

# Media policy in south africa assignment



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There are three most popular paradigms of communications policy which originated from the most advanced societies of North America and Western Europe. These paradigms can be adopted to explain the advent and development of communications policy in countries such as South Africa. 1 .

1. 1 Emerging communications industry policy Communications policy during this era (pre sass) was dominated by telecommunications policy with emphasis on communication technologies that were new at that time in advanced societies of the Western world. Such technologies included telegraphy, telephone and wireless broadcasting.

In South Africa, emerging communications industries such as these were considered as public utilities that could not be left in the hands of private communication layers. This view, therefore guided the formulation and implementation of most communication policies leading to state monopoly in telecommunication industries. However there is an argument that in South Africa such monopoly was seen as a tool of colonization as policy formulation was guided by restricting the masses and entrenching the colonizers' ideology. The Postal Act(1958) and The Broadcasting Act are perfect examples of emerging communications industry policy in South Africa. . 1. 2

Public service media policy After the Second World War in 1945, most governments changed their miscommunication policy focus from a nationalistic and economic perspective to a socio-political emphasis.

Independence, democracy and diversity were introduced as communications policy determinants. However this was not the case in most African countries which were still under the control of their colonizers. South Africa was no different. More so during the time of Apartheid . Media policy in South Africa

during this period, was shaped by the political and not by social issues of the time.

An example is that of the growth of the SABA in the sass and sass when a lot of radio stations broadcasting in different engages were established.

However, public media policy which determined editorial policy of public media during this time, was seen as turning the same public media into the mouth piece of the Nationalist Party (NP). Therefore, one can argue that the public media policy in South Africa during the period of apartheid was not about social or democratic development but was about furthering the ideas of the NP government.

Erasmus F (2004) sums up this view by saying, " another development in the second half of the sass was the introduction of television in South Africa after the government had prevented this for a number of years. This medium was also considered to be controlled by government, thereby promoting the Nap's political ideology. " unique no: 886406 1. 1. 3 New media policy In this paradigm, the latest of the three, there is a swift move from the old emphasis on political and social perspectives being the determinants of media policy. The third element of economic competition is now a major factor in media policy formulation in the 21st century.

Appropriations, innovation and demand have changed the views on public media policy. In South Africa, new media policy is largely responsible for the changes that have occurred in the electrification and broadcasting industries since the country attained independence. Telecoms monopoly was ended by the changes in regulations that allowed new fixed line operators like Note to

enter the market. The same has happened to the SABA. The monopoly that the national broadcaster enjoyed for a long time ended when policy changes opened up space for new broadcasters like M-net and E-TV.

New media policy is driven mostly by demand and economic development rather than by supply and monopolies. Democracy, the freedom of expression and the functions of media in society are three intertwined elements that can hardly be separated. These elements have to co-exist in unison if society is to develop as well as live in peace and harmony. Freedom of speech is a right that is found in a lot of counterrevolutionaries, South Africa being one such country. However, freedom of expression is not a given. It is a controversial subject that always causes friction between governments and the media.

There are a lot of threats to freedom of expression in South Africa and the debates on the need or the lack of it normally hinge on the freedom of the media. Questions are raised as to whether such threats are justified or unwarranted. 1. 21 The need for freedom of expression Freedom of expression is a right that is enshrined in the constitution of South Africa. This freedom goes hand in hand with the freedom as well as the role of media in society. These elements cannot be separated. In democratic societies like South Africa, the need for freedom of expression cannot be over-emphasized.

The media acts as the custodian of society and plays an oversight role when it comes to holding government officials to account. Freedom of expression is a pre-requisite in any democratic society in order to make sure that public

officials do not get away with corruption, maladministration and jack of service delivery through silencing or denying space to those that seek to speak out about these social ills. Denying society freedom of expression leads to tension that can boil over into chaos and social unrest. 1 . 2. Threats to it As much as freedom of expression is considered a constitutional right in many democratic countries, including South Africa, this right is always under constant threat from a number of sections of society. The major threat to freedom of expression emanates from the government, with its policies that control the flow of information and regulations that deter the free access to and publication of information. Patriotic media that is under the control and influence of government is also another threat to freedom of expression. In South Africa, the SABA as a national broadcaster, is expected to be non-partisan and impartial.

However due to the broadcaster being under the control of the government, there have been a lot of questions asked with regards to its impartiality. Freedom of expression has been suppressed in the way in which the SABA executes its editorial policy. Views that are deemed to be in contrast with the current government's ideology have been prevented from being broadcast on SABA TV and radio platforms. Journalists have sometimes been forced to toe a certain line of ideology and have been prevented from doing their jobs in an objective and impartial manner.

An example is that of a journalist on Metro FM, Kinas Awakened, who was forced to cancel a discussion on the Ann.'s Managing Conference on her show by her employers at the SABA as they claimed the show lacked balance and fairness. Julie Reid sums up this point in her article in the Daily Maverick <https://assignbuster.com/media-policy-in-south-africa-assignment/>

by saying, " Last year the SABA banned the Big Debate talk show, an excellent current affairs programmer that earned a reputation for holding government officials to count on thorny issues like corruption or Non-delivery of services.....

Halide Monotone's, infamous for his insistence on the production of 70% good news remains at his post, continuing the facilitation of the Hallucination of news" 1. 2. 3 If , how and why such threats can or cannot be motivated The issue of the freedom of expression, especially in the media, and threats to its execution within democratic societies is a contentious one. The discussion around it, is dynamic and never ending.

Some sections of society especially those in power, who are normally the ones who seek to monitor and regulate the media, believe hat it is necessary not to allow the media to have free reign where the nature and flow of information will go on without any regulation by the government. On the other hand, the media itself, especially private media, is against the idea of strict policies being introduced to regulate the flow of information as this is seen as a direct attack on the freedom , not just of the media but that of expression as well.

However, the media as an industry and platform upon which freedom of speech is manifested, does understand and appreciate that some form of regulation has to take place in order to preserve the validity of the media being the " fourth state" and prevent national security threats as well as invasion of privacy. It is in this light that the issues of external and internal regulation come into play. In dealing with arguments that explain why the

threats to media freedom cannot be motivated, one has to do so within the context of freedom of expression being a constitutional right.

Democratic as a system is mostly reliant on how society thrives socially, politically and economically. For this to happen, freedom of speech has to be taken as a fundamental element that has to be seriously considered in policy formulation. Stifling freedom of expression through draconian and authoritarian policies and regulations is a recipe that culminates in a failed democracy. For democracy to function, freedom of expression and more so, freedom of the media has to exist.

Roles (1996: 51-53) in Fourier (2008: 34) clarifies how freedom of expression enhances developments such as the rise in democracy, religious freedom and economic emancipation through the press that assumes a role of mass medium. It is worth noting that out of the three theories used in studying the role of the media in society, the libertarian theory insists on viewing people as rational beings capable of distinguishing between truth and falsehood and between good and evil (Fourier 2008 : 34).

Therefore, the issue of strict policies to regulate the media and stifle freedom of expression are needless and cannot be justified and motivated. As McLain (1987: 89) in Fourier (2008: 34) notes in the basic assumptions of the libertarian theory, the media should be free from any external censorship and there should be no force or intimidation to publish anything. The behavior of the SABA bosses in the Metro FM story can therefore not be justified if this theory is applied because intervening and gagging the talk

show as tantamount to denying the public their right to air or listen to different views on the Managing conference.

In dealing with this contentious matter of media freedom and regulation, it must be noted that the freedom of expression that is incorporated into the freedom of the media, cannot be viewed as an unlimited right. There are responsibilities that go with it. It is at this juncture that the regulation of the media can be motivated and justified. This regulation can emanate from outside media organizations therefore being called external or it can be internal which means the regulation comes from within the media institutions themselves.

Fourier (2008: 73) explains that in South Africa, media regulation has gradually moved away from being more externally regulated and has shown a more emphasis towards internal regulation. Internal regulation takes place in different ways. It can be through the involvement of gatekeepers, regulators, directorates and boards of media organizations or institutionalized internal regulation by non-governmental as well as professional bodies. Gate keepers and regulators are people or groups of people that decide on the content of particular media and determine which content is relevant and how it is going to be published or broadcast.

Fourier (2008: 78) refers to internal regulation by gatekeepers and regulators as “ implicit internal regulation”. This regulation occurs through the medium itself. Implicit internal regulation happens when different sections within or sectors involved with the medium influence the publication or broadcasting of information. Such sections include boards of directors of



media institutions, editors, advertisers, consumers, journalists, etcetera. These regulators cannot be ignored as they have the power to influence content substantially.

A good example is that of acting SABA operations chief and radio group executive who took a decision not to allow a live talk show hosted by Kinas Awakened on Metro FM to go ahead. 6 2. Medal MANAGEMENT AND MEDIA MARKETS Media concentration deals with the control of media as property. Concentration and competition are two aspects that are dependent on each other. The dual nature of the media makes it different from other types of markets in that it gets more attention when concentration takes place due to the dangers to society that such mergers and take-overseer pose to positive externalities of the media.

Picador (1989: 33) in Fourier (2008: 1 50) defines concentration as “ the degree to which the largest companies control production, employment, or other indicators of size in an industry in a market. ” Competition and concentration in the media markets are dependent on each other. This means that one is the dependent variable of the other. When the market boasts different media companies all vying for their share of the market, this leads to high competition. On the other hand the opposite is true when the market sees mergers and takeovers that reduce the number of participants in the market.

This leads to less competition ND reduced plurality of media content. The dual nature of the media industry Media industries are seen to have dual significance in their existence. This simply means that over and above the

media industries being economic entities that exist for economic purposes for their owners, media plays an extensive role of being cultural products to society (Fourier 2008: 151). The media carries content that can be passed on from one person or group to another.

The media can assist people to formulate views and perspectives, the media educates, informs and encourages whilst still contributing economically to society through roving employment and investment opportunities. An example is that of the SABA that employs thousands of people, buys and sells content worth millions of rand's while providing educational programs about Havana AIDS. 2. 1. 2 According to Meier & Trapper (1998) and McLain (2002) in Fourier (2008: 151-152), media concentration occurs in three different levels with the fourth one being added by some media scholars.

The first form is horizontal media concentration, sometimes called nomadic concentration. This is when a merger within the same media market happens. An example would be that of two newspaper publishers coming together to form one publisher in order to expand their market base. In South Africa, this happened in 1996 when Person's PL acquired half of Times Media Limiter's Business Day and Financial Mail. The second form is called vertical concentration. This is concentration of different parts within the media institution.

For example the production part of the SABA coming up with educational content that gets broadcast on the Saba's TV and Radio platforms. The third form is diagonal media concentration. This is sometimes called cross- media concentration. This form of concentration happens across different Edie

types, for example a newspaper publishing company taking over a broadcasting institution and then incorporate it into its stable or a television station diversifying and making use of web services.

An example is that of Duvets INCA channel that also has a massive focus on web services by launching an application for smartness and tablets that allows its viewers to access the station's content even when they are not in front of their Television. The forth form of concentration that is sometimes added to the above three, is called conglomerate concentration. This is when an institution that operates outside of he media sector diversifies and acquires media as property. (Fourier 2008: 1 51). An example is that of Unplanned Holdings acquiring shares in Vass.

The dangers of concentration The media industry is different from all other industries. Mergers and acquisitions within the industry are usually met with fierce criticism from different sections of society. Media concentration is seen as posing danger to the impartiality of the media in society and most importantly, the negative effect that this has in eliminating plural voices that are required in society to maintain a balance of views. As Fourier notes, “.. Rogers and take overseer of publishers could constitute a threat to the diversity of the social provision of information”. (Fourier 2008: 151). 2. 1. The matter of positive externalities of the media refers to the positive effects and influence that the media has on more sections of society or groups of people, not just those who consume the content of the media. The media carries different social values that assist in the emancipation of democracy as well as maintaining social cohesion which leads to peace and social development. Media concentration is seen as a threat to the positive externalities and is

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therefore scourged or shunned by most democratic governments. Fourier (2008: 151) gives a clear explanation as to why concentration is seen as being a dangerous process.

He says history has proven that when media concentration happens, especially diagonal concentration, it wipes away the impartiality and professionalism of editors and journalists. This leads to lack of diversity in society. ADDENDUM A: SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SELF-REFLECTION By doing this portfolio task, I have learned how to manage my time. Seeing that this was the first assignment and it had to be submitted a few weeks after achieving my study material, I had to start with my assignment right away and did not wait for the last day as this would have put me under immense pressure.

The skills, abilities and orientations that I accomplished are, being able to stick to my assignment deadline, doing proper third level research, ability to systematically compile different arguments relating to media policy, regulation and freedom. I also managed to exercise patience, attention to detail and discipline in my work. The strengths that I could apply in future are, the ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines. Being a media student means that I will be working in the fields that require self-motivation, discipline and patience.