

This article was downloaded by: [Cox, Hannah][informa internal users]

On: 30 November 2009

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 755239602]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Journal of Radio & Audio Media

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information: <http://www-intra.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t775653665>

### Media Diversity With and Without a Policy: A Comparison of the BBC and Nigeria's DBS

Ayobami Ojebode<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Online publication date: 12 November 2009

**To cite this Article** Ojebode, Ayobami(2009) 'Media Diversity With and Without a Policy: A Comparison of the BBC and Nigeria's DBS', Journal of Radio & Audio Media, 16: 2, 216 – 228

**To link to this Article:** DOI: 10.1080/19376520903279415

**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19376520903279415>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www-intra.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# Media Diversity With and Without a Policy: A Comparison of the BBC and Nigeria's DBS

Ayobami Ojebode

*Discussions of media diversity have taken for granted the assumption that diversity is properly maintained only when there is a well articulated diversity policy with human and material resources to implement it. This article seeks to find out what it is like to manage diversity where there is not a diversity policy. To do this, it compares Nigeria's Delta Broadcasting Services (DBS) which does not have a diversity policy, with the BBC which had an elaborate policy with extensive resources for implementation. The study finds an inbuilt diversity consciousness among DBS staff whereas at the BBC diversity is driven by policy and even pressure. At both stations, fear of different kinds propels the determination to reflect diversity, and both stations face fairly similar problems in managing diversity, among which is the challenge of balancing diversity with competence in staff recruitment. The key lesson is that, depending on the context, diversity is not better achieved by official policies and targets, than without them.*

## Introduction

Media diversity is the proportionate representation of the various segments of the particular society that a medium seeks to serve. Such representation is expected to manifest in the source of the media message, its content and its readership, listenership or viewership. Discussions of media diversity are getting quite old but the fervency is not abating. In the United States, the Communications Act of 1934 and the great social changes of the 1960s which ushered in the introduction of

---

*Ayobami Ojebode, (PhD, University of Ibadan, 2002) is a lecturer and coordinator of postgraduate programs in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. His research interests include political and cultural aspects of development communication, communication research, and media and diversity.*

*The fieldwork for this paper began when the author was a visiting scholar at the Centre for Research in Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE), University of Oxford.*

*The author wishes to acknowledge the CRISE Director, Professor Frances Stewart, for motivation to embark on the BBC study, and to CRISE staff Nicola Shepard and Jo Boyce for assistance.*

Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunities, were landmark precursors to the current understanding and misunderstanding of media diversity (Einstein, 2004; Fife, 1987). In the United Kingdom, the Race Relations Act of 1976 governs Equal Opportunities the offshoot of which is diversity (Wilson & Iles, 1999). In Nigeria, a 1957 constitutional conference set up a committee on minority concerns the recommendations of which formed the foundation for the Federal Character Commission established many years later in 1996 (Mustapha, 2007; Olusanya, 1980). The multifaceted nature of diversity, the sheer emotion and morality attached to it, the changing political landscape especially in the south and the recurring academic storms much of whose current is traceable to the seminal disquisitions of modern-day thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas<sup>1</sup> have kept the discussions of diversity going with increasing fervor.

As fervent as the discussions might be, they seem to be marked by a certain implicit dogma. Basically, it is assumed that for diversity to be properly managed there must be a written diversity policy which is being enforced. Most criticisms have been on whether the particular diversity policy adopted by a particular media or media system truly reflects diversity (Podkalicka, 2008; Wilson & Iles, 1999); or whether the policy is realistic (Fife, 1987); or whether or not the terms are specific, the goals are measurable and the measurement has adopted the right indices and formula (Campion, 2006; Macdonald & Dimmick, 2003; Podkalicka, 2008). In all cases, the existence of a diversity policy is treated as an invariable precondition for managing diversity. But is it possible to manage diversity where there is no diversity policy? How does that work and how does it compare with a situation where there is a written diversity policy complete with its implementation personnel and department? This article attempts to answer these questions by comparing diversity management by the BBC which has a written diversity policy and an implementation framework with that by the DBS, Delta Broadcasting Service, Nigeria, which has no diversity policy, implementation framework or personnel.

I want to state quite emphatically that though both the BBC and DBS operate in multicultural and multilingual environments and are both supposed to be public service broadcasters, I do not make any assumption that the DBS stands on a pedestal anywhere near the BBC which is a giant. I, nonetheless, believe that these two organizations stand for two poles of practice and thought: one western the other not; one sophisticated the other simple; one guided by a firm and written system of rules the other guided by what many would dismiss as an unclassifiable thingamabob; one known among researchers, the other unknown and little valued. And so, studying them comparatively might show us something about these poles of thought which essentially transcends the stations themselves.

## Media Diversity: An Overview of the Contours

By media diversity, scholars and advocates mean that the mass media should be fully representative of the communities that it serves. Simple as this may appear,

there is no agreement over what exactly constitutes diversity. As Napoli (1999) observes, diversity takes three broad dimensions: source, content and exposure.

Source diversity entails pluralism of the sources of media messages and covers diversity of media ownership, media outlet and media workforce (Hellman, 2001; Napoli, 1999). The marketplace of ideas, it is believed, is enhanced only when the system not only allows but also motivates different segments of the society to own the media. In itself, media ownership comes in two forms: outlet ownership, that is, the ownership of the media station, and program ownership. In many countries, including Nigeria, the owner of a media organization may not be the owner of a program being aired. In Nigeria, there are those known as freelance broadcasters who buy airtime from media owners and expend it on the program they produce. There have been worries that with increasing media monopoly, both program and outlet ownership is getting concentrated in the hands of few people (see Bagdikian, 2004) and diversity advocates are opposed to this. Where a media station produces its own programs, then both program and outlet ownerships merge. As Hitchens (2006, p. 6) observes, regulatory emphasis is so much on ownership diversity that the significance of other dimensions "and the role they play in pluralism protection are overlooked."

Diversity of media outlets has to do with the variety of the media channels available to a community. Another term for this is channel diversity (Hellman, 2001). This further enhances diversity if the channels specialize on differing genres. This is called horizontal diversity (Hellman, 2001). Behind the advocacy for channel diversity is the assumption that channel diversity enhances choice among audiences and thus adds to the viability of the marketplace. Research has however shown that multiplicity and variety of channels do not, on their own, guarantee diversity. That a person or set of people can own a chain of stations or channels, for instance, poses a threat to source or viewpoint diversity (see, for instance, Adams & Cleary, 2006; Napoli, 1999).

Workforce diversity, as the name implies, requests that the staffing of a media organization should consist members of the different ethnic, gender and ability composition of its audiences (Hellman, 2001; Napoli, 1999). This, it is assumed, would give the audience a sense of belonging, pluralize media content and increase acceptance of content by audience. Again, this assumption has been proved not to be true in some cases. Adams and Cleary (2006) discovered that members of minority groups did not read newspapers that have higher percentages of minority employees more often than they read those papers with less minority staff quotas.

Content diversity refers to variety of program format, variety of ideas and viewpoints and variety of on-air and on-screen demographics. By demographic diversity is meant the racial, gender and ethnic diversity of the people featured in a media program. It is often assumed that source diversity will produce content diversity (Napoli, 1999). The last leg of diversity is exposure diversity which refers to diversity as received. It examines diversity from the receivers' perspectives. There could be diverse sources, viewpoints and content but receivers might expose themselves to just one or a few of these. In that case, even when efforts at reflecting diversity are

well-guided at the media source and in the content, they cannot be described as completely successful.

Media organizations embark on diversity for two major purposes. For public service broadcasters, diversity is "a normative criterion of quality and a deliberately sought policy goal" (Hellman, 2001, p. 187) whereas commercial broadcasters regard diversity as a way of attracting more audiences and thus climbing up the rating rungs. This is another assumption about diversity that is not true in all places. For example, with the deregulation of broadcasting in Nigeria in 1992, government-owned stations were asked to commercialize. This led to the scampering for market share and the ascendance of profit over such issues as diversity and public service. These were stations meant to be non-profit, public service broadcasters. Not only this, as we will see shortly, even the BBC talks of a "business case" with regards to diversity.

The doctrine of diversity in the media and in similar situations is not accepted by all. Some oppose it for the reason that it necessitates the presence of a regulatory framework and so might become an obstacle to media freedom. Others oppose it for purely commercial reasons: enforcing program content diversity might mean forcing commercial stations to take decisions on some basis other than pure commerce. A third group of opponents of diversity consists of those who contend that attempts to ensure workforce diversity might mean hiring people not on the basis of their competence or qualifications but on the basis of ascribed racial, gender, ethnic or ability status. This they claim lowers not just the self-esteem and job satisfaction of the hired but also the productivity of the hiring establishment. It also raises a moral question in that it denies suitably qualified candidates who are from the majority group the opportunity of being employed (see Einstein, 2004; Hitchens, 2006; Wilson & Iles, 1999; see also Mustapha, 2007).

There is a growing team of thinkers who oppose the popular understanding of diversity for theoretical reasons. Notable among these are Jacka (2003) and Karppinen (2007) who trace their postulations to the anti-Hebarmasian disquisitions of Chantal Mouffe. Simply put, Habermas (1984; 1995) seems to conceive an all-inclusive public sphere that is open to everyone, the venue for deliberative democracy and a universal rational consensus. The role of the media is that of an arena for public debate over matters of common interest which debate leads to the formation of public opinion free from state and market manipulations. Habermas' thoughts envision the evolution of a single public sphere where free multiple ideas and views meet and mingle, a sphere which produces a universal consensus. Plurality or diversity, highly desirable, will in the end produce a rational consensus.

Radical democrats criticize Habermas and other deliberative democrats for, among other things, under-estimating the irreducibility and "depth of societal pluralism and the fundamental nature of value conflicts, both in the sense of cultural differences as well as structural conflicts of interest" (Karppinen, 2007, p. 496). Radical pluralists call for a limit to pluralism and diversity. They claim diversity should not be without an end and without a politics. They claim that diversity without a political guide aimed at leveraging subordinated groups ends up marginalizing them. They kick against emphasis on public service broadcasting because it tries to monopolize

knowledge and power and marginalize the market and private broadcasting (Jacka, 2003).

It is defensible to conclude that deliberative and radical democrats both support diversity by and in the media. The difference seems to be in their conception of diversity and the manner in which diversity should be expressed. A part of this difference is the role of the state which deliberative democrats seem to de-emphasize and radical democrats accentuate; another is the idea of a universal consensus which radicals oppose. Of important relevance to this study is the implicit assumption by both groups that an articulated diversity policy is a non-negotiable ingredient in managing any type of diversity

As stated earlier, this paper focuses on media diversity in two different contexts. Focus is on workforce, view point and program content diversity as reported by key informants. Exposure diversity did not form a part of the study; exposure diversity calls for an audience research which falls outside the scope of the current study.

### **The Socio-Cultural Contexts**

The BBC and the DBS share more in common than is immediately obvious. In a sense, the former is the progenitor of the latter. Broadcasting started in Nigeria in 1932 when a relay station of the BBC was established in Lagos. That one-station effort has grown into 283 stations: 101 radio stations; 143 television stations and 39 cable, direct-to-home and direct broadcast satellite stations (National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, 2008). Among these is the DBS with stations in Warri and Asaba, Delta State Nigeria.

It is said that over 300 languages are spoken in London, the immediate sphere of BBC (Podkalicka, 2008). Like the BBC, the DBS serves a multilingual and multicultural audience. Delta State, the owner of DBS, is one of the most ethnically diverse states in Nigeria. Created in 1991, the state is home to six ethnic and linguistic groups—Igbo, Itsekiri, Isoko, Izon or Ijaw, Ndokwa and Urhobo (Delta State, 2008; Otite, 2000) though the population is only about 2.5 million people. Race is somewhat to the BBC what ethnicity is to the DBS.

However, the stations differ in a number of ways. Besides differences in age, levels of technological sophistication, staff strength and width of reach, their sources of funds also differ. The BBC is funded largely from license fees whereas DBS relies heavily on government funding. This difference is of direct relevance to this study. The primary allegiance of BBC is thus to the audience while that of DBS is to government.

### **The Study**

The study adopted a qualitative approach with data coming through key-informant interviews with purposively selected BBC and DBS staff. I interviewed Ms. Andrea

Callender, Head of Diversity, BBC and two other BBC staff: one from news, the other from human resources. These two preferred anonymity. Given the focus of the study, we considered this selection as strategic. I interviewed three senior staff of DBS: Messrs. Malcolm Oteri, Henry Uzor and Edward Ogude, all of whom held management positions. I also interviewed Mr. Chris Okoyomo, the Director of the Benin Zone of the National Broadcasting Commission whose zone covers DBS.<sup>2</sup>

I examined policy and other documents of the BBC and program schedules of the DBS. I sorted out data into emergent themes paying special attention to areas of convergence and divergence. The major limitation of the study is its reliance on interviews and documents produced by the stations. Save for Mr. Okoyomo, all other sources of data were from the stations being studied.

## Findings

### Written Policy Versus Inbuilt Awareness

The BBC operates a comprehensive diversity policy aimed at diversifying its workforce and programs across racial, gender and ability levels. For 2007, the diversity target of the BBC was to have black and minority ethnic (BME) groups constitute 12.5% of its total workforce, have BME constitute 7% of its senior managers, and people with disability constitute 4% of the total workforce. (The document does not state the proportion of senior managers to be taken up by disabled people). After a series of consultations running to 2007 from 2006, the BBC adopted a Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan to address issues relating to gender inequality. This the station hopes to do by ensuring equal pay for men, women and trans people; and ensuring that a person's chances of being recruited are not jeopardized by their gender (BBC, 2007).

In addition to an elaborate diversity policy, the BBC has a detailed structural framework to monitor diversity. Ms. Andrea Callender informed me that "responsibility for equal opportunities and diversity does not sit with one person at the BBC." Ultimately responsibility for ensuring that the BBC is compliant and meets its legal obligations sits with the BBC Trust. According to her, the Executive Board has the executive responsibility for approving the corporate diversity strategy of the BBC and ensuring that it meets its diversity commitments. The Board has delegated the responsibility for reviewing progress on diversity to the Diversity Board. Workforce diversity is specifically overseen by the Director of BBC People assisted by Head of Diversity, Andrea Callender herself. There is also an editorial executive who has "the remit to improve the on-screen portrayal of diverse communities."

Inability to meet diversity targets at the BBC is punished. For instance, in an edition of *Ariel*, the BBC staff newspaper, directors were informed that if they did not meet their workforce diversity target, they would be denied their bonuses (Campion, 2006). One of my interviewees confirmed that the threat was actually

made real: Very top people were not given their bonuses because they did not meet the diversity targets—last year. Confirming the inability to meet aspects of the target, Ms. Callender informed me that the BBC met its diversity target on disability for 2007 by November 2007 but by January 2008, it had not met the 2007 diversity targets on BME within the workforce, and on BME at senior manager grades.

The case at DBS is different. DBS does not have a diversity policy, and two of my interviewees could not remember ever seeing a copy of the station policy and objectives. One of these told me:

If you insist on having a written document that guides us, I can only show you our slogan. Our radio is Voice of Delta speaking for all the different ethnic groups in Delta State. Our TV is the Golden Dawn. But in everything we do, we reflect the views and voices of all the different groups in Delta.

Though without a policy guide, my DBS interviewees firmly insisted, diversity was being maintained in their programs, views, news and recruitment. According to them, there is “an in-built awareness” that diversity must be maintained. Mr. Malcolm Oteri said:

It is an in-built awareness; it is just that understanding that you must be careful. In programming you must reflect the interests and character of these ethnic groups. For example now, if you do a story on the Niger Delta or any national issue, if you talk to an Urhobo chief, you have that in-built awareness in you that, for a balance, you must talk to an Ijaw chief, you must talk to an Itshekiri chief. That consciousness is in every one of us. . . . The reporter is always conscious, the programmer is conscious, the management is conscious about how to reflect the interests of these ethnic groups.

Other expressions used for this “awareness” is “understanding,” and “consciousness.” This raises an important question. How did staff imbibe this awareness? My interviewees informed me that there was no direct formal diversity training for new recruits; there was not even an identifiable informal process of initiation or indoctrination on diversity. According to Mr. Henry Uzor, it is “something in you. It is inside of you. It is wired into your system.”

Mr. Chris Okoyomo, an official of the regulatory agency, the NBC, told me that the NBC Code demanded that broadcast organizations should reflect the various components of their audience in the several aspects of their activities. This, according to him, is not a policy per se but a broad guideline for the stations to follow. He concluded saying, “they know. They know the right thing to do.”

There is a strong suggestion that diversity consciousness is something people bring to the DBS rather than something they acquire through training, threat or policy enforcement. Born into and living in a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic society, members most probably have in them an unwritten indoctrination which in itself produces, one is led to say, a selfless and constant awareness of the other and their interests. Samovar and Porter (1995) alluded to this other-wardness in non-western cultures as they compared side-taking by parents in children’s quarrels.



They observe that no matter which child is at fault, in the west, a parent stands by her child when the child quarrels with another child; in Africa, a parent scolds her child for quarrelling with another child. It is a positioning of the mind that is not likely to be appreciated by those whose life experiences have been within fairly monolithic or policy-governed environments. Ethnicity then, as the eminent Nigerian sociologist, Otite (2000) claimed, could be an advantage rather than the whipping boy for all the evils of inter-ethnic wars and other more subtle expressions of acrimony.

The conclusions are obvious: at the BBC diversity is enforced; at the DBS it is left to intuition and personal judgment. At the BBC it is learned but at DBS it is part of the socialization process acquired as people grow from childhood. What the written policy officially seeks to do in the United Kingdom, the informal society seems to do in Delta State, Nigeria.

### **The Fear of Losing the Audience Versus the Fear of Meeting it**

I asked my interviewees to state their purpose for maintaining diversity. In answering my "what if" question, they stated what they felt would happen if they do not maintain diversity. Working through their responses, I realized that diversity at both stations is propelled essentially, in fact, primarily, by fear. Defining diversity as "a creative opportunity for the BBC to engage the totality of the UK audience," Ms. Andrea Callender informed me that diversity at the BBC was

[A]bout competition. BBC operates in a competitive and multi-channel environment which offers a lot of choice for people with different tastes and values. It's about lost audiences, and remaining relevant to different groups in our audience.

Managing diversity is thus a survival strategy at the BBC. Other interviewees at the BBC echoed Callender's position: with the growing access to multiple channels, members of the different cultural and linguistic groups in the United Kingdom are able to receive broadcasts in their languages from many channels other than the BBC. This, they observed, posed a threat to the position and audience share of the BBC. Diversity is propelled by the fear of losing the audience.

Fear was also palpable in the responses of my DBS respondents but it is a different kind of fear. Occasionally the delicate balancing of diversity at DBS was tilted and the audience reacted in one of three ways. The most often trodden was that the audience complained to the traditional ruler who then invited the management of DBS to meet with representatives of the aggrieved group in the ruler's palace. Mr. Oteri put it quite figuratively:

If you carry a report today that goes contrary to the interest of the Urhobos, the next day, just be ready to carry your station to the palace of the Urhobo chief and to meet with the Urhobo community there.

My interviewees considered this a community's expression of its right to defend itself against marginalization or discrimination, though they also considered being summoned to be an unpleasant experience. It usually ended up with the management justifying its position, or promising to retract on-air or on-screen if it considered the claim by the community justifiable. Whatever the end might be, no one wanted to meet the audience that way.

The second possible reaction was placing complaints in the form of paid advertisements in newspapers. For instance, when recruitment was deemed to have gone against the interests of some groups, such groups occasionally sponsored announcements in the papers condemning the action of DBS though recruitment was done centrally by the state Ministry of Information. In this case, the management might join the aggrieved on the pages of the papers. The third response was complaint forwarded to the State House of Assembly, the legislative arm of the state government. Invariably, the management was invited to the House of Assembly to meet the representatives of the audience. Meeting the audience these ways was detested.

At both the BBC and the DBS therefore, fear is a motivation for managing diversity. As to which of these types of fear is a more effective motivation, the jury is still out. It is understandable that the fear of the market is not palpable at the DBS: the station is funded by the state government and does not depend on advertisement-generated income or license fees. But there are less compelling but nobler sources of motivation than fear. At the BBC, there is also a sense of responsibility to the audience. Ms. Callender said because the BBC was uniquely funded by a license fee which everyone—regardless of color, religious belief, or where they live in the UK—paid, the station is obliged to reflect the views, voices and interests of all these people. At DBS, there is the desire to be patronized by the audience. As Mr. Oteri put it, "you cannot ignore the fact that you are being ignored by your audience." To get the audience to watch or listen to a program, the producers must ensure the audience sees itself reflected in the program. This is done in a number of ways including speaking the language and dialect of the audience, featuring leaders from the audience communities in interviews, and featuring arts and artifacts produced by or associated with the community in question in the programs.

### Process, Product and Problems

Both at the BBC and the DBS content diversity is ensured by deliberately featuring programs produced by people from diverse groups and featuring on-screen and on-air characteristics of the diverse groups. The BBC, I was informed, commissioned multicultural seasons such as *Abolition* which included documentaries presented by Moira Stuart and Ms. Dynamite. *Partition* included Sanjeev Bkaskar in India and Saira Khan discovering modern life in Pakistan. There is the intention to bring multicultural programs into the mainstream with shows such as *The Retreat*, *The Choir*, *Baby Borrowers*, *Neneh* and *Andi Dish It Up*, and *The Apprentice*. Examples

of comedy include *Lenny's Comic Britain* and *Little Miss Jocelyn*. In the drama genre, there are what my interviewees considered ground-breaking storylines in offerings such as *Shoot The Messenger*, *5 Days* and *Dr. Who*. The station also maintains databases of diverse producers and presenters to help in-house staff locate people from different backgrounds that can do different things. These include the Diverse Production Talent database; the Diverse On-Screen Database and the Diverse Contributors' directory.

At the DBS, news is read in each of the languages spoken in the state and in pidgin. There are request programs and magazines in the languages. Examples include *Egwu Ala Anyi (Music of Our Land)*, *Ezon Request*, *Okpe, Isoko-Ndokwa*<sup>3</sup> *Music* and *Make We Laugh (Let's Have Fun)*. Women programs include *Feminine Fair* and *Today's Woman*. Children and young people have *For Children*, *Creative Hands* and *Youth Scene*.

Thus, in spite of the differences in the purpose and motivation for diversity at the BBC and DBS, the methods of managing content diversity are roughly comparable: both stations embark on deliberate production of programs targeted at specific segments of the audience. However, the DBS has not been commissioning programs; it hires occasional staff to handle programs for groups for which there seemed not to be a capable hand in the house. To the extent to which we can call a list of such people a talent or production database, the DBS maintains a database.

What is the outcome of the diversity efforts of these stations? Again, the responses are fairly comparable. My interviewees claimed that their audiences were largely satisfied with their efforts. In Ms. Callender's words, the BBC listeners and viewers are "broadly, very interested and supportive of what we are trying to do." Mr. Uzor would say "seventy percent of our audiences are very satisfied with us," though he could remember any audience survey ever conducted on DBS to yield such categorical data. Ogude mentioned increase in audience size. All DBS interviewees referred to visits as well as letters and calls made by community leaders and members of the audience to commend the station for properly reflecting "their image and culture" in its programs. "We have been able to give them a sense of belonging," Ogude concluded. Mr. Okoyomo of the regulatory agency firmly believed that the stations in the zone, including the DBS, had been successful in reflecting the diversity of its audience.

Neither the BBC nor the DBS has been able to please everyone in the audience. It is unrealistic, and probably undesirable, to seek to do so. As Karppinen (2007, p. 505) puts it, "there is no media system that can exhaust the multitude of publics in a complex pluralist society and claim perfect impartiality, fairness or balance." What is interesting is that at both the BBC and DBS, the assessment of audience satisfaction with stations effort at diversity is strikingly similar.

At both stations, managing diversity has not been without its costs. Costs of producing programs go up as producers go beyond the immediate neighborhood of their stations to gather news and interview people, as new hands are employed to balance the racial, ethnic, gender and ability ecology, and as new programs are commissioned. Another cost to diversity is the possibility of hiring unqualified

staff or promoting staff ahead of their seniors, just for the reason of diversity. Ms. Callender believed this was not the case at the BBC for “the BBC always hired the best hands” but other interviewees felt that the possibility could not be ruled out. One in fact said, “people don’t like the idea that some people might be promoted for these reasons . . . I think actually that’s the issue.” At DBS, respondents were more forthcoming in declaring that hiring people to ensure workforce diversity led to hiring incompetent hands. Not only this, promotion order is unduly shunted by the need to reflect diversity.

If the general manager in Warri is Urhobo, the one in Asaba cannot be Urhobo; it has to be Itsekiri or another tribe. If at some point an Urhobo man becomes manager in Asaba, something has to be done to ensure the Warri manager is moved or something. . . . When we apply Federal Character rules,<sup>4</sup> we compromise standard. An Igbo person has been GM here in Asaba. The next in command is also Igbo but he cannot be made GM if the incumbent retires. They will bring someone else from another ethnic group who might be of lower rank to the next in command and make him GM.

It then seems safe to conclude that the intensity of the problems relating to diversity being faced at the BBC and DBS may differ, but the nature are essentially similar.

## Conclusion

Diversity is not better achieved by official policies and targets than by an inherent appreciation of diversity within the organization and its community. The BBC and the DBS adopt different approaches to managing diversity. The BBC approach is formal, comprehensive and based on a written policy. The DBS approach is informal, sketchy and unwritten. Yet, both of these manage diversity—one would say—successfully in their different contexts by recruiting workforce across different groups and producing programs in which the different segments of their audience find their representation. Problems encountered are also fairly similar.

Some observers have noted the tendency of Nigerian media to imitate the program format and content of western, especially American, media (Bourgault, 1995; Odunlami, 2007; Ojebode, 2004; Omojola, 2002). In the light of this, one would posit that it is not necessary for the Nigerian media to begin to fashion out diversity policies exactly after the version and manner of Western countries. Nonetheless, it seems to me that the total lack of a written diversity policy or statement at DBS makes the diversity arrangement a fragile one. Some written document that states simple diversity guidelines including management succession plan, recruitment guide and content advisory should help solidify the present arrangement at DBS, save management from having to explain its actions to community leaders and act as a general safeguard should management change hands in any unforeseen way.

The study of diversity has not been diverse. Deliberative and radical democrats alike have narrowed their theorizing and counter-theorizing to the predominantly

literate western societies with a fast-dwindling sense of community. In such societies, even interpersonal relationships are firmly guided by law and policy, and individualism and privacy are indeed deified. This is unlike much of Africa where the collective is clearly put ahead of the individual (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000; Opubor, 2000). Western theories cannot account for such and neither will western policy.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Most advocates of media pluralism echo some of Habermas's postulations, especially his (1984) theory of communicative action, which have been applied to the basic claims about communication, rationality and public sphere. Ideal communication, Habermas claims, is one "immunized against repression and inequality in a special way" (p. 25) and "oriented towards achieving consensus ... a consensus that rests on inter-subjective recognition of criticisable validity claims" (p. 17). It is one in which "every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part" (Habermas, 1995, p. 89). These claims have attracted advocates and critics of media diversity alike.

<sup>2</sup>The interview with Ms. Callender was conducted as email exchanges; those with others were oral.

<sup>3</sup>Ezon, Okpe, Isoko-Ndokwa are some of the many ethnic groups in Delta State. The programs referred to are designed for them.

<sup>4</sup>The Federal Character Commission is a Federal Agency that sees to the equitable distribution of federal jobs and appointment across the various geo-political and ethnic categories in Nigeria. It deals only with federal appointments. See Mustapha (2007) for a comprehensive discussion of the achievements of and problems facing Nigeria's Federal Character Commission.

## References

- Adams, T. & Cleary, J. (2006). The parity paradox: reader response to minority newsroom staffing. *Mass Communication and Society*, 9(1), 45–61.
- Airhihenbuwa, C. O. & Obregon, R. (2000). A critical assessment of theories/models used in health communication for HIV/AIDS. *Journal of Health Communication*, 5 (Supplement), 3–15.
- Bagdikian, B. (2004). *The new media monopoly*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- BBC. (2007). Reports, policies and guidelines. Retrieved November 25, 2007, from [www.bbc.co.uk/info/policies/diversity](http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/policies/diversity)
- Bourgault, L. M. (1995). *Mass media in sub-Saharan Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Campion M. J. (2006). Diversity, or just color by numbers? *British Journalism Review*, (17)1, 71–76.
- Delta State Government. (2008). Retrieved August 15, 2008, from <http://www.deltastate.gov.ng/aboutDelta>
- Einstein, M. (2004). *Media diversity, economics, ownership and the FCC*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.
- Fife, M. (1987). Promoting racial diversity in US broadcasting: federal policies versus social realities. *Media, Culture & Society*, 9, 481–504.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action, v.1*. Reason and the rationalization of society, trans. T. McCarthy. London: Heinemann.
- Habermas, J. (1995). *Moral consciousness and communicative action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Hellman, H. (2001). Diversity—An end in itself? Developing a multi-measure methodology of television program variety studies. *European Journal of Communication*, 16(2), 181–208.
- Hitchens, L. (2006). *Broadcasting pluralism and diversity: A comparative study of policy and regulation*. Oxford: Hart Publishing.
- Jacka, E. (2003). Democracy as defeat: the impotence of arguments for public service broadcasting. *Television & New Media*, 4(2), 177–191.
- Karppinen, K. (2007). Against naïve pluralism in media politics: on the implications of the radical-pluralist approach to the public sphere. *Media, Culture & Society*, 29(3), 495–508.
- Macdonald, D. G. & Dimmick, J. (2003). The conceptualization and measurement of diversity. *Communication Research*, 30(1), 60–79.
- Mustapha, A. R. (2007). Institutionalising ethnic representation: How effective is the Federal Character Commission in Nigeria? CRISE Working Paper No 43.
- Napoli, P. M. (1999). Deconstructing diversity. *Journal of Communication*, 49(4), 7–34.
- National Broadcasting Commission. (2008). Broadcast stations. Retrieved August 27, 2008, from www.nbc.gov.ng
- Odonlami, D. (2006). Media globalization, ICTs and Nigeria's development. In I. E. Nwosu and E. O. Soola (eds.). *Communication in global, ICTs & ecosystem perspectives: Insights from Nigeria*. Enugu: Precision Publishers, 198–207.
- Ojebode, A. (2004). Media globalisation and the responses of the Nigerian media: implications for democracy and development. *International Review of Politics and Development*, 2(2), 40–53.
- Olusanya, G. O. (1980). Constitutional developments in Nigeria 1861–1960. In O. Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian history*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 545–569.
- Omojola, B. (2002). Television shows: the electronic columns. *Media Review*, Dec, 24–35.
- Opubor, A. E. (2000). If community media is the answer, what is the question? In S. T. Kwame T. (ed.). *Promoting community media in Africa*. Paris: UNESCO, 1–25.
- Otite, O. (2000). *Ethnic pluralism, ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Shaneson.
- Podkalicka, A. (2008). Public service broadcasting as an infrastructure of translation in the age of cultural diversity. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 14(3), 323–333.
- Samovar, L. A. & Porter, R. E. (1995). *Communication between cultures*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Wilson, E. M. & Iles, P. A. (1999). Managing diversity—An employment and service delivery challenge. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, (12)1, 27–48.