate, APCON plays a pivotal role in advertising education and training in Nigeria. Hence, this study is designed to assess the APCON’s entrepreneurship and professional development programmes for the advertising profession in Nigeria. APCON was established in 1989 through Decree (now Act) 55 of 1988, which was later amended by Decree (now Act) 93 of 1992.

## **Statement of the Problem**

There is a symbiotic relationship between advertising education and the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), Advertising education provides the advertising professionals that constitute members of the APCON. And APCON complements advertising education by organizing professional development programmes for advertising professionals. However, while some experts such as Onuorah (2015) express concern about the inadequate number of qualified manpower in Nigeria’s advertising industry, others such as Ayozie (2019) complain that the increasing number of unemployed advertising related graduates threatens the very basis of advertising education.

## Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess and evaluate the entrepreneurship and professional development programmes of the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are:

- i. To identify the factors responsible for the inadequate number of well trained professionals in Nigeria's advertising industry.
- ii. To assess what APCON has done or is doing to promote entrepreneurial and professional development in advertising.
- iii. To identify the various ways in which students and graduates of advertising related courses can acquire entrepreneurial skills needed for self-employment in advertising.
- iv. To identify the career opportunities for self-employment in advertising.
- v. To identify ways in which APCON can contribute towards reducing unemployment among advertising graduates and professionals.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the researchers in the course of this study:

- i. What are the factors responsible for the inadequate number of well-trained professionals in Nigeria's advertising industry?
- ii. What is APCON doing or has done to promote entrepreneurship and professional development in advertising?
- iii. What are the possible ways in which students and graduates of advertising related courses can acquire entrepreneurial skills needed for self-employment in advertising?
- iv. What are the career opportunities available for self-employment in advertising?
- v. In what ways can APCON contribute towards reducing unemployment among advertising graduates and professionals?

## Theoretical Orientation

This study is anchored on Tyler's Model of Curriculum and Instruction. The model was developed in 1949 by Ralph Tyler. Originally, he wrote down his ideas in a book, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, for his students to give them an idea about principles for making curriculum. According to Lau (2001), Tyler's Model consists of four steps, namely:

- 1 Determine the school's purposes or objectives
- 2 Identify educational experiences that can be provided in order to achieve these objectives
- 3 Organize the educational experiences effectively
- 4 Determine whether the objectives are being achieved

Lau (2001) noted that Tyler's Model itemizes the four main components of the curriculum, namely: Purposes, experiences, methods and evaluation. This means that the four steps centre on defining appropriate learning objectives, introducing useful learning experiences, organizing experiences to maximize their effects and evaluating the process and revising areas that were not effective. According to the Tyler's Model, curriculum design begins with the setting of objectives, which must be in line with the educational goals and philosophy of the school (Agba, Oshega and

Ogri 2018). Citing Tyler (1949, P.3), Lau (2001) stated that “educational objectives become the criteria by which materials are selected, content is outlined, instructional procedures are developed and test and examinations are prepared. All aspects of the educational programmes are really means to accomplish educational purpose.”

Tyler’s Model is relevant to this study because it helps to determine the instructional objectives for Nigerians advertising education. It also helps to determine how the objectives of advertising education can be achieved through a set of practical experiences. The Tyler’s Model also makes provision for periodic assessment and evaluation of the advertising curricula.

### **Review of Empirical studies**

In a study entitled “Assessment of mass Communication Education in mid-West Region, Nigeria”, Guanah (2019) investigated how mass communication is being taught in some tertiary institutions in mid-west (Delta and Edo States), Nigeria, to find out if it aligns with the requirements of the National Universities Commission’s benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). It was discovered among other findings, that mass communication students are exposed to e-learning and modern technological innovation. The study concluded that “mass communication curricula should be responsive and educative in preparing students whose future work and careers depend on how they successfully align what they have learned in school, and the skills they exhibit in the field after graduation from school.

A similar study was carried out by Okiyi (2019) on the topic, :Achieving UNESCO’s Standards for Mass Communication Education: A Taxonomy of Curricula of Polytechnics/Universities in Imo State. The study was designed to determine how well the institutions have adopted the mass communication education curricula recommended by UNESCO without deviating from the standards put in place by regulatory agencies such as the NUC and NBTE. The study posits that there is a need for more proactive intervention by regulatory bodies to ensure that mass communication programmes meet up with challenges facing societies at the present. Okoro, Obayi & Onyebuchi (2013) carried out a study on “the status and challenges of Mass Communication Education in Nigeria”. The study examined the status and challenges of journalism and communication education in Nigeria with a view to recommending ways to tackle them. Top on the list of challenges identified in the above study is lack of qualified teaching staff. They posit that professional bodies and regulatory agencies in mass communication should collaborate with the communication training institutions to ensure the maintenance of high quality education in these institutions.

Similarly, Agba, Oshega & Ogri (2018) carried out a study on “An Assessment of Training Curricula of selected Mass Communication Programmes in Nigerian universities”. The researchers conclude that communication training institutions in Nigeria should commit more efforts and resources to practical aspects of the course, adding that training facilities and equipment should be upgraded and the students should be given unrestricted access to such facilities. The quest for a suitable curricula for a functional communication education in Nigeria was heightened by Wilson (2018) when he urged the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technician Education (NBTE) to convoke a national conference to discuss the redesign and repositioning of communication studies in the curricular of Universities and Polytechnics.

In a study titled “Social Media Advertising/Marketing: A study of Awareness, Attitude and Responsiveness by Nigerian youths”, Otugo, Uzuegbunam and Obiaka (2015) noted that the advent

of social media has introduced a paradigmatic shift in the way advertisers/marketers promote their goods and services. The study reveals that social media advertising is still in its developmental stages. A similar study was carried out by Ekulueme & Okoro (2018). The study analysed the frequency of use of social media advertising among selected online businesses in Nigeria as well as the challenges militating against adopting social media advertising by online businesses in Nigeria. The researchers recommend, among other things, that media practitioners especially advertising practitioners, should see the gap created by lack of professionals in the field of social media advertising and act proactively by co-opting the trend and adding it to their arsenal so as to remain valuable in this changing times. They further recommend that social media advertising should be introduced to the curriculum of institutions training media and advertising practitioners, so as to ensure the production of solid personnel, not half baked, quacks or charlatans.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative method using in-depth interview (IDI) with an interview guide. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on a particular idea, programme, or situation”.

In-depth interviews are useful when you want detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours or want to explore new issues in depth. (Boyce & Neale, 2006,P.3). The population of the study comprises advertising practitioners, mass communication lecturers and APCON officials based in Owerri and Lagos. Owerri was selected for convenience and Lagos was chosen because of its status as the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria and also for the fact that Lagos is the home of most advertising agencies in Nigeria, as well as the headquarters of APCON.

There is no formal documentation of the actual number of advertising practitioners and mass communication scholars in Owerri and Lagos because some advertising lecturers are not registered practitioners of advertising. Six respondents comprising advertising practitioners, scholars and APCON officials were interviewed in Owerri, using the research questions. Similarly, six respondents comprising advertising practitioners, scholars and APCON officials based in Lagos were interviewed based on the research questions.

The sample size of 12 respondents were purposively selected for this study. According to Tongco cited in Talabi, Ogundeji and Adedowole (2016), purposive sampling is the most effective when studying certain cultural domain where knowledgeable experts are involved. Four respondents were selected on the basis of their status and experience as advertising lecturers, four were selected on the basis of their status as advertising practitioners (industry professionals) and four were selected based on their status as APCON officials.

The data elicited from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively looking at the pattern of responses from the respondents. Thematic analysis was used in analyzing the data generated from the interviews. According to Anderson cited in Meribe and Oke (2017), the researcher groups and distils from the texts a list of common themes in order to give expression to the community of voices across participants. The aim of thematic analysis is to identify patterns of meaning across a data set that provide an answer to the research question being addressed.

## Data Analysis

### Findings

An in depth interview using interview guide was used to elicit responses from the 12 advertising experts that were purposively selected. The in-depth interview was complemented with telephone interview. The respondents names were with-held in order to protect their identity. The responses generated from the research questions were organized and analyzed thematically as follows:

#### **RQ1: What are the factors responsible for the inadequate number of well-trained professionals in Nigeria’s advertising industry?**

Out of the 12 respondents interviewed, 10 persons agreed that Nigeria’s advertising industry has inadequate number of well-trained professionals. The 10 respondents identified the following as factors responsible for the inadequate number of well-trained professionals in the advertising industry:

- I. Absence of Degree/Diploma Programmes in Advertising: Until recently, there was no institution that runs a degree or diploma programme in advertising. Advertising used to be offered as part of a degree or diploma programme in Mass Communication, Marketing or graphic arts. It was only recently that very few institutions such as Igbinedion University, Okada, Benin City and American University, Yola started awarding degrees in advertising while the Nigerian institute of Journalism awards a post graduate diploma in advertising.
- II. Inadequate funding of training institutions. The respondents identified poor funding of institutions as a major factor responsible for the shortage of well trained professionals in advertising. They argue that the recent unbundling of mass communication programme by the National Universities Commission (NUC) would have been a boost to the training of advertising professionals but due to inadequate funding many institutions have not been able to start degree programmes in advertising.
- III. Inadequate training facilities. Most Mass Communication and Marketing departments in the Universities and polytechnics do not have advertising laboratory and other facilities needed for practical training in advertising. Consequently, many lecturers in Mass Communication or Marketing do not have relevant practical knowledge of advertising.
- IV. Lack of exposure to internship and industrial training in advertising agencies. Many students of mass communication, marketing and other disciplines do not have the opportunity to do their industrial training or internship in an advertising agency.
- V. Lack of professional inclination to advertising. Most lecturers and graduates of mass communication and marketing are not registered advertising practitioners and also do not participate in the APCON professional development programmes.
- VI. Lack of synergy between advertising lecturers and advertising professionals. There is no rapport or interaction between the advertising lecturers and the industry practitioners.

#### **RQ2: What has APCON done or is doing to promote entrepreneurship and professional development in advertising?**

The respondents identified the following as the entrepreneurship and professional development programmes of APCON.

- I. APCON recently organized the 1st National conference on advertising in Nigeria. The theme of the conference is Advertising in the Post Digital Age: The Profession, The Business and

Nigeria's Socio-Economic Development. The date was 26th – 27th Nov. 2019 and the Venue was Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja.

- II. APCON organizes Advertising Day which is a yearly event involving public lectures.
- III. In furtherance of its mandate of manpower and skills development, APCON conducts seminars and workshops periodically in different centres in Nigeria. Participants include advertising practitioners, educators and students.
- IV. APCON runs a professional Diploma programme in advertising. Successful completion of this programme qualifies the candidate for the APCON Professional Diploma in Advertising, required for registration as associate member of the advertising profession.
- V. Accreditation of tertiary Institutions. In order to produce well – qualified manpower for the advertising industry, APCON carries out accreditation of Institutions in Nigeria to assess the suitability of its departments of mass communication, marketing, advertising and graphic arts for training of students. The council's accreditation exercise is intended to guide institutions in staffing, equipping and curriculum development of the relevant departments. On graduation, students of accredited disciplines qualify for registration as associate members without any further verification of courses.
- VI. Sponsorship of creativity week seminars. This is an annual event that last one week and involves seminars and competitions.

**RQ3: What are the possible ways in which students and graduates of advertising related courses can acquire entrepreneurial skills needed for self-employment in advertising?**

Respondents identified the following ways:

- I. The students can acquire the relevant entrepreneurial skills through functional entrepreneurship training in advertising.
- II. They can also acquire the relevant skills through internships and industrial training.
- III. Students and graduates can also learn entrepreneurial skills by attending the APCON professional development seminars.
- IV. Excursion and educational visits to advert agencies by students: the respondents agreed that this can provide the much needed opportunity for interaction between students and advertising practitioners.

**RQ4: what are the career opportunities available for self-employment in advertising?**

The respondents identified the following career opportunities for self-employment in advertising.

- I. Advertising copy writing
- II. Advertising production
- III. Media buying/media placement
- IV. Advertising consultancy
- V. Client services
- VI. Photography and photo-processing
- VII. Advertising research
- VIII. Modelling
- IX. Graphic Arts and Design

**RQ5: In what ways can APCON contribute towards reducing unemployment among advertising graduates and professionals?**

Majority of the respondents are of the view that APCON can contribute towards reducing unemployment among advertising graduates and professionals by:

- I. Increasing the frequency and geographical spread of its entrepreneurship development seminars and workshops.
- II. Collaborating with Mass Communication and Marketing departments in the universities and polytechnics in designing a functional entrepreneurship courses for students in their departments.
- III. Helping Mass Communication and marketing students to secure internship or industrial attachment jobs in advertising agencies and other advertising related establishments.
- IV. Organizing entrepreneurship seminars and workshop for mass communication, advertising and marketing students in their various institutions. This can be done in collaboration with advertising agencies. Such seminars and workshops can be sponsored by interested corporate organizations and government agencies in order to reduce running costs.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **Factors responsible for the inadequate number of well-trained professionals in Advertising**

From responses to RQ1, it is revealed that several factors account for the inadequate number of well-trained professionals in advertising. A cursory look at the various factors identified by respondents shows that APCON, government, advertising training institutions as well as advertising agencies have roles to play in addressing the problem of inadequate number of well-trained advertising professionals. According to the respondents, the fact that many advertising graduates and professionals are not well-trained may have contributed to unemployment in the advertising profession. This argument is based on the fact that a well-trained advertising professional can be easily employed, and can also set up his own advertising business if he could not get employment in the existing establishments. This is in line with Guanah's (2019) finding that "mass communication curricula should be responsive and educative in preparing students whose future work and careers depend on how they successfully align what they have learned in school, and the skills they exhibit in the field after graduation from school." Inadequate funding of tertiary institutions is another major factor identified by the respondents. They are of the view that if universities and polytechnics are adequately funded, these institutions would be able to establish full-fledged advertising programmes at undergraduates and post-graduates levels, recruit qualified advertising lecturers and produce well-trained advertising graduates.

### **APCON'S Role in Promoting entrepreneurship and professional development in advertising.**

There is a consensus among the respondents that APCON has played and is still playing very important roles in promoting entrepreneurship and professional development in the advertising profession. Prominent among such roles are certification of members, manpower and skills development through seminars and workshops, accreditation of tertiary institutions offering advertising courses. The importance of APCON certification of members cannot be over-emphasized. Certification differentiates the professionals from the quacks. Through the various APCON seminars and workshops, students and graduates of advertising related courses are equipped with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge that will enable them to practice advertising. Of special importance is the accreditation of institutions offering advertising courses. APCON's accreditation



exercise is intended to guide institutions in staffing, equipping and curriculum development of the relevant departments. In this regard, the APCON's accreditation exercise is in line with Tyler's Model of Curriculum and Instruction because the accreditation exercise helps institutions to achieve the objectives of advertising education through a set of practical experiences. Furthermore, the APCON accreditation exercise involves a periodic assessment and re-assessment of the advertising curricula of the various Universities, polytechnics and other training institutions. This is also in line with Tyler's Model of assessment and evaluation of the educational curricula.

### **Ways in which students and graduates can acquire Entrepreneurial Skills needed for self-employment in Advertising.**

The respondents identified several ways in which advertising students and graduates can acquire entrepreneurial skills necessary for self-employment in advertising. Prominent among them is functional entrepreneurship training in advertising. They believe that the present general entrepreneurship courses offered in the various tertiary institutions is not enough. The respondents argued that the entrepreneurship course for advertising students should expose the students to the various business opportunities in advertising and teach them how to harness such business opportunities. This finding is in line with Onuorah (2015) and Kenechukwu et al (2017) who said that equipping advertising graduates and professionals with entrepreneurial skills will promote self-employment in advertising and thereby reduce unemployment.

Other major ways of acquiring the relevant entrepreneurial skills include internships and industrial attachment, seminars and workshops as well as educational visits to advertising agencies by students.

### **Career opportunities available for self-employment in advertising**

The respondents identified several career opportunities for self-employment in advertising. The career opportunities include advertising copywriting, advert production, media buying, advertising consultancy, and client services. Others are photography and photo-processing, graphic arts and design, modelling and advertising research. It is believed that incorporating the above listed career opportunities as topics in the advertising curricula will go a long way in equipping advertising students and graduates with the functional entrepreneurial skills and knowledge need for self-employment in advertising.

### **Ways in which APCON can contribute towards reducing unemployment in the advertising profession.**

As was noted in the responses to RQ1, APCON can help in reducing unemployment among advertising graduates by updating and improving advertising curricula in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. This involves introducing functional entrepreneurship courses in the advertising curricula. Other ways to reduce unemployment in the advertising sector include exposing students to industrial training and organizing entrepreneurship development seminars and workshops for advertising graduates and professionals. Such workshops should be held more frequently in the various cities across the nation instead of concentrating them in Lagos and Abuja. Furthermore, respondents suggested that APCON, in collaboration with advertising agencies, can organize entrepreneurship seminars for mass communication, advertising and marketing students in their various institutions. According to them, APCON can seek for sponsorship of such workshops from interested organizations as a way of reducing costs.

## Conclusion

Advertising education in Nigeria has undergone various stages of development. Yet the advertising curriculum, no doubt, requires up-dating and improvement. Equipping advertising graduates and professionals with entrepreneurial skills in advertising is a task that needs urgent attention because the role of entrepreneurship in every profession cannot be over-emphasized. APCON, the government regulatory agency for the advertising profession has contributed immensely in promoting advertising education, particularly in the promotion of entrepreneurship and professional development in advertising. However, a lot still needs to be done in the area of entrepreneurship development in the advertising profession. There is a consensus among respondents that funding is a major factor responsible for the inadequate number of well-trained advertising professionals in Nigeria. The need for adequate funding of tertiary institutions cannot be over-emphasized. If functional entrepreneurship courses are incorporated into to the curriculum for advertising agencies, graduates of mass communication, advertising, marketing and graphic arts will be well trained and can easily go into advertising entrepreneurship (setting up their own advertising business) if they are unable to secure employment in the existing advertising establishments. This will, no doubt, reduce the level of unemployment in the advertising industry.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The federal government, state governments, corporate organizations and public spirited individuals should assist in funding advertising education in Nigeria because the role of advertising in the socio-economic development of a nation cannot be over-emphasized.
2. Universities and Polytechnics in the country should avail themselves of the opportunities created by the recent unbundling of mass communication programme by the National Universities Commission by mounting full fledged advertising courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well as National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) levels.
3. Universities and Polytechnics should recruit qualified advertising lecturers for their mass communication, advertising and marketing programmes and also provide well-equipped advertising laboratories for such departments.
4. The present advertising curricula in the tertiary institutions should be reviewed and updated with a functional entrepreneurial development content.
5. APCON should improve the curricula for advertising education in Nigeria and also bring its entrepreneurship and professional development seminars and workshops within the reach of advertising graduates and professionals in the various cities across the country.
6. The Department of mass communication, advertising, graphic arts and marketing in the various Universities and Polytechnics should organize entrepreneurship and professional development workshops for their students.
7. APCON should assist advertising students across the nation to secure internships/Industrial attachment jobs in advertising agencies and other related advertising departments.

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