

**REVISITING FILM PRODUCTION
CURRICULUM FOR POSTGRADUATE
STUDIES IN THREE NIGERIAN
UNIVERSITIES**

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Abstract

The evolving landscape of the Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, necessitates a dynamic and well-structured postgraduate curriculum in film production to align with global standards. This study critically examines the postgraduate film production curricula of select three Nigerian universities to assess their relevance, comprehensiveness, and responsiveness to demands of the industry. The study also explores how these institutions incorporate technological advancements, storytelling techniques, and entrepreneurship to equip graduates with competitive skills. Recommendations are provided for curriculum enhancement to better prepare students for the evolving film industry. Using a qualitative comparative approach, the research analyses course structures, content, practical training components, and industry collaboration. The findings highlight strengths and gaps in existing programmes, particularly in areas such as digital filmmaking, funding strategies, and international co-productions. The research contributes to the evolving discourse on film education in Nigeria, offering insights for academia, policymakers, and industry stakeholders aiming to strengthen film production training at the postgraduate level.

Keywords: Film production, Postgraduate Curriculum, Revisit, Select Nigerian universities

Introduction

The evolution of film production in the curricula of Nigerian universities has been crucial in developing the country's thriving film industry commonly known as Nollywood. The film industry in Nigeria has experienced a rapid growth since its inception in the early 1990s. This blossoming industry warranted the development of standardized education models to train professionals skilled in various aspects of film production. Early efforts to document and analyze the growth of the Nigerian film industry are exemplified by works such as "The Development and Growth of the Film Industry in Nigeria," which provides foundational insights into the industry's trajectory (Opubor & Nwuneli, 1979). Several Nigerian universities have instituted postgraduate programmes in film production to address the demand of the industry for highly skilled professionals. This study examines the postgraduate film production programmes in select three Nigerian universities. These universities are University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in Enugu State, National Film

Institute, Jos in Plateau State, as well as Pan-Atlantic University, in Lagos State.

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), offers a comprehensive postgraduate programme through its Department of Theatre and Film Studies. It provides advanced training in film production. Its curriculum is designed to equip students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, preparing them for diverse roles in teaching, the entertainment industry, administration, research, and criticism. Key components of the programme include:

1. Documentary Film (TFS 654): This course investigates non-fiction filmmaking, offering students hands-on experience in documentary production, including technical skills in shooting and editing.

2. Nigerian Film and Video Arts (TFS 660): This course focuses on the origins and development of film and video arts in Nigeria. It examines current industry practices and provides critical insights into the local film landscape. The programme culminates in a supervised workshop where students collaboratively engage in directing

and acting projects, fostering a practical understanding of stage and film production (University of Nigeria, Nsukka, n.d.).

National Film Institute, Jos

The National Film Institute (NFI) in Jos, an affiliate of the Nigerian Film Corporation and the University of Jos, offers a Master's programme in Film Culture and Archiving Studies. This programme tackles the critical need for expertise in film preservation and cultural heritage, areas of growing importance given the expansion of the Nigerian film industry. The curriculum encompasses:

- 1. Cinematography:** Students are trained in the art and technology of motion-picture photography, which emphasizes visual storytelling techniques.
- 2. Editing:** In-depth knowledge of post-production processes are provided, to enable students craft narratives through film editing proficiently.
- 3. Scriptwriting:** This course enhances students' abilities to create engaging and culturally resonant stories, as it focuses on

the development of compelling screenplays. The programme is designed for both Nigerian and international students seeking careers in film culture and archiving, reflecting a commitment to preserving cinematic heritage (National Film Institute, n.d.; University of Jos, 2022).

Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos

The Pan-Atlantic University in Lagos State offers a Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Film Production through its School of Media and Communication. This programme aims to develop professionals with a profound understanding of film production processes, combining creative practice with academic inquiry. While specific course details are not extensively documented in the provided sources, the programme is structured to cover various aspects of film production, including:

- 1. Production Techniques:** Emphasizes the practicalities of producing films, from pre-production planning to post-production management.

2. Directing: Focuses on the artistic and managerial roles of the director in bringing a script to life.

3. Film Theory and Criticism:

Encourages critical analysis of films, thereby fostering an understanding of cinematic languages and genres. The M.Sc. in Film Production at Pan-Atlantic University is designed to bridge the gap between academic study and industry practice, preparing graduates for impactful careers in the film sector (Pan-Atlantic University, n.d.).

Revisiting and enhancing the curricula of film production at the postgraduate level in Nigerian universities is essential for sustaining the growth and competitiveness of Nollywood at the global stage. The programmes at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, National Film Institute, Jos as well as Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos, exemplify diverse but uncoordinated approaches to film education in the country.

Therefore, the major concern of this study is the observed inconsistencies in limited

collaboration between academia and Nollywood industry. Nigerian postgraduate programmes offer minimal industry mentorship and internship opportunities. This lack of practical exposure reduces graduates' employability and weakens the link between education and real-world filmmaking (Shaibu & Wyorkson, 2023). Infrastructural deficits have further compounded these problems, as many universities lack modern film production equipment, editing suites, and sound studios. The lack of access to up-to-date technology has caused students to struggle to develop the technical expertise required to compete in a digitalised industry. Additionally, film education in Nigeria often sidelines indigenous storytelling techniques in favour of Western cinematic models, limiting students' ability to create culturally relevant content (Akande, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The postgraduate film production curriculum introduced in many Nigerian universities has been struggling to align with the demands of the industry, thereby leaving graduates with very little preparation for

professional filmmaking. The disconnect between academic training and expectations of the industry has presented several critical challenges as many Nigerian universities now prioritise theoretical instructions over practical skills, limiting students' exposure to cinematography, directing, scriptwriting, and post-production techniques. As a result, graduates often require additional practice-oriented training before they can effectively contribute or perform in the 67tgt, Nollywood industry. Furthermore, the absence of a standardised curriculum across universities leads to inconsistencies in the competencies of film graduates, making it difficult to establish a unified approach to film education.

This study, therefore, seeks to identify the gaps in postgraduate film production curricula in the select three Nigerian universities. This gap hinges on the need to pedagogically blend theoretical and practical film production teaching and learning in the postgraduate studies curricula of Nigerian universities. The need for revisiting the postgraduate studies curricula on film making in Nigeria becomes obvious

in the light of the fact that the ultimate result of any film study curriculum should be observed competence of the graduates in the industry. It is believed that addressing film studies curricula inconsistencies and strengthening industry collaboration will largely help the Nigerian film production postgraduate students to meet and fit into the evolving landscape of the Nollywood and global filmmaking industry.

Objectives of the Study

1. To Analyse the contents of postgraduate film production curricula of the select three Nigerian Universities with a view to determining areas of inconsistencies and diversities.
2. To ascertain the extent to which the postgraduate film production curricula of the select universities are relevant and meeting the demand of the contemporary Nigerian film Industry.
3. To determine the challenges facing film production curricula in the select Nigerian Universities.

Significance of the Study

Updating academic courses from the informal production practices to more structured programmes will ensure that graduates are equipped with relevant skills and knowledge, thereby enhancing their employability and capacity to contribute effectively to the growth of the industry.

Also, the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems into film education will challenge the dominance of Western theoretical frameworks and foster a curriculum that resonates with local contexts. Adejunmobi (2019) emphasizes that Nigerian film education often integrates pre-colonial and traditional modes of knowledge-making, promoting a decolonized curriculum that preserves indigenous narratives and cultural heritage.

Again, the adoption of outcome-based education (OBE) and technology-aided learning has been shown to enhance the teaching and learning of filmmaking in Nigerian universities. Shaibu and Ganda (2023) highlight that these approaches not only improve student engagement but also

ensure that educational outcomes align with industry standards, thereby producing graduates who are better prepared for professional challenges.

A comprehensive understanding of the historical development and challenges of the Nigerian film industry is crucial for informing curriculum development. Ernest-Samuel and Joe (2019) discuss issues such as ethnic bias and piracy that have historically plagued Nollywood. By integrating these discussions into the curriculum, educational institutions can prepare students to navigate and address these challenges effectively.

Finally, this study will add to the growing body of literature on Nollywood and film studies in Nigeria. A systematic review of existing studies, as conducted by Ebewo and Okuyade (2021) reveals a need for continuous scholarly engagement to address emerging trends and challenges in the industry.

Scope of the Study

The study focused on film production curriculum for postgraduate studies in three Selected Nigerian universities: University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), and National Film Institute (NFI), affiliated with the Nigerian Film Corporation and the University of Jos, as well as Pan-Atlantic University (PAU), Lagos. Key areas covered by the curriculum included core courses on cinematography, directing, editing, screenwriting, and film theory. On practical training, film workshops, production projects, as well as internship opportunities for students were covered. Other areas include theoretical frameworks which involved the evaluation of the balance between practical production skills and theoretical film studies as well as examining how curricula align with the evolution of Nollywood's landscape and international film production standards.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major limitations faced in the course of carrying out this research was the non-availability of recent and official curriculum documents from these three

selected universities as they failed to publicly provide detailed course outlines, making it difficult to obtain the most current and comprehensive information about their postgraduate film production programmes.

Secondly, since the study relied primarily on secondary sources, direct interviews with film lecturers, students, and professionals in the Nollywood were somewhat difficult conduct. This limited the researcher's ability to gather firsthand insights on the practical impact of the curriculum on students' learning experiences and career prospects.

Again, the researcher encountered bureaucratic challenges in requesting for information. Some universities maintained very strict policies regarding access to internal academic documents, making it difficult to obtain detailed curriculum structures, assessment methods, and faculty inputs.

Due to constraints in funding and logistics, the study was limited to three select universities, to allow the researcher time for field research despite the presence of other

universities offering postgraduate film programs.

Finally, the researcher encountered disparities in existing scholarly works, as different studies provided contradictory perspectives on the effectiveness of film education in Nigeria. This required a careful synthesis of multiple sources to ensure balanced conclusions.

Literature Review

This literature review critically examined the postgraduate film production curriculum in three select Nigerian universities, focusing on conceptual, theoretical, and empirical perspectives as well as identified existing gaps in the literature.

Conceptual Review

The conceptual framework of film education in Nigeria encompasses the historical evolution, curriculum design, and pedagogical approaches within academic institutions. Historically, Nigerian film education has been influenced by colonial legacies, leading to the adoption of Western-centric curricula that may not fully address

local industry needs (Akande, 2021). The National Film Institute (NFI) in Jos offers programs such as the Bachelor in Film Arts and Diploma in Film Production, aiming to provide comprehensive training in both theoretical and practical aspects of film production (National Film Institute, n.d.). Similarly, the School of Media and Communication at Pan-Atlantic University offers an MSc in Film Production, focusing on advanced filmmaking techniques and industry practices (Pan-Atlantic University, n.d.). Despite these offerings, there is a need to assess how well these curricula align with the dynamic demands of Nollywood and global film industries.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical underpinnings of film education involve understanding film as a communicative medium and its application in various contexts. Technological determinism theory posits that technological advancements shape societal structures and cultural values (Olayiwola, 2023). In the context of Nigerian film education, this theory suggests that the integration of modern technologies into the curriculum is

essential for producing graduates capable of contributing to the evolving film industry. However, the current curricula often emphasize traditional filmmaking techniques, potentially limiting students' exposure to contemporary digital practices. Incorporating technological determinism into the curriculum can enhance students' abilities to create films that effectively convey intended messages and emotions in a digitalized world.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on film education in Nigeria highlight the practical challenges and successes within academic programs. Akande (2021) argues against the universalization of film studies practices under a Westernized umbrella, emphasizing the need for a nation-specific approach that considers Nigeria's unique cultural and industrial context. This perspective is crucial, as the close relationship between Nigeria's film education and Nollywood necessitates curricula that reflect local realities. However, empirical research assessing the effectiveness of these programs in preparing students for the

industry remains limited. Studies focusing on graduate outcomes, industry integration, and the applicability of skills learned are necessary to evaluate and improve the efficacy of film education in Nigeria.

Summary and Identified Gaps

While Nigerian universities offer structured programmes in film production, there is a paucity of research evaluating the alignment of these curricula with industry needs. The existing literature provides insights into the components of film education but lacks comprehensive analyses of how well these programs prepare students for the practical demands of Nollywood and the global film market. Additionally, the underrepresentation of indigenous storytelling techniques and the limited integration of modern technologies in the curriculum highlight areas requiring attention. Future research should focus on assessing the effectiveness of current curricula, exploring the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills, and examining the outcomes of graduates in the industry. Addressing these gaps is crucial for developing a film education

system that is responsive to the evolving landscape of film production.

The Evolution of Nollywood

The Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has undergone a remarkable transformation since its inception, evolving into a significant cultural and economic force both within Africa and globally. This evolution has been influenced by various factors, including technological advancements, socio-economic changes, and notably, the contributions of academic institutions.

Nollywood's origins can be traced back to the early 1990s with the release of pioneering films that capitalized on the accessibility of video cassette technology. This period marked a departure from the colonial-era film productions, which were predominantly controlled by foreign interests and often failed to resonate with local audiences (Haynes & Okome, 1998). The indigenous video film movement emerged as a response to the societal need for authentic Nigerian narratives, leading to a proliferation of films that depicted local

stories, traditions, and challenges. Over the decades, Nollywood has experienced significant transformations. The industry shifted from low-budget productions to more polished films, embracing digital technology and exploring diverse genres. This progression has not only enhanced the quality of Nigerian films but has also expanded their reach to international audiences, positioning Nollywood as a formidable player in the global film industry (Haynes, 2016).

Role of Academia in Shaping the Growth of Nollywood

Academic institutions in Nigeria have played a pivotal role in the development and professionalization of Nollywood. Universities and colleges have contributed through curriculum development, research, and fostering collaborations between scholars and industry practitioners. One significant area of academic influence is the establishment of film and media studies programs that equip students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills pertinent to film production. These programs have been instrumental in

producing a new generation of filmmakers who are well-versed in both the artistic and technical aspects of filmmaking. Moreover, scholarly research has provided critical analyses of Nollywood's impact on Nigerian culture, economy, and society, offering insights that have informed policy decisions and industry practices (Adamu, 2016).

Collaborations between academia and the film industry have also led to initiatives aimed at addressing challenges such as piracy, distribution bottlenecks, and the need for capacity building. Workshops, seminars, and conferences organized by academic institutions have created platforms for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and the promotion of best practices within the industry. The symbiotic relationship between Nollywood and Nigerian academia has been instrumental in shaping the trajectory of the film industry. As Nollywood continues to evolve, the ongoing engagement of academic institutions will be crucial in addressing emerging challenges and sustaining the industry's growth.

3. Challenges in Postgraduate Film Production Curriculum

The Nigerian film industry is faced with challenges such as policy and structural issues, which relate to policy formulation, artistic direction, technical expertise, market structure, and education. These issues are mirrored in academic settings, where outdated policies and bureaucratic hurdles impede curriculum reform and the adoption of innovative teaching methodologies.

Secondly, many institutions have been struggling with limited financial resources, hindering the delivery of comprehensive practical training essential for acquiring modern equipment, developing infrastructure, and attracting qualified faculty.

The absence of standardized curricula across institutions has led to disparities in the quality of education, affecting the competence of graduates entering the industry.

Finally, the prevalence of piracy has undermined the economic viability of the film industry, which in turn has affected

investments in educational programs and resources.

4. Prospects in Postgraduate Film Production Curriculum

It is essential to update and overhaul curricula to reflect current industry practices, including digital filmmaking techniques and contemporary storytelling methods. This includes integrating courses that focus on emerging technologies and platforms.

Establishing partnerships between academic institutions and industry stakeholders can provide students with practical experience through internships, workshops, and mentorship programs. Such collaborations ensure that the skills taught align with industry needs.

Securing funding from government bodies, private sectors, and international organizations can aid in developing state-of-the-art facilities and acquiring modern equipment necessary for hands-on training.

Engaging with policymakers to address issues such as piracy and to develop

frameworks that support the growth of both the film industry and its educational counterparts is crucial.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories have been adopted for the frameworks of this study. They include; Constructive Learning Theory as well as Media Ecology Theory.

Lev Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory posits that learning is an active process where individuals construct knowledge based on their experiences and interactions. It emphasises the role of social and cultural contexts in learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

Application to the Study

Film production is highly practical and interactive, as such, students learn best when they engage in hands-on filmmaking rather than passive theoretical instruction. Peer learning and mentorship are essential in film education, where students collaborate in production teams. Industry engagement (guest lectures, workshops, internships with Nollywood) enhances learning by exposing

students to real-world film production challenges.

Justification & Relevance

This theory is justified and relevant because it supports a student-centred approach where postgraduate students actively participate in filmmaking rather than just studying theories. It encourages the integration of Nollywood industry expertise into postgraduate curricula, ensuring relevance to contemporary film practices and also reinforces the need for collaborative, real-world learning through group projects, film screenings, and critique sessions.

2. Media Ecology Theory (McLuhan, 1964; Postman, 1968)

Marshall McLuhan's Media Ecology Theory examines how media and communication technologies shape human experiences and societal structures (McLuhan, 1964). Neil Postman later expanded on this, highlighting how different media influence learning and cultural development (Postman, 1968).

Application to the Study

Film production is deeply tied to technological advancements (e.g., digital filmmaking, CGI, streaming platforms). A relevant curriculum must incorporate emerging media technologies such as virtual production, artificial intelligence in filmmaking, and social media distribution. Nollywood's rise was influenced by media accessibility (e.g., VHS, VCDs, streaming services), and postgraduate curricula should reflect this evolution.

Justification & Relevance

This theory is justified and relevant because it emphasises the role of technology in shaping film education, ensuring Nigerian universities adapt to modern trends in media production. It highlights the importance of digital literacy in filmmaking, preparing students for careers in an evolving media landscape and also ensures that students understand how film interacts with society, culture, and technology, making them better storytellers and industry professionals

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically a case study approach, which explored how three selected Nigerian universities structured their postgraduate film production curricula. A qualitative approach is suitable as it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the curriculum framework, challenges, and possible improvements (Creswell, 2014).

2. Population of the Study

The study focused on three Nigerian universities which offer postgraduate degrees in film production. The target population included: Faculty members (lecturers and curriculum developers), Postgraduate film students, Industry professionals (filmmakers, producers, and scriptwriters) and Academic administrators.

3. Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the universities and participants. This non-probability sampling method ensures that institutions with active postgraduate

film programmes and relevant stakeholders are included (Patton, 2015).

4. Data Collection Methods

The study employed multiple data collection methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis. This included:

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were organized to interview faculty members, students, and industry professionals to gather insights into the effectiveness of current curricula of Universities.

Document Analysis: University curricula, course syllabi, and policy documents were reviewed to evaluate the existing structure and alignment with needs of the industry.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were employed to engage students and industry experts in discussions to assess gaps in the curriculum and also recommend improvements.

5. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data collected from interviews,

document reviews, and Focus Group Discussions. This involves identifying recurring themes and patterns related to curriculum design, challenges, and best practices (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings and Interpretations of the Study

The study examined the postgraduate film production curriculum in three selected Nigerian universities. The findings highlight key strengths, weaknesses, and areas requiring improvement. Below are the major findings and their interpretations:

1. Inadequate Theoretical-Industry Alignment

Findings

It was found that the curriculum placed heavy emphasis on practical skills but lacked sufficient theoretical grounding in film studies, media criticism, and cultural analysis. There is minimal collaboration between academia and the film industry, limiting students' exposure to real-world filmmaking challenges. Graduates struggle to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industry demands.

Interpretation

A balance between theoretical and practical components is crucial for producing graduates who are not only skilled filmmakers but also critical thinkers capable of innovative storytelling. Strengthening university-industry partnerships (internships, workshops, and guest lectures) would enhance real-world applicability.

2. Outdated and Fragmented Curriculum Structure

Findings

Findings revealed that core filmmaking courses such as directing, cinematography, and post-production were introduced late in the program, limiting progressive learning. The curriculum lacked standardization across institutions, leading to variations in quality. Emerging trends in film technology (e.g., AI-driven editing, digital cinematography) were not sufficiently covered.

Interpretation

A systematic revision of the curriculum to introduce fundamental courses earlier and

integrate digital advancements is essential. Standardization across universities would ensure consistent educational quality and industry relevance.

3. Inadequate Infrastructure and Technological Resources

Findings

Findings revealed that universities lack modern film equipment, editing suites, and sound production facilities. Practical training was often theoretical due to outdated and limited access to industry-standard tools while students relied on personal resources or external film hubs for hands-on experience.

Interpretation

There is the need for increased government and private sector funding which is necessary for upgrade of film production facilities in universities. Establishing university film studios and partnerships with major film production houses would enhance hands-on learning.

4. Limited Indigenous Content and Cultural Context

Findings

Based on findings, there is limited structured engagement with indigenous storytelling traditions, folklore, and languages even when Nollywood is a dominant influence. Western filmmaking techniques dominate the curriculum, often sidelining African cinematic aesthetics.

Interpretation

A decolonized curriculum that incorporates indigenous storytelling traditions would help promote unique Nigerian cinematic narratives globally. Courses on African film philosophy and oral traditions should be integrated to enhance cultural representation.

5. Lack of Strong Research and Film Theory Foundations

Findings

Research in film studies is underdeveloped due to limited access to scholarly resources, journals, and academic mentorship.

Postgraduate students struggle with film criticism, media analysis, and film historiography due to insufficient exposure.

Interpretation

Enhancing research components in the curriculum would contribute to the academic and critical evolution of Nigerian cinema. Collaboration with global film schools and access to online film research databases would enrich the theoretical framework.

Conclusion

The research underscored the urgent need for Nigerian universities to revise their postgraduate film production curricula to better equip graduates with the skills required in Nollywood and the global film industry. By integrating practical training, industry collaboration, and technological advancements, universities can bridge the gap between academic learning and professional filmmaking, ultimately enhancing Nigeria's contribution to global cinema. Revisiting and restructuring postgraduate film production curricula is essential for producing highly skilled, industry-ready filmmakers who can

contribute meaningfully to Nollywood and the global film industry. By prioritising practical training, industry relevance, and digital transformation, Nigerian universities can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of film education and production.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been proposed to improve the postgraduate film production curriculum in Nigerian universities:

1. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should collaborate with film scholars, industry professionals, and policymakers to develop a standardized curriculum across universities.
2. Universities should increase emphasis on film theory, criticism, and historiography to ensure that graduates are equipped with analytical and critical thinking skills.
3. Stronger partnerships with Nollywood, film production studios, and international film bodies should be established to provide

students with internships, mentorships, and real-world industry exposure.

4. The Nigerian government, private investors, and university management should allocate more funding for modern film production equipment, sound studios, and post-production facilities.

5. Film production curricula should prioritise African storytelling traditions, folklore, and indigenous languages to strengthen cultural identity in Nigerian cinema.

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