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# The Contribution of the Broadcast Media to Public Policy Formulation in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study set out to investigate the contribution of the broadcast media to public policy formulation in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The broadcast media selected for the study were *Radio Akwa Ibom* and *NTA Uyo*, both based in the State. Five programmes of the broadcast media were selected for the study. The work employed content analysis and survey as the research design. A purposive sample of respondents was drawn from a population of members of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly and higher civil servants, comprising permanent secretaries and heads of directorates in 17 ministries and two bureaux. It was found out that the broadcast media made input that was incorporated into public policy, and such input was incorporated to the extent that it tended to agree with the proposals already made by public policy formulators. Incorporation of policy input from the broadcast media also depended on the attitude of the public policy formulators to such media organisations. The policy makers also considered policy input from the broadcast media as reliable and representative of public opinion. Hence when policies succeed or fail, the accolades or blame should not be restricted to policy makers alone.

**Key words:** policy actors, policy input, agenda-setting model, opinion-management process

## 1. Introduction

The mass media are believed to cast their influence on the diverse segments of the polity, including the process of governance, through their discharge of various functions. This is the 'media-centred' view of society. It holds that the media are a power base and to a great extent dictate or influence the behaviour of their audience. This position presupposes a relationship between political actors and the mass media, and underlines the contributions of the press to the political process. Communication processes contribute to the legitimisation of authority and also serve the functions of political articulation, mobilisation and conflict-management. They set much of the agenda of political debate, and are partly responsible for determining which will be relatively muted. In the process, they affect the chances of governments and actors to secure essential supports.

The power of the mass media is intrinsic in their function as articulators of interests and mobilisers of social power for purposes of action. Thus, the media often assume the role of a guide and, according to McQuail (1987), they "can attract and direct attention to problems, solutions or people in ways which can favour those with power and correlatively divert attention from individuals or groups".

Taking the point further, the mass media, by their intrinsic role as articulators of interest and mobilisers of social power, can point a searchlight in a particular area of public policy for policy makers to consider, be it in the area of problem-identification, problem-solving or diversion of attention from individuals, groups or issues. In doing this, however, the mass media consciously or unconsciously give some groups, individuals or issues differential treatment, sometimes favourable, and, at other times, unfavourable. This is why Cahn (1995) argues that the mass media help to define social reality and influence policy outcomes in the process.

Because the mass media can serve as a channel for persuasion and mobilisation, they are able to wield public opinion to influence policy makers in government as to the direction of public policy in the polity. Given the powers often ascribed to the mass media, is it possible that the broadcast media can contribute to public policy making in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria? If they do contribute, do such contributions find themselves in the mainstream of policy formulation? And under what circumstances do policy makers in Akwa Ibom State integrate policy suggestions from the broadcast media? These questions will, hopefully, be answered in this study, but first who are the public policy formulators?

Cahn (1995) uses the terms policy *actors* or *players* to refer to individuals or groups that are involved in public policy making. The usage presupposes that policy making involves more than those traditionally identified with policy formulation. Cahn divides these policy actors into two categories: institutional and non institutional

actors. The institutional actors, so called because they have been established by law, include the legislature, the president, governors, executive agencies and the courts. The non institutional actors consist of the media, political parties, interest groups and political consultants.

## 2. The Study Area

The study area is Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. It was created out of the erstwhile Cross River State, as the 21st state of Nigeria. The state lies wholly within the tropics along the South South corner of Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea, and situates on Latitudes  $4^{\circ}32'N$  and  $5^{\circ}33'N$  and Longitudes  $7^{\circ}25'E$  and  $8^{\circ}25'E$ . The State is bordered on the East by Cross River State, on the West by Rivers and Abia States, and on the North by Abia and Cross River States and on the South by Atlantic Ocean and the Southermost tip of Cross River State.

For this study, policy makers are narrowed down to the institutional actors, that is, the House of Assembly of Akwa Ibom State and the executive agencies in the State. The legislative authority of the House of Assembly makes the House a central institution in the policy formulation process. The powers of the Assembly, many and varied, are contained in Chapter V, Part II of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. The legislature is traditionally saddled with the responsibility of making laws for the society.

Another set of the institutional policy makers relevant to this study is the Executive headed by the governor. Although the executive does not have its powers of legislation clearly spelt out as those of the Legislature, it does, in the course of policy implementation, make its laws through orders, memoranda, circulars etc that have the force of law without statutory basis to implement policies. This is accomplished through the civil service where civil servants are the instruments in the accomplishment of such tasks. The civil servants are permanent policy makers in government because as Adamolekun (1986) puts it, they “are appointed into a permanent (career) service which is expected to serve successive sets of political officials”. Civil servants are part of the executive arm of government. And their appointments are on a permanent or career basis.

In Akwa Ibom State, the civil service came into being on September 23, 1987, when the State was created out of the old Cross River State. Today, Akwa Ibom State has 31 local government areas as listed in the First Schedule – Section 3, Part 1 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. The civil service is guided by a set of rules called *Civil Service Rules* as contained in the Federal Republic of Nigeria Civil Service Handbook 1997. The 12-chapter book addresses various aspects of the operations of the civil service.

Two broadcast media are used for this study. First is *Radio Akwa Ibom*, an arm of Akwa Ibom State Broadcasting Corporation, transmitting on the frequency of 90.528MHz. It is based in Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital, and was established in July 1991 to operate on the Frequency Modulation (FM) Band.

The other broadcast medium used for this study is the *Nigerian Television Authority, Uyo*, a product of the policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria to expand television services to all state capitals and major cities in the country. It was established in 1991.

## 3. Statement of the Problem

Some of the Chief Executive Officers (governors and military administrators) of Akwa Ibom State had made public statements on the need for the broadcast media to contribute to the formulation of policies by the state government. At other times, they were emphatic that the broadcast media had played major roles in policy making in the state.

To these researchers, however, the governors might have engaged in such rhetoric as an image and confidence-building measure, especially as they were addressing mass media professionals. The need arises, therefore, to test the claims of these Chief Executive Officers that the broadcast media, as an integral part of the mass media, *actually* contribute to public policy making in Akwa Ibom State. The burden of this research work, therefore, is to ascertain whether or not the broadcast media do contribute to policy formulation in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

## 4. Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What is the input made by broadcast media into public policy formulation in Akwa Ibom State?

2. To what extent is broadcast media input incorporated into policy making?
3. What is the relationship between policy formulators' attitudes toward the selected broadcast media and their attitude to the input from such media?
4. What is the policy makers' assessment of the contributions of the broadcast media to policy making in Akwa Ibom State?

## 5. Definition of Terms

*Input:* This refers to the advice, comments, ideas and suggestions of the broadcast media on issues of public relevance to Akwa Ibom State.

*Policy Formulation:* This is a stage in the cycle of public policy where a decision is taken and approval given for the preferred policy by public officials. It is a stage where goals are set and specific plans and proposals created towards the realisation of the goals of public policy in Akwa Ibom State.

*Policy Makers:* This refers to members of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly as well as higher civil servants in the employ of the Akwa Ibom State Government.

## 6. Public Policy

Scholars have severally defined public policy. Hence, it does not have one composite definition. Each definition, however, contributes to the total explanation of the concept. According to Eminue (2001), "a policy is simply a statement of the goals and objectives of an organisation in relation to a particular subject and the description of the strategies by which the goals and the objectives are to be achieved". In narrowing down what public policies are, Okereke (1998) situates public policy within the context of government: "Public policy refers to those definite acts or actions of government geared toward the fulfilment of the obligations of government on the citizens..." Thus, public policy is aimed at achieving what is in the public interest by the best possible means. Public policy is concerned with decision-making that Anderson (1979) says "involves the choice of an alternative from among a series of competing alternatives" (cited in Adebayo 1986).

The line of demarcation between policy and decision-making is rather thin. However, Adebayo (1986) attempts a line of distinction: "Many decisions build up to form policy; a decision is therefore an integral part and a component of a policy". Eminue (2001) states that "a decision is a choice made among many competing alternative options in response to certain needs or problem-solving situations", while policy, in a general sense, according to Eminue, normally refers to "webs of decisions, or courses of action or inaction which guide direction, coherence and continuity...more specifically the concept of *policy* typically demonstrates a concern without means and ends". The difference between policy and decision further lies in the fact that policy making typically involves a pattern of action extending over time and involving many decisions, some routine and some not routine. A summary of the distinction between policy and decision is simply this: a policy is broader than decision, and it is an aggregate of decisions, as explained by Eminue (2001): "A policy may be viewed as consisting of a series or collection of disparate decisions made with respect to a particular problem, but which is wider in dimension or scope, longer in time-span and broader in terms of goals and therefore more embracing in its consequences on individuals, organisations and the environment than a decision. To that extent, a policy could be regarded as a major decision, which encompasses or encapsulates a number of decisions which are integrated into a general programme of action."

What distinguishes public policy from private policy is that public policy is for the collective good of the society; and if any person in a group or society consumes it, it cannot feasibly be withheld from others in the same group or society. Public policy is for *public good*, and that public good is "something that is non-rival (non-depletable) and non-excludable in use", according to Eminue (2001), who further expatiates that goods that are rival and excludable are private in use. Non-depletability denotes that one's consumption of a public commodity (x) still leaves the same amount available for consumption by others. Non-excludable means that wherever commodity x is supplied for one person, it is available to all; hence non-fee paying citizens cannot be excluded from its consumption.

The public purpose of public policy is further emphasised by Stewart and Ranson (1988) as they state that public policy incorporates public values, and that it is typically the reserve of government whose essential role is “clarifying, constituting and achieving public purpose”.

Public policy has various characteristics:

1. Public policy is developed by government bodies or officials. It is formulated by authorities in the political system, and these authorities are similarly recognised by most members of the political system as responsible for public policy formulation.
2. Public policies are purposive or goal-oriented rather than chance or random behaviour. They are deliberate actions because human action is motivated or goal-directed. Fredrick *et al* (1988) state that public policy involves “a goal or purpose that has impact on the public at large”.
3. Policy consists of courses and patterns of action by governmental officials rather than their separate decisions. For example, it includes not only a decision to enact a law on some issues but also subsequent decisions on its implementation and enforcement.
4. Public policy is government action on a problem and what it intends to do about it in the future. It is the proposed course of action of the government or one of its divisions or departments. Eminue (2001) buttresses this point when he says that “policy must therefore be seen, among other things, as an attempt to anticipate and influence the future conditions, attitudes, behaviour, values, norms and tastes – either by preserving or by changing them”.
5. Public policies are aimed at public interest. All leaders justify their policies with appeals to public rather than specific interest. Even policies that tend to be against public interest are varnished and presented as public good.
6. Public policy could be either negative or positive. It is positive when it takes the form of overt governmental action aimed at tackling a problem, and negative when it (government) resolves not to take any action. In one word, it is the action or inaction of government.
7. Public policy is authoritative and legally binding, and has a potentially coercive quality. Citizens obey the law because it is authoritative and legitimate, with the full knowledge that disobedience or non-compliance may attract severe sanctions.
8. Public policy is intrinsically conflictual, because it is often a result of interplay of political forces. Jinadu (2000) pursues the point further by saying that the “discussion of policy matters becomes one of trades-off, of persuasion requiring flexibility, the ability to give and take and to sell one’s ideas...to recognise where pressures are coming from and ability to cope with them or to deflect them diplomatically”.
9. Public policy has both intended and unintended consequences. Policies never produce the exact result intended. Former President Ibrahim Babangida admitted this much at a symposium in October 2000, as reported by *This Day* of 18th October, 2000, page 8. He is quoted as saying:

Our desire to secure the maximum good for our country did inevitably beget certain consequences that were negative, even harmful. These were never intended, and were never foreseen. I acknowledge that the scale of (structural) adjustment might have been severe, despite our painstaking efforts to minimise the effects...A lot of our people found their way and were rewarded with success and fulfilment. A few bore the pains of some of our policies with patience and understanding. Many others, quite unfortunately, were unable to meet the challenges, and life proved too hard and too painful...As the pivot of that political process, I am profoundly sensitive to the unpleasant and regrettable but wholly unintended consequences. I take full responsibility.

Government policy is such that for everyone who achieves a good outcome, there are usually others who gain less or even suffer more.

10. Public policy is as much a decision or action taken as it is non-decision or inaction. Eminue (2001) states that “outright indecision, immobility or benign neglect also enjoys the status of policy options”. Non-decision-making is hence a means by which demands for a change in the existing allocation of

benefits and privileges are kept covert or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making arena, or, failing all these things, are maimed or destroyed in the decision implementing stage of the policy process. Eminue (2001) characterises non-decision as “mobilisation of bias” or “dynamic inaction”, “progressive decision postponement” or “creative status quo” which is a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a talent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision-maker.

11. Public policy is, ideally, *responsive* to the needs of the citizens, according to the realities of the day, with much of flexibility, firmness and sense of purpose.

## 7. Bureaucrats and Public Policy in Nigeria

Since the conclusion of the Nigerian Civil war in 1970, civil servants have played a significant role in policy-making in Nigeria. Top echelon of bureaucracy, particularly the permanent secretaries, their deputies and undersecretaries, have the wealth of experience as well as access to information necessary for policy proposals. Eminue (2001) states that although the implementation of public policies has been exclusively handled by Nigeria’s civil servants since Independence, the higher civil servants have often been dominant participants in the policy formulation process. He quotes Asiodu (1993) who asserts that once the permanent secretary gathered the necessary data on which policy formulation would be based, he then marshalled the information to indicate possible policy options, the consequences and repercussions of pursuing alternative courses of action.

In discussing bureaucrats and public policy in Nigeria, two distinct periods come into focus: the era of the civilian and that of the military administration. The periods are so divided because of their peculiar character, and it is this character that directly or indirectly defines the role of the civil servants in the policy formulation process.

In a civilian administration, where the political leadership is elected, the civil servants are less visible, a situation which is sometimes described as “an air of anonymity”. That the role of civil servants in policy-making tends to be less visible in the civilian era does not suggest that they do not contribute to policy-making. Rather, the political leadership is made up of professionals in different fields whose technical expertise may sometimes be comparable to that of the civil servants.

Under the military, however, civil servants play a significant role in policy formulation. In spite of power flowing from the barrel of the gun, the soldiers are politically and administratively naive, hence they invite the relatively experienced higher civil servants into a partnership in administration. Adamolekun (1986) describes the partnership as military-bureaucratic diarchy, and states that the most senior career officials in the ministry join a few leading military officers to constitute the executive-cum-legislative arm under the leadership of the Commander-in-Chief and Head of the Supreme Military Council. In the formulation of government policy, writes Adamolekun (1986) on the military era, the civil servants in Nigeria enjoy a *potential primacy*.

## 8. The Media and Public Policy

For the mass media to be in a position to act on the society, perhaps more than they are seen to be acted upon, journalists must have access to the political gladiators (Boyd-Barret 1995). To be convincing purveyors of reality, journalists must get as close as they can to the sources of events. Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) corroborate this position: “Journalists cannot perform their task of political scrutiny without access to politicians for information, news interviews, action and comments”. Journalists and the politicians are, therefore, in a role relationship, a relationship with which “the mass media offer politicians access to audience through a credible outlet, while politicians offer journalists information about a theatre of presumed relevance, significance, impact and spectacle for audience consumption” (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995).

As these scholars have stated, each side to the prospective transaction is in a position to offer the other access to a resource it values. However, according to Blumler and Gurevitch (1995), “the recurring interactions that result in political communication for public consumption are negotiated, not by unsocialised individuals but by individuals-in-roles whose working relationships are consequently affected by normative and institutional



commitments". This functional approach explains the behaviour of journalists and policy makers by locating them in their respective organisational settings, where their roles are chiefly defined and performed. Role-anchored guidelines provide models of conduct in the business of policy makers and journalists in their relationships or interactions.

Thus, journalists cannot, without great risk, offer policy suggestions that lie outside the authority of their roles. Likewise, policy makers will tend to avoid behaviour vis-a-vis the media that would be construed to breach their role prescriptions. By implication, therefore, "exchange and the tussles of mutual influence are normatively bounded" (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). Hence an ever-evolving, shared culture emerges from an ever-tactically shifting process in which the principal actors strive to influence each other for their own benefit. The authors further maintain that interaction is regulated to some extent by a shared framework of news values, indicating both who and what will tend to be treated as newsworthy.

Cahn (1995) states that the mass media help define social reality and influence policy outcomes in the process. Graber (1995) suggests that the media influence policy outcomes through what he calls "priming", which he explains as a selective coverage of only certain events. Through high-quality, thoughtful comments and debates on public issues, the mass media play a key role in supporting good policies and building decent societies. Aside from supporting public policies on their own, the mass media also create broad-based support for good policies. McCawley (2003) argues that sometimes policies fail, not because they are not good policies, but because there is lack of public support for the policies. He maintains that support for public policies is generated mainly by the mass media and this is achieved through discussions of policy issues by well informed persons.

The importance of public policy discussions is corroborated by Budge-Reid (1999) who also points to the dangers in the failure to debate policy publicly: "Making sustainable policy that is not subject to informed public debate is rarely sustainable. Media should be at the heart of policymaking, reflecting and communicating debates".

Sound, publicly debated policy making, according to Budge-Reid, requires:

- a) good, accessible information on issues;
- b) analytical capacity;
- c) capacity to communicate analyses among the public;
- d) capacity of the public to communicate their perceptions;
- e) a political environment which acknowledges and values public opinion; and
- f) a vibrant civil society where the media can express diverse viewpoints.

The public media are irreplaceable as a mechanism for moving a problem to solution. It takes the media to legitimise a problem as an issue of public concern. If the mass media contribute to good public policies, they have also been accused by policy formulators of contributing to bad policies. According to Otten (1992), the criticism is that the mass media "too often sensationalise and overplay stories, exaggerating risks and scaring the public, particularly in environmental and other areas involving public safety". That, critics say, pushes the government into bad policies or into actions that go much further than is scientifically justified, or diverting money that could have been used on more pressing and genuine problems.

Another criticism of the media's role in public policy formulation is that their contributions are sometimes cacophonous and contradictory. Otten observes that media stories often had several experts arguing with each other, frequently confusing readers and listeners. At other times, the mass media tend to frame the issue and create pressure to do something, or they concentrate coverage on why solutions to a problem will not work, thus giving the public the sense of there being no solution.

As much as they contribute to policy making, the mass media are sometimes ignored by policy makers. Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) state that when not facing election, contemporary US presidents and members of the Congress routinely ignore the media and follow their own political philosophies, as well as those of their party's activists, their contributors, and their interest group allies. They also write that politicians devote substantial time and money to tracking public opinion, not for the purposes of policy making, but to change opinion – to determine how to craft their public statements and actions to win support for the policies they and their supporters want.

## 9. Review of Studies

Studies by Dyck and Zingales (2002) have also indicated how the mass media affect corporate governance. According to them, the mass media do play a role in corporate governance by affecting reputation in at least three ways. First, the media can drive politicians to introduce corporate law reforms or enforce corporate laws in the belief that inaction would hurt their future political careers or shame them in the eyes of public opinion, both at home and abroad.

Second, media attention drives the fear of monetary penalty for abuses into the mind and conduct of managers, so that in the least they can be seen as good managers. Third, media attention affects not only managers' and board members' reputations in the eyes of shareholders and future employers but also their reputation in the eyes of society at large.

Low, Seetharaman and Poon (2002) in a survey in Malaysia asked institutional investors and equity analysts to identify the factors that were most important in assessing corporate governance and deciding to invest in public listed corporations. They found that the frequency and nature of press comments about a company were more important than a host of other factors.

A study by Dayha, McConnel and Travlos (2002) showed that while two thirds of a sample of the London Stock Exchange firms were not in compliance with Cadbury Standards when they were enacted in 1992, 93 percent had complied in 1996. This remarkable response was facilitated by the press' (hence public) acceptance of the standards, so that reports of non-compliance would lead to widespread condemnation of managers and directors.

Dyck and Zindales (2002) report that the California State Pension Fund for public employees (CalPERS) has adopted a policy of identifying under-performing firms and generating widespread media attention as an important tool in its efforts to change corporate policies. In 1991, when several chief executive officers convinced CalPERS that a "kindlier, gentler" strategy would be less antagonistic and more effective, only two of the 12 targeted companies negotiated acceptable agreements with CalPERS, and three resisted even meeting with CalPERS officials. In 1992, CalPERS returned to the policy of publicizing its target lists. This approach – reliance on disclosure supported by widespread searchlight by the press on performance relative to standards – led to remarkable changes in firm practices within a short time.

Dyck and Zindales (2002) in another study on the influence of the mass media on corporate governance report that following the passage of the Pollution Prevention Act of 1990, US firms were required to disclose their annual releases of each listed chemical by facility. Some environmental groups aggregated the disclosures and communicated same to the press by means of publications with such titles as *The Who's Who of Toxic Polluters* and *The Toxic 500*. The researchers report that a corresponding publication of the disclosures by the media forced many firms to take the Pollution Prevention Act seriously, such that: "firms that were high on the list, such as Allied (ranked third in 1990) and Dupont (ranked first in 1990), have made getting off the top 10 list a point of corporate strategy. Allied, for example, more than tripled its expenditures on environmental control facilities and voluntary clean up following the release of this information" (Dyck and Zingales 2002).

In a study of the news media's influence on the US foreign policy in the Information Age, Strobel (2000) reports that the news media, television in particular, have greatly affected the agenda of US foreign policy. According to him:

From 1992 until 1995, Presidents Bush and Clinton did not believe the war in Bosnia threatened the US interest sufficiently to send in US ground troops. But near non-stop coverage of the carnage and humanitarian



suffering ensured that they had to deal with the conflict nonetheless. Similarly, when organised violence broke out following East Timor's referendum on Independence, it was not perceived initially as a major issue on the administration's agenda. Television images and journalists questioning the administration's policy ensured that it was on the White House agenda, nonetheless. Conversely, there may be less pressure to attend to conflicts, such as the civil wars in West Africa, if they do not generate media attention and no other national security interest is involved.

Strobel further reports that it was "the TV images of fleeing ethnic Albanian refugees and the propaganda war on the Internet that played a major – even dominant – role in US foreign policy during the Kosovo conflicts".

Do the news media actually change US foreign policy? According to Strobel (2000), the news media seem to have the greatest impact in one narrowly defined area: humanitarian relief policy. However, as Strobel study further revealed, US diplomats, by and large, do not rely on media reports alone in tackling foreign policy issues. Hence Strobel says that: "Despite heavy media coverage, the United States did not intervene to stop the genocide in Rwanda. Neither President Bush nor President Clinton supported sustained US military involvement in Bosnia until the latter sensed that the war was threatening a major US security interest – the cohesion of NATO and the Atlantic Alliance. In other situations, such as Haiti and Kosovo, national interests caused US policy-makers to choose intervention even in the face of a skeptical Fourth Estate."

From the study, Strobel concludes that "global real-time television, the Internet and other technological advances have clearly affected how top foreign policy-makers do their jobs". He adds that "foreign policy isn't made by the media. But in the information Age, it can't be made without it".

A health-based report on the contribution of the mass media to public policy making is a study carried out by Otten (1992) on the mass media and HIV/AIDS. Otten reports that although AIDS began to be noticed in the United States in 1981, only a few broadcast stations or newspapers paid much attention. Even the expanding coverage in the San Francisco media and the gay press was largely dismissed by the rest of the mass media. At most, coverage consisted of brief items within articles in medical journals or speeches of medical conferences. In Spring 1983, there finally came a brief flurry of media attention. *Newsweek* ran AIDS cover story in April, and in May there were scare stories based on an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggesting AIDS could be transmitted through routine household contact.

But government policy on AIDS was slow in coming. However, when the mass media began to challenge the American Administration on the AIDS burden, government then developed a policy to combat the AIDS surge. Otten summarises his study of the influence of the mass media on AIDS policy in the United States by quoting one health policy specialist: "Early lack of attention to the AIDS epidemic shows the influence of the media. When the press didn't pay attention, neither did Washington".

Beaming his searchlight on the role of the mass media in the area of economic and development policies, McCawley (2003) studied how the mass media, through high-quality, thoughtful comment and debate on public issues, play a key role in promoting good policies and building decent societies. The country of study was Australia. McCawley reports that between 1950 and 1980, there was a long running debate in parliament, in universities and in business circles about the pros and cons of cutting tariff and reducing protection. Several of Australia's most well known economic journalists constantly set out the issues clearly and fairly. Because of the consistent media focus on the issues, the government of Australia was convinced to embark on economic reforms that witnessed marked reductions in the level of protection in Australia in the 1970s, which continued into the early 1980s. McCawley concludes: "Looking back at the series of supply-side economic reforms that have underpinned good economic performance in Australia, there seems little doubt that the media played a key role in strengthening the environment for reform".

In 1999, Enviros-RIS, public policy consultants based in Ontario, Canada, were contracted by Public Policy and Outreach Table, also based in Ontario, to prepare a "Discussions Paper on Public Policy and Social Change: The

Role of Awareness Building”. The object of the project was to ascertain the relationship between public policy, public awareness and social change. Enviros-RIS evaluated eight case studies in the project.

The study found out that:

- a. Timely media attention on public policy issues is indispensable. This derived from the effective use of the media by media-smart staff to get messages out, and in engaging the public through clever, catchy campaigns.
- b. The interaction among public awareness, public policy formulation and social change is not a linear process. In some cases, the public policy was clearly made first. In others, public policy was changed as a result of increased public awareness and advocacy through the mass media.
- c. Effective policy changes can take years to achieve. For example, it took a decade of extreme hard work to achieve the goal of Coalition for Acid Rain. The Quebec Tobacco Legislation took four years of intensive effort.
- d. Good science and research are essential components of good public policy development. Policy changes (and awareness campaigns related to these changes) need good science and research to garner support. This can be either scientific research or economic analysis or social implications.
- e. Ministerial support is essential for successful policy. In most of the case studies, the minister in charge of the department was a strong supporter of the policy, and shepherded the policy within the political system.
- f. Successful policies need strong, committed multi-sectoral champions.
- g. Mass media do not communicate complicated issues. The media need short sound bites. They do not like stories on problems that take years to solve. They also do not like concepts that are complicated to explain.
- h. Public awareness, public policy and social change are all interlinked. Politicians follow opinion polls, and will address an issue if they see it appearing in opinion polls.

In one of the most comprehensive studies of the media and foreign policy in the US, 20 distinguished scholars and analysts explain the role played by the mass media and public opinion in the development of the United States foreign policy in the first Gulf War. This is reported by Bennett and Paletz (1994). Tracing the flow of news, public opinion and policy decisions from Saddam Hussein’s rise to power in 1979, to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, through the outbreak and conclusion of the war, the authors examined how the media became key players in the foreign policy process. They also examined the pre-war media debate, news coverage during and after the war, how the news gathering process shaped the content of the coverage, and the media’s effect on public opinion and decision-makers. What went on behind the scenes in the high-tech world of political communication as well as troubling questions about the ways the government managed the coverage of the war and captured journalists were also examined. The analysts concluded that the news media played a decisive role in the US foreign policy during the civil war.

## 10. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the agenda-setting theory. Agenda-setting is a function which credits the media with the power to affect the perception of the audience. As a theory, agenda-setting function of the mass media was first highlighted by McCombs and Shaw (1972, 1995). According to these American researchers, “audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters through the media, they also learn how much important to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it”.

Since ‘agenda’ is a list of subjects to be considered or acted upon and could also be subjects that everyone has heard of, McCombs and Shaw believe that the mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agenda to the public agenda because people judge as important what the *media* judge as important. They write further: “Here may lie the most important effect of mass communication: its ability to mentally order and organise our world for us. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about” (McCombs and Shaw 1995).

The basic idea, according to McQuail and Windahl (1993), “is that amongst a given range of issues or topics, those which get more media attention will grow in their familiarity and perceived importance at a period of time, and those which get less will decline correspondingly.” McQuail and Windahl stress that attention to some issues and neglect of others will have effect on public opinion, as people want to know about those things which the mass media deal with and accept the order of priority assigned to different issues.

Media agenda, according to O’Sullivan *et al* (1983), is “the way that media, particularly in news, current affairs and documentary output, have the power to focus public attention on a defined and limited set of selected issues, while ignoring others. The result is that some topics are widely debated, beyond the media in the public sphere, while others are ignored”. To these authors, agenda-setting deals with “the question of *what* topics the media present to the audience, and secondly how information on those topics is presented. This relates to the dynamics of coverage; for example, *what* spectrum of viewpoints, symbols, questions and so on are selected to construct a particular news item of documentary programme and crucially how they are ranked, or accorded legitimacy and priority”.

The media often choose to emphasise certain topics, thereby causing the public to also choose and emphasise these issues (Dominick 2009). To Burns (1977), “the critics of newspapers and broadcasting see their power as lying in controlling the agenda, in their ability to select certain issues for discussion and decision and to ignore others, or treat them as non-existent; and in the ability to treat certain conflicts of interests as manifestly proper material and others as too complex, or marginal, or unmanageable”.

Through what Burns calls *news tasting* – a process of selecting what should count as news and what should not – the media allow the public to have that which they (the media) have already adjudged salient. In setting an agenda, the media assume the role of leader. Leadership does suggest a claim that the media elites know more than their clients - their audience. They are expected to lead in the discussion of issues, show the light to the audience and from the standpoint of being better informed, guide the audience into making rational decisions.

Agenda-setting is closely linked with ‘gate-keeping’. Watson and Hill (2006) press the point further when they hold that agenda-setting “defines the context of transmission, establishes the terms of references and the limits of debate...interviewers...are in control of preset agenda. They initiate, formulate the questions to be asked and have the chairperson’s power of excluding areas of discussion”.

The relevance of the agenda setting theory to the study is that the media are capable of influencing policy makers in decision-making. This they can do by selecting and emphasising certain issues for discussion and decision, while ignoring others, and thereby helping to focus the mind of the policy makers on the direction that the press has provided. The media are able to do this through mediation, which Watson and Hill (2006) explain as “...a process of interpretation, shaping, selecting, editing, emphasising, de-emphasising – according to the perceptions and the previous experience of those involved in the reporting of the events; and in accordance with the requirements and characteristics of the means of reporting...”

As the media often choose to emphasise certain topics, it is likely that the policy makers will also choose and emphasise these issues. The mass media may not change long-established policies, they can cause the audience, including policy makers, to be involved in policy debates, allow their emphasis to rise and fall according to media emphasis until a policy decision is reached by policy makers. The setting of agenda by the mass media implies that people look up to them for cues on policy issues of salience. They want the media to assist them to determine ‘reality’ in terms of likely policies to be made, changed or terminated.

## 11. Methodology

The study made use of both content analysis and the survey. In order to ascertain if the broadcast media under study made input into public policy formulation in Akwa Ibom State, it was imperative that the manifest content of the selected broadcast media be analysed. This study was also concerned with the attitudes of public policy makers towards the input from the broadcast media. Hence, the survey was employed to ascertain the attitudes of the public policy makers.

The study population of this work comprised members of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly as well as civil servants who were either permanent secretaries or were on the directors' cadre in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The rationale for selecting civil servants who were directors or permanent secretaries was the assumption that in their positions, they were experienced, had access to intelligence necessary for policy formulation and were closely involved in the policy making process. This indicates that new ideas and policy reform proposals have tended to emanate from the civil service. Members of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly were selected because constitutionally, they had the responsibility of law making.

There were seventeen ministries and two bureaus in Akwa Ibom State at the time of this study. These were: Lands and Housing; Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs; Agriculture and Natural Resources; Education; Finance; Health; Justice; Works and Transport; Industry and Commerce; Culture and Tourism; Science and Technology; Information and Social Re-orientation; Environment and Mineral Resources; Economic Development; Women Affairs and Social Welfare; Rural Development; Youth and Sports; Co-operative Development (Bureau); and Political and Legislative Affairs (Bureau).

The population of the broadcast media under study comprised news bulletins on both *Radio Akwa Ibom* and *NTA Uyo*, news commentaries on *Radio Akwa Ibom* and talk shows on the two stations. *Radio Akwa Ibom* and *NTA Uyo* were selected in the first instance because at the time of the study, they were the only functional broadcast media located in Akwa Ibom State.

In order to choose a sample of the respondents, purposive sampling was employed. Each ministry or bureau was divided into directorates. Only the heads of directorates were then included in the sample. Consideration was given to the fact that some ministries or bureaus were larger than others. This was resolved by the fact that the larger the establishment, the more the number of directorates it had. Adopting this for the study ensured that larger ministries had more representatives in the sample than smaller ministries. There were a total of 108 directorates in the 17 ministries and two bureaus as at the time of study. Therefore, the 108 heads of directorates were chosen purposively among the 930 directors in the ministries and bureau.

However, all the 19 permanent secretaries were included in the sample. The same rule was applied in the treatment of members of the House of Assembly. They were only 26, so all of them were polled. Altogether, 153 respondents were included in the sample.

Samples were also drawn on the contents of the two broadcast media analysed for possible policy input towards public policy formulation. The contents were news bulletins, news commentaries and talk shows. There were three issue-based talk shows on *Radio Akwa Ibom*. These were *Platform*, *Spotlight* and *Viewpoint*. *Platform* was a *live* discussion programme, and was rarely recorded. *Spotlight*, on its part, was not regular because it was a sponsored programme. *Viewpoint* was selected for the study for a number of reasons: it was consistent on the air; it was a general interest programme and, above all, dealt on contemporary issues. *Viewpoint* also had the advantage of not being a sponsored programme, hence did not come under the influence of commercialisation. The programme was added to the news bulletins and news commentaries of the station for study.

For *NTA Uyo*, only two types of content were analysed. These were the news bulletins and *Summit* - a general talk show programme. There were three talk shows on *NTA Uyo*. These were the *Summit*, *Investment Forum* and *Mboho Iban*. Of the three, only *Summit* was a general talk show. *Investment Forum*, as the name implies, was restricted to the economic sector, while *Mboho Iban* was a programme particularly targeted at the womenfolk, hence it was not considered general enough to be selected for the study. *NTA Uyo* did not have news commentaries.

A period of two years was selected for the study: January 2011 to December 2012. Two months were constructed from each of the two years to select bulletins and news commentaries to be content-analysed. Each year was divided into two halves – January to June as well as July to December. This was done to avoid the problem of *hidden periodicity*, a situation whereby a particular event of interest was not completely avoided so that samples were representative of the whole period under study. One month of 28 days was constructed from the first half of the year (January-June), while another month was constructed from the other half (July – December), using the Tables of Random numbers. The four constructed months had a total of 112 days. Unlike the daily bulletin and news commentary, talk shows were weekly. Therefore, all editions of the selected talk shows – *Viewpoint* and *Summit* – for 2011 and 2012 were included in the sample for content analysis.

The following content categories were created:

*Policy Input* – advocacy or suggestions by the broadcast media on the direction of public policy.

*Policy Statement* – A report by the media on the formal pronouncements of government indicating what it wants to do, how and why.

*Policy Outcome* – Reports on the consequences or impact of public policy in the society.

The units of analysis were news bulletins, commentary and *Viewpoint* on *Radio Akwa Ibom* as well as news bulletin and *Summit* on *NTA Uyo*.

The measuring instruments were the questionnaire and the media content. The questionnaire was in two parts. The first contained two sets of questions: one for the civil servants and the other for the House of Assembly members. The questions were generally the same except that some questions were framed to suit the peculiarities of the civil servants and the House of Assembly members.

Part two of the questionnaire contained specific policy suggestions made in the news bulletins, news commentaries and talk shows of *Radio Akwa Ibom* and *NTA Uyo* as the analysis of these contents revealed. Policy input was so identified when and if there was clear advocacy or outright suggestion on the direction of policy on the issues at hand. The questionnaire therefore sought to determine the extent to which policy makers agreed with the broadcast media on these specific policy issues.

On the other hand, the content categories were provided codes that enhanced proper placement of an item in a category. The codes were as follows: policy input, policy decision, policy output, policy outcome, news, commentaries, *Viewpoint* and *Summit*.

For this study, the sampling error was calculated to be  $\pm 5$ . Hence, the sample procedure in selecting respondents for the study was subjected to an error of  $\pm 5$ . This implies that the actual size of the sample could have been as high as 158 or as low as 148. The sample error was not significant. The split-half technique was used to ascertain the reliability co-efficient of the data gathering instrument.

For this study, the reliability of the instrument was calculated to be 1.1. This was a high positive and therefore indicated that the measuring instrument was reliable.

The weighted mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) was used to analyse responses from the respondents to address the research questions in the study. The questionnaire was structured based on a five-point Likert-scaling with the following parameters: Strongly Agree (SA) 5; Agree (A) 4; Undecided (U) 3; Disagree (D) 2; and Strongly Disagree 1. A mean of above 3 invariably supported the question raised while a mean of 3 or less disagreed with the question.

Coding of contents was carried out by two coders using the coding sheet. The calculated inter-coder reliability was 0.91. This represented a high level of agreement between the two coders.

## 12. The Findings and their Discussion

A total of 85 items were coded out of which 15 were on policy input, 23 were on policy statements, while 30 items were policy output and 17, policy outcome. A breakdown indicated that News on *Radio Akwa Ibom* produced 24 items, News on *NTA Uyo* 19, *Viewpoint (Radio Akwa Ibom)* 13, *News Commentary (Radio Akwa Ibom)* 23, and *Summit (NTA Uyo)* 6.

### 12.1 Research Question One: What is the input made by broadcast media into public policy formulation in Akwa Ibom State?

Fifteen policy issues were identified as input from the broadcast media. These were that:



- (i) Policies to protect the rights of the child are necessary.
- (ii) Widows are entitled to inherit their deceased husbands' property.
- (iii) Government should sanction multinationals who fail to exhibit corporate social responsibility.
- (iv) Cultism in schools deserves specific legislations in order to eradicate it.
- (v) Science and technology should be institutionalised in the country through realisable policies.
- (vi) The aged and the disabled should be given free medical treatment by government.
- (vii) The state government must show greater commitment to the fight against corruption among its officials.
- (viii) The state needs a sports policy that encourages talent-hunt and development, and ensures an appropriate reward system.
- (ix) Pensioners' entitlements should be paid before workers' salary.
- (x) There is need for specific legislations to ensure that citizens perform their civic responsibilities to government.
- (xi) Government should ensure free medical treatment for accident victims.
- (xii) Youths should be empowered through self-sustaining programmes.
- (xiii) The state needs workable policies that will translate into higher food production levels.
- (xiv) There should be a policy to harness the rich culture and diverse tourism potentials in the state.
- (xv) Akwa Ibom State needs policies to ensure integrated rural development.

These policy issues that engaged the attention of the broadcast media indicate that they (the media) cover a wide spectrum of issues. Although the issues covered may not be exhaustive, the situation gives an indication of a lively, issue-oriented discussion on radio and television. Apart from making the broadcast media appealing to public policy formulators in different areas, it also encourages the different segments of the audience to tune in regularly to the programmes of the broadcast media. In other words, audience members are likely to feel that issues concerning them have found space in the large stream of policy issues being discussed. Given that the two broadcast media are government-owned, though by different levels of government, particular segments of the public whose problems are being articulated by the broadcast media may claim, and rightly too, that government is about to act on issues affecting them. They feel recognised as part of the polity. This tends to bind the group to the media source in what McQuail (1987) calls an associational mode in communication relationship. By making input towards public policy formulation, the broadcast media fulfill their function of correlation where news events are explained and interpreted through commentaries and news analyses. Through correlation, the broadcast media set priority and signal the relative status of events.

From their input towards policy formulation, the media set the agenda both with the topics they present to the audience and how the information on those topics is presented. According to O'Sullivan *et al* (1983), the media, by so doing, "focus public attention on a defined and limited set of selected issues, while ignoring others". Hence, through what Graber (1995) calls 'priming', the broadcast media engage in a selective coverage of events. The implication is that those issues that have not come on the agenda of discussion of the broadcast media may be ignored because they are of less importance.

If the broadcast media adjudge issues as important, it is likely that the public, of which the policy makers are an integral part, will also adjudge those issues as important. By focusing on some policy issues and ignoring others, the broadcast media are involved in "gate-keeping", ensuring that some policy issues are either allowed through or turned back at the editorial gate. That most of the policy makers "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the specific policy input from the broadcast media also suggests that the media do help to focus the minds of policy makers on the direction that the press has provided. By implication, policy makers can look up to the broadcast media for cues on the feelings of the public as to where the pendulum of public policy should swing.

The nature of the specific policy suggestions by the broadcast media, however, provokes some thinking. A critical analysis of those specific suggestions indicates that the issues were not critical of already existing government policies and this tends to suggest collaboration with policy makers rather than independence by the



media operatives. This may not be entirely surprising because the two broadcast media are government-owned; hence it is unlikely that they will make policy suggestions that could be very critical of government.

The argument by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) that journalists cannot, without great risk, offer policy suggestions that lie outside the authority of their roles is very relevant here. Being government-owned, the broadcast media would not risk offering input that is very critical of the establishment of which they are a part. This position is also in line with the structural functionalism model of decision-making. Under this model, the broadcast media function to maintain the different structures in the society; hence any input that is likely to jeopardise the survival of the existing structures is unlikely to be put forward by the broadcast media. This is so because interactions between journalists and public policy makers are regulated by a shared framework of news values that determines both who and what will tend to be treated as newsworthy (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). Similarly, it is not also surprising to observe that the specific policy suggestions made by the broadcast media found high agreement rate among the public policy formulators who are also government officials. It is therefore tempting to suggest that both the broadcast media studied and public policy formulators are two sides of the same coin – government – working sometimes from different directions, complementing each other but ultimately working to achieve the common objective of enthroning government policies.

However, does this imply that differences in opinion may not exist between the two? Of course, these differences exist. This leads us to the discussions of the answer to Research Question Two.

## **12.2 Research Question Two: To what extent is broadcast media input incorporated into public policy?**

From the responses of the subjects in this study, it was established that broadcast media input is incorporated into public policy formulation. This suggests a relationship between policy formulation and broadcast media input and portrays the broadcast media as an active player in the policy formulation process. That input from the broadcast media sometimes leads to a change in the policy maker's proposal alludes to the power of the media to change perceptions by determining "reality" as to why public policies should be made, changed or terminated. This is in line with the agenda-setting theory that the mass media are capable of influencing policy makers in decision-making. By "shaping, selecting, editing, emphasizing" certain issues for discussion and decision while ignoring others, the mass media help to focus the minds of policy makers and define 'reality' of public policy for the policy formulators (McQuail 1977; Watson and Hill 2006).

It is also important to observe that through their selection, exclusion, emphasis and de-emphasis of some policy issues from debates, the broadcast media confer status on such issues. Domnick (2009) is very explicit: "The audience evidently believes that if you really matter, you will be at the focus of mass media attention, and if you are the focus of media attention, then you really matter". In effect, if a policy issue really matters, it will be in the focus of the broadcast media attention. Thus, policy issues that the broadcast media highlight continually assume priority – issues that have been conferred a status of salience by the media – and policy makers, rightly or wrongly, wittingly or unwittingly, take such policy issues to be a of great concern to the public and the policy makers themselves.

It is also interesting to observe that in spite of their presumed power, the broadcast media are not always able to get their policy fare into public policy. The fare is sometimes rejected. As the responses of the subjects indicated, policy input finds more acceptability when it tends to agree with the proposals already made by the policy formulators. In this regard, the broadcast media reinforce existing patterns (Cassata and Asante 1979).

That the policy makers sometimes reject the policy input from the broadcast media indicates that the policy formulators are not passive recipients of whatever media content comes their way. According to Dowse and Hughes (1986), government is not always responsive to public opinions. Response tends to depend on the issue. Therefore, when the broadcast media input tends not to be in agreement with the policy formulators' proposals, it is likely that such input is outrightly rejected or is not given consideration as much as it would have been were

the policy input to be in agreement with the proposals already made by the policy formulators. Since the policy formulators are not passive recipients of policy input from the broadcast media, it is likely that, as Dowse and Hughes (1986) have said, the policy makers sometimes engage in tilting the balance of media discussion in favour of their proposals in what is known as *opinion management process*.

Thus, where broadcast media input is at variance with already established policy proposals, the formulators may actively canvas their position in the mass media in order to convince both the media professionals and the audience members who depend on the mass media for some of the information needs. Such occasions provide the policy formulators with the much needed opportunity to explain the desirability or otherwise of the policy being canvassed. This suggests that at all times in the policy making process, the formulators are ready to defend their position, particularly when such a position has received unfavourable comments in the mass media. This is in line with the argument of McCawley (2003) that policies fail not because they are not good policies, but because there is lack of public support for the policies. To the extent that they do not want their policy proposals to fail, policy makers actively and openly canvas support for their proposals through the media.

**12.3 Research Question Three: What is the relationship between policy formulators' attitudes toward the selected broadcast media and their attitude to the input from such media?.** The findings of the study indicate that a relationship exists between the attitudes of policy makers to a broadcast medium and the acceptance of policy input from such a medium. This underlines the point that policy makers do discuss media input concerning them, and it suggests, too, that their response, more often than not, especially where there is a common enemy, is determined by their social relationships, because informal social relationships play a significant role in modifying the manner in which a given individual will act upon the message which comes to his attention via the mass media. Being members of the same category, the policy makers also tend to select more or less the same content and will respond to it in (roughly) equal ways.

That some policy formulators could be influenced in incorporating or rejecting a policy input by their prejudiced attitude to a broadcast medium is disturbing, because it tends to take policy formulation away from the critical plane of reasonability to the platform of personal or group bias. The danger inherent in such a situation is that policy formulators indirectly put unnecessary pressure on the broadcast media to amend or change their stance before input emanating from them could be given serious attention, no matter the salience of such input. In the end, therefore, the final policy outcome may be defective since the path of policy formulation was defined not by objective reasoning, but by personal or group bias. Such policies may at the end be counter-productive.

**12.4 Research Question Four: What is the policy makers' assessment of the contributions of the broadcast media to policy making in Akwa Ibom State?**

From the findings of the study, policy input from the broadcast media is considered reliable and representative of public opinion. It should be said, however, that in a locality such as Akwa Ibom State where the broadcast media studied are government-owned, policy input from such media is not likely to be critical of existing policies. Rather, it will be, to a great extent, complementary and mutually reinforcing. Since there exist no competing and alternative sources of information on the airwaves, what the broadcast media under study – *Radio Akwa Ibom* and *NTA Uyo* – present becomes a public opinion. It had earlier been stated in this study that a monopoly of the media and subsequent eclipse of contending views from discussion in the media seriously impede effective public discussion. Hence, as Dowse and Hughes (1986) argue, "if a government can control all media then it might well be able to control the opinions of the population". Since there are no competing and alternative broadcast media in Akwa Ibom State, policy input from the existing ones is more complementary than divergent. Yet the confidence of the policy formulators in the input from the broadcast media is significant and should not be overlooked. It demonstrates that the broadcast media are active, focused, convincing and intelligent participants in the policy formulation process. Therefore, the policy formulators are justified in describing the

policy input from the two broadcast media as reliable and representative of public opinion. It is not surprising, too, that the policy formulators would go for broadcast media input.

A summary of the findings were thus:

- i) The broadcast media made input into public policy formulation. Their suggestions cut across a wide spectrum of issues. The policy formulators also indicated that the broadcast media made contributions into policy making and that they incorporated some of these suggestions into policy making.
- ii) Broadcast media input is incorporated into public policy to the extent that such input tends to agree with the proposals already made by the policy formulators. This indicates that public policy formulators are not passive recipients of whatever media content comes their way. Response tends to depend on the issue at hand.
- iii) A relationship exists between the attitude of policy makers toward particular broadcast media and the acceptance or rejection of the input of such media into policy in Akwa Ibom State. Accepting or rejecting policy input from the media could depend on the attitude of policy formulators to such media organisations.
- iv) Policy input from the broadcast media is considered reliable and representative of public opinion. However, in a situation that all broadcast media are government-owned, such input is less likely to be critical of existing policies.

### 13. Conclusion

From the findings above, it is concluded that *Radio Akwa Ibom* and *NTA Uyo* play major roles in policy formulation in Akwa Ibom State. They offer policy input that is incorporated into public policy. That the input may sometimes be rejected does not vitiate the role of the broadcast media in policy formulation. It only demonstrates the fact that the policy makers are not passive recipients of input from the media, neither are the mass media imbued with such power that their messages have inevitable impact on the audience (policy makers) once they have been released, as conceptualised by the simple conditioning model of media effects process. The occasional rejection of broadcast media input is a further confirmation of existing mass media studies that there are many intervening variables in the media effects process. In this study, such variables included congruence or the lack of it with the proposals of policy makers.

It is further concluded that the attitude of policy makers towards a particular broadcast medium is a factor in the acceptance or rejection of input. It also submits that the broadcast media are not only engaging in information dissemination or information sharing or surveillance, they are similarly active in setting orders of priority and signalling the relative status of events.

It is noteworthy that despite their being government-owned media, *Radio Akwa Ibom* and *NTA Uyo* are still able to play major roles in policy making. This raises two fundamental issues in the journalism profession. The first is that although government may own a medium of mass communication, it does not always interfere in the operations of the medium. The second issue is that as the operatives in *Radio Akwa Ibom* and *NTA Uyo* have demonstrated, mass media professionals in government employ should not be lily-livered in playing their roles in the society because of the fear of government sanction. Although government sometimes wields the big stick, the media professionals should realise that they must continuously push the frontiers of their freedom in order to be relevant in the society.

It is also submitted that policy makers in Akwa Ibom State and the broadcast media are in a symbolic relationship. Policy makers profit from the informed analyses on the airwaves on policy proposals which enable them to reposition policy proposals for wider acceptance and applicability. On the other hand, broadcast media's discussion of policy proposals gives the media the opportunity to fulfil their political functions in the society.

One of the greatest contributions of the study is ascertaining that sometimes the final outcome of what is known as public policy is as much a product of policy makers as it is of the mass media professionals. The work has brought out the inter-connectedness between policy formulators and the mass media in enthroning public policies, such that when policies fail or succeed, the blame or accolades should not be restricted to policy makers alone.

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## APPENDIX

**Table 1: Public Policy Content in the Selected Five Programmes on Radio Akwa Ibom and NTA Uyo**

Media Content	Policy Input	Policy Statement	Policy Output	Policy Outcome	Total
News (Radio Akwa Ibom)	4	7	10	3	24
News (NTA Uyo)	3	5	5	6	19
Viewpoint (Radio Akwa Ibom)	2	2	6	3	13
Contemporary (Radio Akwa Ibom)	5	6	8	4	23
Summit (NTA Uyo)	1	3	1	1	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>85</b>

Total number of items coded = 85

**Table 2: Media Input affects Proposals**

Option	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly Agree	17	11.6
Agree	88	59.9
Undecided	18	12.2
Disagree	24	16.3
Strongly Disagreed	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Policy Makers sometimes reject Input**

Option	Radio Akwa Ibom		NTA Uyo	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly Agree	24	16.3	24	16.3
Agree	56	38.1	56	38.1
Undecided	50	34	50	34
Disagree	17	11.6	17	11.6
Strongly Agree	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4: Policy Makers' Personal Attitude to a Medium affects Attitude to Input from the Medium**

Option	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly Agree	55	37.4
Agree	69	47
Undecided	11	7.5
Disagree	9	6.1
Strongly Disagreed	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 5: Policy Makers always agree with Policy Input**

Option	NTA News		Radio Akwa Ibom News		News Commentaries on Radio Akwa Ibom		Summit on NTA Uyo		Viewpoint on Radio Akwa Ibom	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly Agree	35	23.8	35	23.8	43	29.2	16	10.9	14	9.5
Agree	50	34	50	34	59	40.1	36	24.5	39	26.5
Undecided	20	13.6	20	13.6	16	10.9	26	17.6	26	17.7
Disagree	25	17	25	17	17	11.6	53	36.1	49	33.3
Strongly Disagreed	17	11.6	17	11.6	12	8.2	16	10.9	19	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6: Broadcast Media Input is representative of Public Policy**

Option	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly Agree	30	20.4
Agree	63	42.8
Undecided	17	11.6
Disagree	27	15
Strongly Disagreed	15	10.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 7: Policy Makers' Agreement with Broadcast Media Input enhances Chances of Input Acceptance**

Option	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly Agree	35	23.8
Agree	66	44.9
Undecided	22	15
Disagree	24	16.3
Strongly Disagreed	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>



**Table 9: Public Policy Contribution from Broadcast Media is reliable**

Option	NTA Uyo		Radio Akwa Ibom	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly Agree	30	20.4	30	20.4
Agree	75	51	75	51
Undecided	18	10.2	18	12.3
Disagree	15	10.2	15	10.2
Strongly Disagreed	9	6.1	9	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>

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