Bridging the gap:

How media houses and higher learning institutions can learn from and with each other

Reflecting on the importance of (academic) journalism education for the development of professional journalism in young democracies in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania

By Swenja Kopp*

* Swenja Kopp is a German journalist and Ph.D. student at the Chair of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Hamburg, Germany. She has conducted research and media training in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania. In her doctoral thesis she analyses the development, structures and function of professional journalism in sub-Saharan Africa. E-mail address: Swenja.Kopp@gmx.net.

Abstract

The relationships between media industry and higher learning institutions in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania are paradox: The commitment of the media industry to training and journalism education is exceptional high. At the same time there is an awareness of the needs to provide practical knowledge to prepare the students for their work in the newsrooms in most higher learning institutions. In sum, media houses are committed to journalism education and higher learning institutions are committed to cater for the needs of the media industry by making their curriculum as practical as possible. Therefore these should be shining examples how media industry and higher learning institutions cooperate. But despite the mutual commitments the relationships have often been rocky as empirical evidence (which is the result of qualitative research conducted in Malawi and Zambia and partly Kenya and Tanzania) shows. The major obstacles towards a fruitful cooperation are wrong expectations on both sides, internal struggles within the media industry that reflect on the higher learning institutions, political pressure and compromised independence of the higher learning institutions as well as the impact of the overall level of socioeconomic development in the country. The empirical case studies could show how changes in society immediately affect both journalism and journalism education systems. Their ability to adjust to change and if possible coordinate their efforts decides if they are able to fulfil their roles in society according to society's expectations.

1. Introduction

The young journalist in Malawi opens a drawer in his desk and shows me sheets and sheets of paper: manuals to train journalists how to do investigative reporting, conducted by an US American trainer, sponsored by an international organization. "Great stuff", the journalist says, "it is just unfortunate that I will not be able to practice it in the newsroom." In Zambia, a senior editor is going through the raw copies written by some of his junior reporters. He sights heavily. "Dealing with university graduates is like dealing with babies", he claims. In Kenya, the Aga Khan, owner of the leading media company in East and Central Africa, announces at the Pan African Media Conference in March 2010 that the Aga Khan University plans to open a school of journalism and mass communication in cooperation with Nation Media Group to answer training needs in East Africa and beyond.

These three stories tell us something (but not enough) about journalism education in African countries. In this paper I will try to analyse a bit more system(at)ically the complex relationships between journalism and journalism education systems as well as their interactions with other social systems like politics, economics, culture and technology using empirical evidence from case study conducted in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania. This paper is based on the assumption that journalism and journalism education are social systems. Social systems do operate according to their own rules but not independent of their environment (Scholl/Weischenberg 1998: p. 63 et seq.).

The findings presented in this paper are extracted from a still ongoing broader research project about development, structures and functions of professional journalism in emerging democracies in sub-Saharan Africa. The project is driven by the desire to collect empirical data and to understand the reality of journalism in African societies. I have used a comparative approach with three case studies (Malawi, Zambia and Kenya) to enhance understanding of structures and functions of professional journalism. One of the categories of comparison is journalism education, its structures and relationship to the journalism system.

All empirical data was gathered in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and (although more limited) Tanzania during several field research trips from 2007 to 2010. I combined different qualitative research methods: As a participatory observer I followed the working process in the newsrooms from story idea to finished product. In addition I was allowed to participate in the in-house training programmes of two of the selected media houses. In course of my stays I had access to several universities and higher learning institutions as well as special training programmes (short courses). I further conducted interviews with journalists in all media houses and external actors like journalism trainers or university lecturers. In addition I collected data about journalism in the respective countries. The four case studies from which all data is drawn cannot and aim not to represent the African continent.

The bridge is a metaphor prominently featured to describe journalism education: The media industry on one side, the higher learning institutions on the other, separated through a gap that might be wider or narrower, connected through a bridge that might be stabile or shaky, more or less travelled by. How do they look, the gaps and the bridges in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania? What did shape the structures– the surrounding landscapes, the travellers or both? Did media industry and higher learning institutions built a stable bridge between the

two closely connected worlds of journalism practice and journalism education which will stand the shockwaves of change that seem to be essential part of African journalism in the 21st century? Let us take a closer look by strolling through the different landscapes, by walking towards the edges of the gaps and finally by crossing the bridges.

2. Looking at the landscapes –
Development, structures and functions of journalism and journalism education

It is not possible to describe journalism systems and journalism education systems in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania in detail in this paper. I will present some general conclusions subtracted from the empirical evidence in a comprehensive manner. The metaphoric picture of different landscapes, gaps and bridges comes in handy to put the characteristics in context.

2.1 Flushing meadows or rocky grounds – journalism and its demands

According to the high demands the media industry issues towards aspiring journalists someone should assume that the landscape of journalism is all flushing meadows. But reality shows that a journalist walks more likely on rocky grounds and might stumble over low salaries, time pressure, awkward working hours, political interference and in some cases even threats to personal security and freedom. Nevertheless the media industry demands the best to enable the newsroom to fulfil its difficult role to inform, to educate, to entertain and to keep a watchful eye on the mighty and powerful.

The profession needs journalists who know the technical skills and keep themselves updated. The digital revolution, the internet and all facets of social media has changed (urban) African societies in full throttle and demand new technical expertise and a new creative way to present media content. At the same time the traditional journalism skills have never outlived itself. The most important journalistic skill is and always has been the right mindset: a critical mind that dares to ask questions, curious and courageous. In African societies where a real danger can accompany the job as a journalist, every journalist who dares to dig deeper has to be extra courageous. In sum, a journalist is supposed to be some kind of superman. And like superman, it is expected that the journalist works for (almost) nothing. The salaries of journalists in many African countries are far below the salaries paid in other professions like law, medicine or the corporate world.

2.2 Training ground or Academic Island in the sun – journalism training and education

So do the journalism education institutions offer breeding ground for journalists with almost superhuman powers as demanded by the media industry? It seems useful to describe shortly the different types of journalism education Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania: (1) pure training courses, usually workshops which do offer a lot of practical training and little or no reflection on journalism and its role in society, (2) pure academic education, usually performed at mass communication departments in universities which focus either on the linguistic side of writing in journalism or reflect on journalism and society with little or no reference to the reality in the newsroom. (3) In between are a number of higher learning institutions, colleges as well as journalism school at universities, which try to provide room for practical as well as theoretical knowledge about journalism. Kasoma offers a useful distinction between journalism training and education: "Education concerns the body of knowledge required to be a good journalist while training is about specific skills and proficiency required in order to perform the journalistic chores. Both are required to make a good journalist." (Kasoma 2000: p. 42)

2.2.1 Professional development in a patchwork pattern – journalism training

Workshops and short courses are characteristics of African journalism education. The starting point can be traced back to the wave of democratisation in the 1990s which opened a window of opportunity to private or privatised media houses, professional journalism and in due course journalism training. Especially in the early years of democratic rule most countries noticed a mushrooming of private owned newspapers, radio stations and in some cases even TV stations. All these new media outlets needed staff – but in most cases few trained journalists were available on the market. The universities were not equipped to supply society with trained journalists in such a short time. A workshop-culture developed instead.

Short courses and workshops were offered from different sponsors: international organisations (World Bank, United Nations), donor countries (United States of America, Great Britain), media institutions (BBC) and others. The major advantage of the training workshops: They were available. There was no way to implement any form of journalism training faster than that; and because of the funding from various institutions the training was accessible to journalists and media houses used to operate on a low budget. Most training courses are, until today, free of charge and even provide the participants with transport, allowances etc. In addition the workshops were meeting point for journalists from various

media houses. Most journalists have huge networks of colleagues from all over Africa emerging from such workshops. They were also an opportunity to relate to experienced journalist from abroad. The teachers were usually professionals from Western countries, using their experience to teach African journalists. But not in all cases can the experience of Western journalists be translated to fit the African situation. The workshop culture has contributed its share to the tendency to respond to African questions with US-American answers, German answers, or of late Chinese answers.

The workshop culture has had other side effects: Unlike in a formal journalism education institution e.g. a college or university programme there is no curriculum for workshops. Participants take a bit of everything and a patchwork pattern in professional development evolves. There is no continuity or development possible. Another side effect: Workshops are attractive not only for the additional training but also for the paid stay in nice hotels, the extra allowances, and – if the venue is abroad – for a chance to see a different country, do some shopping etc. Most workshops are considered to be a treat. Corruption is a problem in most African societies and it does not stop at the doorsteps of the newsrooms. Workshops are part of internal corruption in media houses – they are offered as rewards for favours.

2.2.2 The relevance of research from a distance

All over the world academic journalism education is faced with the challenge to provide practical training for its students. The lack of practical experience is often cited as a problem (e.g. cited as one of the major findings of an assessment of training needs in Tanzania Moshiro/Meena 2009: p. 25). But there is an often overlooked difference between practical elements in education and training (as discussed above Kasome 2000: p. 42 et seq.). So how practical do journalism education and training at a university have to be?

Just like journalism the system of journalism education has a role to play in society. An academic education system describes and analyses and comments on developments in society. Research is a process to reflect society's reality in an academic way. An academic education system also has the duty to communicate its findings to the society through research papers, conferences and published books. Media or journalism studies therefore reflect on the role and function of journalism in society. In addition every education system has a duty to remain relevant to the society it operates in. The research has to have a connection to societies' reality and its problems. But there is a lack of relevant research in journalism and mass

communication studies originating from institutions in all four countries I have studied. During my stay I have not witnessed one debate about media or journalism which was triggered by local research from academic institutions. I have observed a tendency in many media houses to look down at local universities. Without meaningful research originating from universities in the respective countries little respect can be earned.

Academic journalism education face two major challenges: (1) provide relevant research findings and educate the students to become critical thinkers with profound knowledge about society and (2) train students who are aspiring journalists to be able to function in a newsroom. A lack of practical elements can be noted in both areas. Therefore it is not enough to strengthen the training aspect only. Both elements of education have to be connected to the reality of journalism – research and teaching.

Sometimes there is a misconception about what academic journalism education can and should provide: It can never replace a newsroom. But it can provide an opportunity to try different fields of journalism, to understand the working routines of a newsroom in slow motion. And most important it should provide room to think. When someone joins journalism there is little room to reflect about the own role, the relevance of the profession, the development of professional standards and ethical behaviour. The luxury of time to think, the benefit of a discussion with fellow students how to make a meaningful contribution in the field of journalism can best be provided by formal journalism education institutions. To be as far away from the newsroom as necessary to think without pressure and as close enough to know what is going on in there is the main challenge of meaningful journalism education.

If we use the metaphor of the landscapes again this would mean that a gap between journalism and journalism education is not problematic but necessary. It has to be wide enough to separate the two systems but close enough that a bridge can be built and someone standing at the edge can catch a glimpse of what is happening the other side.

3. Obstacles on the way – external factors and their influence on journalism education

External factors influence the likelihood of good journalism education and training. I have identified these factors as most relevant: (1) experience, (2) political influence, (3) economic sustainability, (4) size of media fraternity, (5) unity of media fraternity.

(1)Experience: All four countries were British colonies with a shared journalism system. The media was controlled but mostly privately owned. The owners and most of the journalists were British settlers or poached from British media houses. There were little training opportunities within the countries. On the eve of independence some countries like Zambia or Kenya tolerated the offspring of journalism training institutions like writers clubs and the establishment of mass communication departments at the universities. Other countries like Malawi did ban any kind of formal journalism education. The history of journalism education in Malawi only started after the end of autocratic rule in 1994. It does make a difference if a department at university, a college or a journalism club has a history as long as 60 years or as short as 16 years. Like any institution journalism education needs time to establish its own routines and to understand, fulfil and communicate its role in society. In countries where journalism education was only possible after the end of one party rule there is still a lot of catching up to do. Nevertheless it cannot be said that the factor time alone is sufficient to describe the importance or quality of journalism education in a society.

(2) Political Influence: The decision to promote or destroy journalism education is a political decision in all African countries I have studies. In autocratic regimes there is little room for progressive journalism education. It was usually sufficient to master the English language and to be able to write straight sentences to be a journalist. Most of the content was ordered from above (as described for the Malawi case in Chitsulo 1994). If a journalism system is not free but totally controlled by the state or the state president there is little hope for journalism education. The wave of democratisation in the 1990s did not only free the journalism systems but also the journalism education systems. But freedom still has to be fought for and in all four countries the introduction of multiparty politics did not guarantee freedom for journalism or journalism education. Attempts to control the media have been noticed several times. I have observed that the journalism education system is often quiet when it comes to attacks against media freedom by the government. Why? Especially public education institutions do depend to some degree (funding) on the political system therefore the decision to keep quiet protects their own survival. In some cases there is a tendency to recruit staff for leading positions in state controlled media institutions or media regulation institutions from the journalism departments of the universities. Whoever aims to be picked prefers to keep a low profile when it comes to criticise the government. Self-censorship is difficult to measure and it certainly does not apply to all journalism lecturers. But it contributes to the noticeable absence of criticism from higher learning institutions in public debates about media freedom.

(3) Economic Sustainability: Money matters, in journalism education and elsewhere. The reality in some higher learning institutions: Libraries contain no books, old books or useless books. No or little access to (digital) databases and archives. No or little access to the internet at all. No computers, and in some cases not even chairs, desks and blackboards. Some public learning institutions really suffer. The lack of funding does not allow them to offer adequate journalism education. This especially applies to public universities or other learning institutions in countries with a low level of socioeconomic development. As long as there is no proper funding the work of any learning institution is limited. It does not only affect the quality of teaching but also the quality of research. And this is a vicious circle because research enables a university to search for funding. Universities which are visible through substantial research are in a better position to apply for research grants. This leads to a situation where few universities are far ahead and other have little chance to catch up. Some journalism departments and schools (especially in South Africa) can and do compete with universities all over the world but the majority struggles to survive.

(4) **Size of media fraternity**: Sometimes challenges within the journalism system itself have a spill-over effect on the journalism education system, especially if the media fraternity is comparatively small. It is difficult to obtain exact data but in Malawi for example most journalists are members of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi. In 2009 the organisation registered about 250 members. Therefore in a country like Malawi it is possible to actually know all members of the fraternity personally. And in fact, most journalists do. The closeness between the members of the media does have advantages for journalism education. It is not too difficult for higher learning institutions to stay in touch with practical journalism and to invite journalists as guest speakers, to poach them to teach or to use them to connect the students to the newsroom. So does this mean the smaller the fraternity the closer the link between media industry and higher learning institutions and the better the journalism education in general? Somehow it does. But there is a disadvantage that should not be underrated. If a media fraternity is small individuals have to double their professional roles and act as lecturers and journalists, the same people changing to and fro in the same jobs. The fraternity can hardly afford to lose one and someone who fails in journalism might find himself teaching. And, where the numbers are small individual relationships become more important. The relationship between lecturers and media houses will have an effect on his student's chance to relate to the media house. And this has lead to

situations where some media houses do not accept interns from certain higher learning institutions because they do not trust some of the senior lecturers or where some lecturers do not support their students to work with certain media houses because of their previous personal experience. Internal quarrels of the journalism system find their way into the journalism education system due to duplication of roles.

A small media fraternity also affect the availability of research subjects. If someone conducts a research about media houses it is usually good practice to hide the identity of the media house and its staff. It also raises the likelihood to actually find a media house willing to participate. But what do you do if you only have one private daily newspaper in a country like Zambia? There is no way you can hide the identity of the media house. I have faced the challenge in my own research projects and I have witnessed how students (and senior researchers) of higher learning institutions failed to find a subject for their studies due to the fact that almost every research finding can be traced back to the source.

(5) Unity of media fraternity: There is always competition between media houses. When I refer to unity I do not talk about the absence of competition. Unity does not even have to mean that media houses spare each other in criticism and it does not mean that they cannot condemn unethical behaviour but it does mean that they show solidarity when one member is threatened in way that might affect the system as such – for example if government threatens to restrict media freedom. Serious threats to unity in African media fraternities are state controlled media houses with little or no independence. They are abused by the political system to crusade against enemies – and in many cases private media houses which have reported critically are considered to be enemies. Such a situation can be seen in Zambia where the private media house Post Newspapers Limited and the state controlled media houses act as if they are on different planets. For journalism education institutions it becomes difficult to articulate a position. If the gap between the rival camps in the media fraternity is deep enough research can be used as a weapon and it is not surprising that the media houses are careful how and whom they allow to conduct research at all. The situation is even worse if the size of the fraternity is small (as discussed above). A certain degree of unity in terms of a general understanding about the role and functions of journalism in society plays an important part in promoting interaction between journalism and journalism education system and in due course progress in professional development. Lack of unity contributes to stagnation or regression in professional development which affects both journalism as well as journalism education.

Let me finally look at the different ways how media industry and higher learning institutions interact. We have had an opportunity to stroll through the landscapes of journalism and journalism education. Neither journalism nor the educational system is all flushing meadows. Hardships are many and challenges like the impact of overall socio-economic development and political influence shapes the structures of the landscapes as well as the gap that separates them. A gap is not a problem but useful as long as it is not too wide to allow building a bridge. Let me finally talk about the bridges before I conclude this research paper.

4. Building bridges

The relationships between media industry and higher learning institutions in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania are somehow paradox: The commitment of the media industry to training and journalism education is exceptional high in all media houses I have had a chance to study. While in other parts of the world there has been and sometimes still is a debate if journalism is a God given talent and therefore impossible to learn, I have not come across this debate in the African newsrooms. There is an almost omnipresent belief that journalism education is necessary to develop the profession further. At the same time I found in most higher learning institutions an awareness of the needs to provide practical knowledge to prepare the students for their work in the newsrooms. The practical aspect of journalism education is always highlighted – when higher learning institutions advertise their curriculum, when they communicate the strengths of their staff or when they are looking for new lecturers. In sum, media houses are committed to journalism education and higher learning institutions are committed to cater for the needs of the media industry by making their curriculum as practical as possible. Therefore these countries should set shining examples how media industry and higher learning institutions cooperate. But a number of obstacles that spoil the relationships have been highlighted in this paper.

Stabile bridges are needed which can resist the shockwaves of change. What are their foundations? Which steps have been made already to build bridges and how can the efforts be strengthened? This questions shall be answered and some recommendations be given.

4.1 Lessons from the newsrooms – practical aspect in journalism training

It was mentioned before that there is a difference between journalism training and education. Higher learning institutions face the challenge to cover both. In training several attempts have been made to be as practical as possible. The bridges connecting the two worlds of journalism

and journalism training are built on several grounds: (1) internships, (2) guest lecturers, (3) lecturers with journalism background and (4) consultation about the curriculum.

(1) Internships allow students to taste the waters before they settle for a job in the newsroom. They already play an important role in journalism education in all four countries I have visited. Most journalists in the newsroom have been interns before. In Africa interns face the same challenges as all over the world – little or no pay and sometimes a lot of work with little supervision. The media industry could try to support the interns through allowances and give them more guidance during their stay.

(2) Experienced journalists as guest lecturers allow the students direct encounters with seasoned journalists. Many higher learning institutions try to get senior journalists to lecture but they face some difficulties. Some do not have the financial resources to pay a senior journalist adequately. Therefore they do not reach prominent and successful journalists but those who are struggling, freelancers or retired veterans. The quality of guest lecturers varies. Some media houses do not allow their staff to take time off to teach. At the same time the media houses complain about graduates who were not taught by media professionals. If media houses and higher learning institutions could strike deals, where media houses borrows lecturers on the expense of the media house and in return higher learning institution offer special programmes for students from the media house, both sides could profit.

(3) Lecturers with a background in journalism have gathered experience in the subject they are lecturing. Depending on the career of the lecturer they might even combine academic merits and journalism experience. In case they did not have an opportunity to gain academic merits there is need to train the lecturers further so that they are resourceful in both fields – trainings as well as (relevant) research. In countries with a short history in journalism education few scholars have a background in journalism plus academic merits in journalism studies. In fact in most cases the higher learning institutions had and some still have to poach lecturers from other departments, often English lecturers, to teach journalism classes. It has to be noted that learning institutions where even senior staff member lack academic merits will most likely not excel in research and struggle to fulfil its public role.

(4) Consultation about the curriculum is usually the starting point for any form of cooperation. This is the advantage of having relatively small media fraternities – cooperation

in how to change the curriculum for the betterment of media industry and academic institutions is possible and in the interest of both parties. In the long run more institutionalized forms of cooperation could be established. An advisory board with member from the media industry could be formed to consult the higher learning institutions about the curriculum.

4.2 Lessons for the newsrooms – the practical aspect in journalism research

The examples above focus on the practical elements in training – to enable higher learning institutions to prepare students better for the working reality in the newsroom. In various degrees these bridges have been built in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania and they are more or less travelled by. But very little has been done to include practical elements in the other element of journalism education – research.

Research projects that relate directly to current challenges in the newsroom are an opportunity for the journalism education system to practice research methods and make a meaningful contribution as public institution. For the media industry it is an opportunity to gain insight in the operations of its own system from a scientific point of view. But there are challenges: Solid research requires funding which most universities do not have. And solid research requires expertise which some universities equally do not have, especially in the field of mass communication. Therefore there is no choice but to tap from the funds not only for equipment meant for practical training but also to furnish research projects. In addition universities should try to establish exchange programmes with visiting scholars from universities who have been more exposed to (empirical) research. In societies where the independence of the academia has been compromised in the past, where the track record of previous research shows that due to inexperience or lack of seriousness the interests of participating media houses have been ignored the trust needs to be restored.

A possibility would be to cooperate in an area which attracts public attention and benefits both the media industry and the higher learning institutions: conferences and congresses. The costs of convening a congress are high and in general media houses as well as higher learning institutions operate within a strict budget. In a situation where funding is tight a cooperation between industry and higher learning institutions might be a favourable way to realize outstanding events. Another bridge less travelled by is to start hosting job fairs to bring graduates of higher learning institutions and the media industry together. In the early days of multiparty democracy in the 1990s the booming private media industry swallowed almost

every available graduate who showed interest to become a journalist. Now, journalism has become an attractive profession for many young school leavers. The number of journalism education institutions has risen and so has the number of graduates (at least with a diploma or first degree). Media houses do have a choice who to employ. Job fairs allow exchange between graduates and media houses to identify talents and fill vacant positions.

4.3 Bypassing the (broken) bridges

In scenarios where the relationship between the (local) higher learning institutions and some media houses is damaged to a degree that does not allow any form of effective interaction, the media fraternity has developed some systems to bypass the broken bridges. I have identified three bypasses worth discussing: (1) rely on higher learning institutions abroad, (2) start afresh with new higher learning institutions and (3) invest in in-house training programmes.

(1) Journalism education in Africa happens not necessarily within the borders of a given state but much more within the borders of linguistic, cultural or political regions. Therefore it is not an unusual step to avoid local higher learning institutions and to rely on universities abroad. The UNESCO commissioned a research paper about quality journalism training institutions in Africa and potential centres of excellence were established (Berger/Madras 2007). Most of these institutions have a history to educate not only the residents of their respective countries but students from all over the continent. If the higher learning institutions in one country do not perform well another institution in a neighbouring country might be able to provide the necessary services. Therefore the recommendation given in the UNESCO report is justified – to invest in existing centres of excellence with the aim to strengthen them to fulfil their public role not only for the country they operate from but for the whole continent. But of course studying abroad comes at a cost. And therefore the masses of aspiring journalism students still have to rely on the institutions found within the borders of the country they live in.

(2) Recently the president of Malawi, Bingu wa Mutharika, has announced to open five new universities in the country. And one Member of Parliament was quick to point out that at least one should focus on mass communication and journalism to raise the standards of journalism education in the country. In all four countries I have studied, a number of public and private journalism education institutions have been opened in the past decades. There is a huge attraction to do something new, to start afresh. But it should be looked at critically. It might be recommended to invest in existing structures instead of starting from scratch. In an

environment where funding is limited, all institutions share the same cake – and the more institutions the smaller each share. The strategy to start something new cannot only be observed in journalism education but also in the media industry. But the excitement of a fresh start vanishes quickly when funds run dry. Therefore new projects in journalism education should be handled with care. But the unsatisfied demands of the media industry and the still growing attraction of the profession are indicators that there is room to explore new avenues of journalism education. In Tanzania the established School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Dar es Salaam has invested in new equipment and just started a Masters Programme. The United States International University in Kenya has started a degree programme in journalism a few years ago which has become very successful in short time due to its practical approach. The Aga Khan University in Kenya has announced to open a postgraduate school of journalism which will cater for the training needs of professionals in East Africa with an interest in journalism education. Like any other part of society, journalism education is also changing on a fast rate.

(3) I have said earlier that there are limits in journalism training within the premises of a higher learning institution. It cannot replace training within a media house. This has been noted and translated in in-house training strategies in at least two media houses I have visited: Post Newspapers Limited in Zambia and Nation Media Group in Kenya. While Post Newspapers Limited offers fine-tuning for mass communication graduates, Nation Media Group has a slightly different approach and focuses on graduates in non-media subjects like law, economics or science to train them to become journalists. In both cases the in-house programmes are products of strategic thinking about how to develop professional journalism within the institution further. In-house training models should not compete with existing journalism education. Ideally they complement each other.

5. Conclusion

The relationship between media industry and higher learning institutions is complex and determined by various factors. In African societies the bridges have to be extra-stabile. Lack of political freedom and low levels of socioeconomic development did shape the structures of the landscapes of journalism and journalism education 50 years ago and still do. In addition new challenges have send shockwaves of change through African societies and especially the technological revolution (internet, mobile phones) have had an effect on journalism and journalism education in the 21st century. Change offers opportunities. But change also comes

at a cost. A journalism education system where some students still struggle to master the English language, where the libraries are empty and many departments do not have computers suddenly has to master the challenge to teach its students how to provide content for an audience that reads the news on the mobile phone or a computer screen. In sum, while in many African countries the media industry and higher learning institutions are still struggling with the basic needs they have to deal at the same time with all the challenges that accompany 21st century journalism.

This paper has drawn a sketch of the landscapes, gaps and bridges that define the complex relationship between media industry and higher learning institutions in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania. But it is obvious that more knowledge is needed to understand and explain the development, structures and functions of these closely related social systems. Therefore this research paper might best be used as a map which allows orientation for further research. Research which should try to put the details in the picture; probably research that originates from one of the higher learning institutions in Malawi, Zambia, Kenya or Tanzania.

6. Sources

Berger, Guy/Corinne Matras (2007): Criteria and Indicators for Quality Journalism Training Institutions & Identifying Potential Centres of Excellence in Journalism Training in Africa. UNESCO.

Chitsulo, Edward (1994): Journalism training in Malawi, a review. Paper presented at the International Federation of Journalists conference held in Blantyre, Malawi August 16-19.

Kasoma, Francis P. (2000): The press and multiparty politics in Africa, Tampere: Acta Universitatis Tampererensis.

Moshiro, Gervas/Jack Meena (2009): Training needs assessment for in-service training for journalists in Tanzania. Media Council of Tanzania.

Weischenberg, Siegfried/Armin Scholl (1998): Journalismus in der Gesellschaft. Theorie, Methodologie und Empirie. Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.