‘The Buck Stops with the Labour Market? An Exploratory Study of Zimbabwean Editors’ and Educators’ Perceptions on the Performance of Journalism Graduates from Polytechnics and Universities.

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Abstract

This paper seeks to make sense of the mismatch that exist between editors' and educators' perceptions on the skills and craft competencies that journalism education must imbue its graduates with in line with market realities and curriculum fundamentals in Zimbabwe. It highlights the 'cold war' that continues to dog journalism education and training over the preferences on the 'why' (theory) and 'how' (practice) questions. It shows that oft-cited theory/practice dichotomy is far from being resolved within the Zimbabwean academy. This paper is based on secondary sources and original field research conducted amongst prominent editors of newspapers and journalism educators in Zimbabwe. This paper argues that the lack of dialogue between industry and journalism educational institutions is to blame for the mismatch which has seen many graduates being shunned by the market. It reveals that attachment assessment strategies have failed to bridge the disconnect that exists between the newsroom and journalism schools. It shows that most editors believe that practice-oriented teaching curriculum at polytechnics provides graduates with a set of newsroom 'soft' skills that are easy to refine, whereas graduates from universities exhibit a high degree of reflexive thinking and a broader understanding of society but still fall short in terms of judicious story-telling. It argues that within the context of massification of student intake in Zimbabwean tertiary institutions, educators are increasingly producing 'unemployable graduates'. It recommends that attachment assessment remains a viable option to connect industry with journalism education as long as findings are used constructively for re-curriculation purposes in light of globalisation that thrives on multi-skilled labour, home working and knowledge workers. It adds that constructive dialogue is crucial for improvement.

Introduction

The high level of unemployment amongst journalism graduates from both universities and polytechnics in Zimbabwe, the outright violation of media ethics and the introduction of the controversial compulsory national strategic studies in most state-run tertiary institutions have fuelled a debate in recent years about the quality of journalists in the country. University journalism education is a recent phenomenon in postcolonial Zimbabwe whereas polytechnics and private colleges have been the sole producers of journalists. Journalism teaching is about more than simply about equipping students with practical skills. It is also about producing self-reflexive and critical graduates whose practice is creative and makes a contribution to achieving social justice (Brand, 2008). The entry of universities in the market

of journalism has meant increased competition in the labour market. This has brought the theory-praxis divide to the fore with editors grappling on how to bridge the two in the newsroom. Achieving technical proficiency and theoretically-grounded reflexivity – is a difficult, but not impossible, challenge (Brand, 2008). Competition has also been rife mostly for attachment places as most universities and polytechnics require their graduates to undergo a compulsory 6-12 months internship programme in the newsrooms. This is despite the fact that on the ground media liberalisation has been rhetoric than reality. Moyo (2005) describes the Zimbabwean media environment as characterised by 'change without change' or 'deceptive liberalisation' which has squashed hopes for media development. This study takes place within a crisis-ridden country where tertiary education is experiencing a myriad of challenges. Zimbabwe, 30 years after independence, still boasts of one public broadcasting station. Most independent newspapers were closed since the promulgation of the draconian laws such AIPPA and POSA in 2003. These include the Daily News and the Tribune.

This study is heavily influenced by Berger (2005)'s suggestion that there's a sneaking suspicion that much energy in journalism training is going to waste. It was also based on participant observations made while on attachment at The Herald in 2004. As a former journalist and journalism educator, I came to the realisation that the gap between graduates and the goings-on in the media required a nuanced analysis. In the context of Zimbabwe, I was motivated to undertake this study after coming across a number university graduates complaining about their treatment within different newsrooms. However, this study acknowledges the complexity of trying to establish the connections between journalism training and the market. Thus, measuring the relationship between people as products of training, and the performance of the media is no easy task (Berger, 2005). This paper concerns itself with the views raised by 'spokespersons' from the two often conflicting camps, thus journalism educators and newspaper editors. It is motivated by the desire to understand journalism education and training from the perspective of two key stakeholders. As such it is an exploratory study meant to map out 'what's working' and 'what's not' in terms of the 'trainer--trainees--media industry' continuum (Berger, 2005).

Conceptualising Journalism Education and Training

Journalism education and training has been conceptualised from different viewpoints depending on one's epistemological and ontological orientation. For instance, scholars such as Brand (2008) and Wasserman (2005) see journalism education as having the potential to

change the way in which journalism is practiced. This approach to journalism education is matrixed within the 'performative' (Biggs 1999) teaching philosophy. It sees teaching as a form of praxis, or transformative social intervention, aimed at challenging and transforming the underlying assumptions of modern 'professional' journalism practice (Wasserman 2005). Biggs (1999: 66) adds that teaching must be oriented towards producing students that act differently when they really understand. It goes beyond skills acquisition to embrace behavioural change in students' lives. Wasserman (2005) calls this transformative social intervention journalism education aimed at challenging and transforming the underlying assumptions of modern 'professional' journalism practice. On the other hand, Pratt et al (2001) suggest that good teaching is enriched by transmission, developmental, apprenticeship, nurturing and social reform. In the end, it is clear that Wasserman (2005), Biggs (1999), Brand (2008) and Pratt et al (2001) concur that journalism education curriculum must foreground the element of social reform. In this case, social reform teaching is seen as a form of praxis which seeks to change professional practice and society in substantive ways (Pratt, et al (2001). Cole (2003: 59) says journalism is becoming a graduate occupation, and university degree programmes must be more than just training courses.

However, the challenge is to design a curriculum that not only straddles the theory/practice divide, a common challenge in journalism education, but that also accommodates the imperative simultaneously to teach and to question prevailing practice (Parker, 2003). Most journalism education institutions in Africa follow curriculums that reflect UNESCO guidelines. The UNESCO guidelines define literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. In short, literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society. Consequently, journalism education has been characterised by divisions along the 'how' and 'why' questions. Scholars rarely agree on the one best way. Recently, others have opted for the middle ground by advocating for the integrated approach. However, scholars such as Hochheimer (2001) point out that after all said and done journalism education and training must teach people the norms and processes of news work in order to provide them with the skills they need to succeed within journalism industries. The problem with journalism as a profession unlike others is that journalists enter the industry through various routes (Dates, 2006: 144). There is little agreement as to how specifically one should go about becoming a journalist. Journalism field has no single set of

procedures or requirements for certifying its practitioners, no specific credential, licence or certificate necessary to enter the field (Singer, 2003). This leads scholars such as Kunczik (1988: 233) to suggest that training of journalists in the process of newsmaking should focus not only on what makes a journalist but also on the qualities of a good journalist. Kunczik further points out that the practice of journalism in the context of a developing country should aim not at giving the very latest information, which in most cases means sacrificing careful research and background-giving, but to give sense and to orientate reporting about themes important to the development of the society in the long run (1988: 236).

Without propagating a one best approach to journalism education, Kunczik (1988: 236) suggests that journalism training must impart technical competence but should not lead to homogenisation of perspectives or to impoverishment and constriction of world views. On the other hand, Nyamnjoh (2005) also desists from suggesting a one-size-fit-all approach by arguing that training programmes must be tailored more and more towards the real (as opposed to the imagined or the imposed) needs of Africa as a developing continent in search of basic freedoms and betterment for the majority of its peoples. His view is that effort must be made to teach journalism in a professional way in order to satisfy the increasing demands for specialised knowledge and expertise in the handling of information. It is Nyamnjoh (2005)'s contention that it is not enough to endow the journalists with practical skills. It is clear Nyamnjoh (2005) endorses the integrated curriculum approach to journalism education. In contrast, de Beer (1995: 27) argues that any training school should aim at preparing students to face difficult and ever changing political and economic situations "by equipping them with the proper skills to do their work with accuracy, initiative and loyalty." This inevitably implies "an approach that would ingrain basic journalism skills training with relevant journalism and communication theory and a sound academic education in the social and other sciences" (de Beer, 1995:21).

Phillips (2003:71) says journalism training institutions should offer vocational courses combining practical experience with journalistic theory. The practical should include basic and traditional journalistic skills like writing, reporting and editing while the theory part should cover areas such as the organisation of the media and the profession of journalism, what constitutes news values, media law and regulation and ethics. De Burg (2003: 95) on the other hand maintains that journalism should be taught as and be regarded as a serious academic discipline and not vocational training arguing that journalists need an unusually broad array of skills and knowledge if they are to perform effectively the tasks of reporting,

analysing and investigating the world around them. This line of thinking assumes that if law and medicine are taught as first degrees then journalism studies is equally appropriate as a university program.

Methodology

This paper is based on secondary sources and original field research conducted amongst prominent editors of newspapers and journalism educators in Zimbabwe. It is pivoted on the disconnect that exists between journalism training institutions and the media industry in Zimbabwe. It discusses findings of interviews held with Zimbabwean editors and journalism educators from September 2009 - April 2010. I asked the editors and journalism educators to answer a set of related questions about journalism training, attachment assessment, journalism curriculum, dialogue between training institutions and the media industry, quality control regimes and performance of graduates from universities and polytechnics and challenges faced by educators and editors in promoting quality training in Zimbabwe. Editors were interviewed since the industry– represented usually by its editorial management, is certainly a key stakeholder in the journalism industry (Berger, 2005). Interviews were held in Harare, Johannesburg, Grahamstown and Masvingo. My research focused on editors and journalism educators who had worked for at least 3 years at the same organisation. Given the politicisation of almost everything in Zimbabwe respondents were assured of privacy and anonymity. Zimbabwe has a few journalism training institutions and therefore it was easier to identify respondents via snowball sampling. The same applies to the media sector where editors were recruited based on purposive and snowball sampling. Additional information came from observation from the researcher as a reporter and a journalism educator in Zimbabwe between 2005 and 2006.

In Masvingo, I interviewed 2 respondents (one editor and one former editor and journalism educator). For the purposes of this study, I will refer to them as M1-2, in this case the letter 'M' standing for Masvingo, a city in Zimbabwe. In Harare, this researcher interviewed 4 respondents (2 female and 2 male) journalism educators and in this report I will refer to them as H1-4, in this case the letter 'H' standing for Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. The four journalism educators were working for Harare polytechnic (HP), National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and University of Zimbabwe (UZ). In Grahamstown, I interviewed 3 journalism educators (all male) from NUST, MSU and Harare Polytechnic during the Highway Africa Conference. I will refer to them as G1-3, in this case the letter 'G'

standing for Grahamstown, a town in South Africa. In Johannesburg, I interviewed one male respondent (journalism educator) from the Midlands State University. I will refer to him as J1, with 'J' representing Johannesburg, a commercial city in South Africa. I also made use of new media facilities such as Facebook chats and Skype to interview 4 editors in Harare, Masvingo and Bulawayo. I will refer to them editor A-D. Through Skyping, I was able to communicate with two former Heads of Department at the Harare Polytechnic, School of Journalism and Media Studies now based in Beijing (B1) and London (L1). While qualitative research require the researcher to use tape recorders to capture respondents' views verbatim, interviews with editors and educators from the public media and public universities were not recorded. E-mail and Facebook chats were also used due to the volatile political environment in Zimbabwe. E-mail respondents seemed more comfortable and reflective, as shown by their detailed feedback. However, the e-mail method did not provide me with ample opportunity to ask follow-up questions. This was corroborated by the use of Skype and Facebook chats.

Theoretical Reflections

The discourse of journalism education is the characterised by the conflict between teaching journalism skills and producing critical, analytical graduates able to bring a reflexive element into the profession and industry (Berger, 2005; Fourie, 2005; Wasserman 2005). At the centre of the theoretical debates are arguments on the theory-practice couplet. This debate featured prominently within the Australian academy in the 1990s. It has come to be known as 'Media Wars'. Keith Windschuttle helped to spark a cross-continental debate about the significance of 'media theory' in journalism education. To him 'media theory' as encapsulated in cultural studies contradicted the realist and empirical worldview of journalism practice. Implicit in this theoretical debate are normative versus idealist views of what journalism should do or ought to do in society. In his controversy courting paper, *The Poverty of Media Theory*, Windschuttle (1997) labelled cultural studies as a form of linguistic idealism. His own worldview is decidedly empiricist. The paper which was meant to be a critique of cultural studies and its influence on media education attracted much the same response in South Africa as it did when published in Australia. He suggested that journalism education and training should promote the empirical methodology. Keith Windschuttle's contention that the differences between journalism (education and training) and (postmodern) cultural studies are represented by a dualism between, on one end, realism and empiricism ('modern'), and on the other end, a postmodern body of thought that is constructionist, idealist and relativist reveals more than he possibly suspects (1998: 19). He accused cultural studies scholars in

journalism education of misrepresenting the subject and corrupting aspirant student journalists, those same scholars responded that their critic had misrepresented their field (Turner, 2000). Windschuttle argues that journalism education programme should uphold three principles: (1) a realist outlook and an empirical methodology committed to reporting the truth; (2) an ethical attitude towards one's audiences; and (3) good writing in the plain style. His view was that 'media theory' (in cultural studies) has no place in professional education on grounds that it contradicts each of the aforementioned principles and is intellectually incoherent.

Consequently, journalism education and cultural studies made the vocational versus the liberal arts distinction palpably concrete. It was not long before there was trouble. The opening shots of the Media Wars, as they were dubbed in Australia, were fired in 1995. Hartley (1995) fired the first shot that 'rang around the world' of journalism education. As always in every great battle there were the conscripts forced into confrontation by virtue of their location within the perceived journalistic ranks. The matter did not stop there, and Hartley and others (Tomaselli and Shepperson 1999; Steenveld and Strelitz, 1998) committed further fuel to the flames. Tomaselli & Shepperson (1999) and Strelitz & Steenveld (1998), disciples of cultural studies in South Africa wrote replies to the journal article by Windschuttle, all critiquing the limitations of Windschuttle's conclusions. Unlike, Windschuttle's empiricist orientation, his critics argued that journalism does little more than recover "the superficial, the literal" and the preferred meanings manufactured via the "mundaneness" of professional practice. Steenveld and Strelitz (1998) countered Windschuttle's views by arguing that cultural studies is at the centre of journalism education theory which allows journalists to critical reflect on their practice. Tomaselli and Shepperson (1998) suggested that to expect journalism to report the world accurately must not only be wrong but naïve in the extreme. Thanks to the "new insights" provided by cultural studies, journalists of the future can be trained to overcome the old deficiencies and ensure that the failures of the apartheid era do not recur (Steenveld and Strelitz, 1998). Responding to the Media Wars debate, Wasserman (2005: 5) argues that reflection about the role of journalism education is meaningless without reflecting on the role of journalism in society, and that the concept of "praxis" – which he defines as "a conception of practice that sees intellectual work as a form of social intervention" – might be a suitable approach to journalism education.

Despite an exchange of 'academic gunshots' over the years, the debate has congealed into stagnant and immovable positions of theory (cultural studies) and practice (journalism

training). And from the proceedings, to paraphrase Emmanuel Kant's oft quoted dictum, it is hard for an observer not to conclude that practice without theory is blind, and theory without practice is empty. Moreover, as the Shona idiom goes, '*Panorwa nzou sora rinonzwa nekutsokodzerwa*' (When elephants fight, it's the grass that suffers) can easily be seen in the 'cold media wars' in Zimbabwean journalism between editors and educators which have rendered some students 'unemployable'. In this case, students denote the 'grass' sandwiched in between industry and journalism training institutions.

Journalism Education and Training in Africa

The World Journalism Education Census estimates that there are 1,859 journalism education institutions around the world. The census also highlights that the curriculum emphasis is on practical journalism education, followed by theory, with technology training a distant third. Just 49 percent offer digital media training, while 76 percent offer print, 64 percent broadcast, and 53 percent media theory (Centre for International Media Assistance Report, 2007). Despite a surge in numbers of journalism training institutions, research has shown that many faculties remain fixed in the past, teaching the theory of journalism exclusively, while others teach only tradecraft without proper grounding in ethics and other studies. This situation is discernible in most African journalism schools whose ancestry is traceable to colonial times (Banda, 2009, Wasserman, 2007, Fourie, 2005). The legacies of these imperialist education policies and the rationalities they served continue to live with a good part of the former colonial world, particularly in Africa. As a result, journalism education in Africa is closely modelled along Anglo-American and Francophone curriculum imperatives. This leads Kupe (2007) and Banda (2009) to conclude that media education has tripartite character. Banda (2009) suggests that it owes some of its identity to its colonial interpenetration. He adds that it also identifies with the postcolonial character of African society, characterised by the postcolonial state's indelible imprint of national unity and development on media curricula. Banda (2009) locates a third, identity of African media education as closely associated with the globalisation of communication. It is Banda (2009)'s contention that within the ambit of globalisation, media education seems to have lost its postcolonial historical-ideological encasing, increasingly linked to its economic value in the employment marketplace. He sees globalisation and its attendant neo-liberal tendencies as emphasising technical skills at the expense of critical engagement in media education. However, Banda (2009) is quick to point out that Africa has a rich media-cultural heterogeneity. As already discussed above, despite this rich diversity, similarities rooted in the shared experiences of the legacy of colonial rule,

the unsettled politics of the postcolonial era and the interpenetration of global influences persist.

Unlike in Anglo-African countries, Francophone Africa seems to have lagged behind in the opening of mass communication training schools (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 95). Whereas Ghana, Zambia, Kenya and Nigeria were running journalism schools in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was not until 1965 that the "Centre d'Etudes de Sciences et Techniques de l'Information" (CESTI) of Dakar was opened. It was only in 1970 that Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, Rwanda, and Togo jointly set up L'Ecole Supérieure Internationale de Journalisme de Yaoundé (ESIJY) (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 95). In South Africa for example, journalism education has been dominated by the technikons-career based skills oriented tertiary institutions and the universities. Technikons emphasize skills while the universities stress theory over practice. In similar view, Du Toit (2009) suggests that South African media history demonstrates that the construction of journalism education has been profoundly shaped by struggles around the production of knowledge within the institutions of journalism and the university.

It is clear from the foregoing that journalism training schools and departments of mass communication have been established in many countries to offer journalism training and education. Nyamnjoh (2005) suggests that in West Africa, there are problems with most training institutions are not well equipped to provide adequate and proper training for journalism work. Due to economic difficulties, lack of resources and dilapidated equipment has rendered these institutions increasingly theoretical in approach (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 95). On the other hand, Banda (2009) locates the problem of postcolonial African media education in the instrumentalist Western educational philosophy upon which it is encased. This orientation privileges the speedy production of graduates to staff profit-seeking media conglomerates (Banda, 2009). He cites that case of the Department of Mass Communication's programme at the University of Zambia which seems to be mostly focused on 'practical training, technical and professional performance'. According to Banda (2009), the programme reflects the American professional-ideological leanings. African overdependence on Western journalism educational and training centres – a legacy of colonialism – cannot be overemphasised (Banda (2009). Consequently, he advocates for an Africanisation agenda in media education to exorcise the current curriculum from the strictures of Western educational philosophy.

Interestingly, the gospel of Africanisation and de-westernisation has found many disciples (Banda, 2008; Wasserman, 2006; Fourie, 2007; Kasoma, 1996; Nyamnjoh, 2005), although it operates within fringes of the dominant discourses on education. It has opened up a space for the discursive pedagogical questioning of the received wisdom from Western academe (Banda, 2009). However, the discourse of Africanisation has unfortunately been manipulated in some contexts by political actors to promote new forms of 'correctness'. I need not belabour on the agenda of the discourse of Africanisation of media education, since it falls outside the scope of this paper. Suffice to note that the dearth of indigenised theoretical knowledge about media has been blamed on the overemphasis on the practical components on their curricula in most media education in Africa. Most theory taught in most journalism training institutions in Africa is Western-oriented (Banda, 2009). On this issue, Hochheimer (2001) suggests that there is need to 'decontextualise' and then 'recontexualise' 'received media theory' in order to speak to our African experiences. Decontexualisation would allow journalists to domesticate 'received' media education in line with their own contextual peculiarities (Banda, 2009). In short, his argument is that the onto-epistemic foundations of Western journalism education practiced in Africa relegate it to the instrumentalist role of fitting the students for industry specifications.

Journalism Education and Training in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's journalism schools exist at registered universities, both public and private, but there are also private colleges that offer journalism training. While public universities have the autonomy to start programmes, private colleges and universities have to secure approval from the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education and the Media Information Commission, which then constitutes accreditation of that programme. In a nutshell, the start of journalism education in Zimbabwe is generally dated from the early 1980s with the setting up of the journalism course at Ranch House College. This course was offered on behalf of the Harare Polytechnic and the students were examined under the auspices of HEXCO. However, there were some earlier initiatives by private run colleges such as the Christian College of Southern Africa (CCOSA). As a result, privately run colleges have been crucial in the training of early journalists during the liberation struggle. Unfortunately over the years their contribution to the profession has largely been unrecognised (Dzirutwe, 2005). Dzirutwe (2005) points out that these have tended to produce a pool of cadre who cannot find suitable employment and end up as freelancers.

The Harare Polytechnic department of mass communication opened its doors to first journalism graduates in 1982 offering a diploma in mass communication. Students were expected to finish the course in one year during its formative stages. At that time there was no internship period. It is poignant to point out that at that time Zimbabwe had just attained independence and therefore human resource development to fill positions left by whites running the government bureaucracy was of paramount importance. The 1980s were a time of expansion in higher education in Zimbabwe in general but especially in the areas of vocational and technological education (Mlambo, 1997, 2005). A fast-track approach to human resource development was started in most polytechnic colleges to enable the government to cope with service delivery and nation-building challenges (Mandaza, 1986). As a result, due to its solid state-funding, the Harare Polytechnic department of mass communication quickly asserted its monopoly as the citadel of journalism training in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Its graduates got employment in all kinds of sectors. It is no wonder that most of the editors in Zimbabwe today came from Harare Polytechnic. The department was set up by Western trained academics hence its instrumental approach to journalism curriculum (Banda, 2009) of prioritising practical training at the expense of theory.

Since those early beginnings, there has been a gradual expansion in provision in the number of courses available, their level and duration in the country. The National University of Science and Technology began offering their degree programme in 2001. Banda et al (2007) characterise their curriculum as reflecting the integrated approach. It tries to balance off theory and practice learning. In 2003, the University of Zimbabwe started its post-graduate diploma in media and communication. The same programme was extended to Masters Level in 1998. These programmes only offer generalised approaches to research techniques, media theory, news gathering and dissemination of news (Dzirutwe, 2005). Most of the students who enrol for these programmes have undergraduate degrees, most often in Arts and Social Sciences, and have no practical experience as journalists. In 2001, Midlands State University also entered the journalism training market offering a degree known as Bsc in Media and Society. This is a four year programme with one year internship. Dzirutwe (2005) suggests that lecturers at universities are purely academics who have never practised as journalists, let alone taught economics, politics or business reporting. As a result, he summarily concludes that students are exposed to theory almost exclusively, and have no access to the practical day-to-day realities of journalism. Other institutions which have joined the fray include:

Zimbabwe Open University, UMAA Institute, Career Management Centre, Lifelong College and BMC College.

As indicated above, an underlying theme flagged by most scholars is that journalism education has been pioneered by lecturers with little background in media studies and social sciences and who have tended to teach only the areas they are familiar with, for instance: public relations, editing and sub-editing etc. Dzirutwe (2005) suggests that journalism education introduced by universities has been too abstract such that if one is keen to specialise in journalism, he/she has to get training in the newsroom or enrol for another diploma in mass communication to fine-tune writing and editing skills. Worse still, on-the-job newsroom training is not taken seriously by most papers in the country. Most papers have no training editors. There are also no specialised training institutions for journalism.

The Linkages between Journalism Education and the Labour Market

The intersection of journalism education and the labour market is an interesting space to assess to effectiveness of training. It is a space where one can analyse 'what's working' and 'what's not' (Berger, 2005). Research thus far has shown that the labour market depends on journalism educational institutions for human resources. Scholars such as McChesney (1997) and Bagdikian (1997) suggest that private media ownership and the rise of advertising as the dominant source of revenue for media organisations have shaped profoundly the form and content of journalism education and training. It has reconfigured the journalistic profession and the production of news. It has created a complementary relationship between the training institutions and the labour market, which begs a nuanced understanding especially in contexts characterised by massification of journalism student intakes, contraction in the labour market and the bourgeoning of alternative forms of journalism such as public and citizen. As McChesney (2007) observes the emergence of journalism schools in the US cannot be extricated from the rise of advertising as the primary revenue source for news media organisations. There is an extensive body of research on the seismic shift towards commercialised and professional press. As a result, the shift was accompanied by the institutionalisation of ethical codes and behavioural norms. Like other professions such as medicine, law and accounting; journalism saw the need to come up with standard training qualifications. As a result, new schools arose out of the deepening of the professional ideology within journalism across the world. Given its normative foundations in positivistic

oriented societies, journalism inherited the empirical and objective baggage (Harber, 2005) as its legitimating framework in practice and educational curriculum.

In terms of the symbiotic relationship that exists between journalism education and the labour market in non-Western contexts, China presents a classic case. The Chinese case study highlights what is happening to many journalism graduates around the world in the context of the mismatch between industry and journalism training institutions. The Centre for International Media Assistance Report, (2007) reveals that a sharp increase in the number of journalism students in China has been met by low recruitment rates by news organizations. This is despite the fact that Asia's news job market is relatively robust. For instance, only one-third of China's 32,500 journalism graduates each year are getting jobs in China's 2,199 newspapers, 1,900 TV and radio stations, or 9,074 journals. Others are left with no choice but to go into public relations, advertising, or unrelated jobs. This scenario has given rise to the question: What is going on? In answering this question, a number of mitigating factors come to light. One explanation is that many journalism schools are old-fashioned and entrenched. In short, there is a disparity between what is taught in the university journalism programs and what is needed professionally (Centre for International Media Assistance Report, 2007). This situation is not only peculiar to China only as this paper which focuses on Zimbabwean journalism educators and editors would show. Firstly, it is important to locate the journalism curriculum template in Zimbabwe.

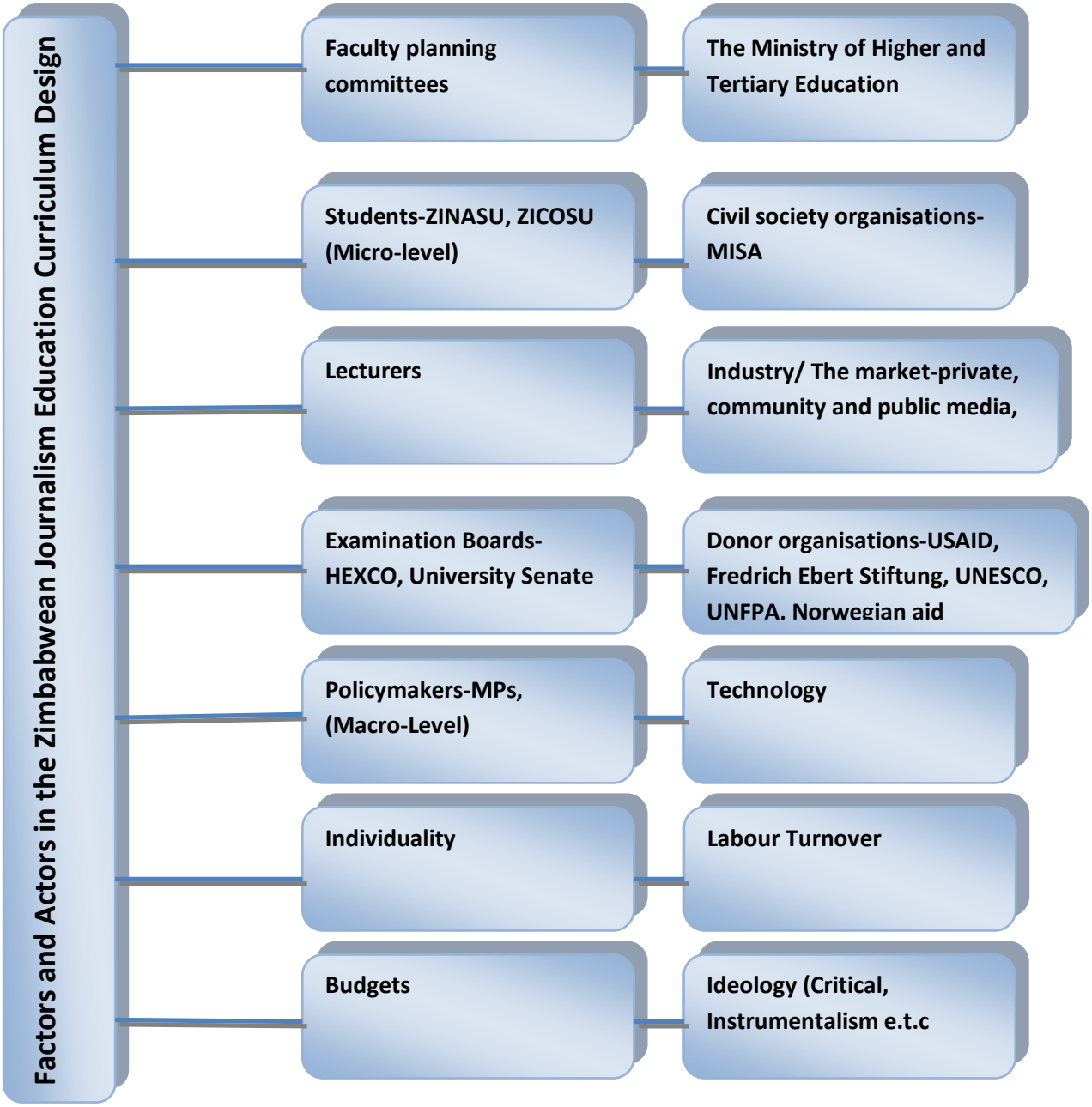
Journalism Education Curriculum in Zimbabwe: Unity in Diversity?

A number of factors shape the theory-practice couplet that mirror journalism education curriculum in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's journalism curriculum has not been immune to local and global distant influences (Banda, 2007). It borrows slightly from the "model" curriculum designed by UNESCO for African institutions in 2002. This model takes into account the social, economic, political and cultural contexts existing in Africa, as well, as the background of communication trainers, teaching and learning methods and available teaching and training capacity, facilities and resources (UNESCO, 2002). On the other hand, domestication and indigenisation of journalism curriculum in Zimbabwe is encased within the ambit of Third Chimurenga. In postcolonial Zimbabwe, the 'Third chimurenga' symbolises an inward-looking, nationalist and anti neo- colonial discourse which began in 2000 following the 'NO' vote during the constitutional referendum and the subsequent land seizures. It was packaged as an antidote to neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism immanent in globalisation

processes (Manase, 2009). The Third Chimurenga was characterised by the indigenisation of media content and tertiary education curriculum to reflect a 'Zimbabweaness' identity. In the context of tertiary education, it manifested itself as authoritarian nationalism rhetoric with a pre-determined ideological agenda. It called upon universities and polytechnics to introduce a course known as 'national strategic studies', to give first preference to graduates from the 'Border Gezi National Youth Service Schools' and to mainstream Zimbabwean history in all undergraduate programmes. The rationale was that these courses would amongst other objects engender patriotic values (Ranger, 2004), inculcate a sense of collective memory and unite the country in the face of perceived neo-colonialists (Manase, 2009). In line with this directive, the Harare Polytechnic complied with these new requirements in 2004. The institution subsequently created a stand-alone department of 'National Strategic Studies' to teach the course across all faculties. The course became a compulsory for anyone undertaking a diploma at the polytechnic. Consequently, diploma and university enrolment requirements were revised downwards. Moreover, it inscribed a paradigm shift on the post-colonial journalism curriculum template. Unfortunately, there is dearth of research on the statistics of students enrolled by journalism training institutions from these 'National Youth Service Schools', but editors are of the opinion that training standards and quality control mechanisms have deteriorated in the last couple of years.

Moreover, the curriculum fundamentals in Zimbabwe cannot be understood outside the locus of quality control regimes, civil society pressures, industrial lobbying, governmental encroachments, and extra-institutional pressures. In fact, one can identify internal and external factors shaping journalism curriculum. These factors tend to coalesce into a discursive system that allows a certain kind of curriculum to predominate at the expense of others. In the same vein, sociological approaches to curriculum design highlight a number of gatekeepers and structures that influence curriculum development and revision at any particular historical juncture. These actors include: government officials, civil society groups, the corporate world, lecturers, examining boards, ministry of education officials, policy makers, captains of media industry and individual lecturers (see fig 1).

Figure 1: Factors and Actors in the Zimbabwean Journalism Education Curriculum Design Process



Furthermore, sociological approaches posit that individual lecturers and administrators have the power to shape curriculum fundamentals in a number of ways. As course designers, lecturers have the leverage to design courses in ways in line with their academic and professional backgrounds. This was acknowledged by lecturers at UZ and Harare Polytechnic, who said that course designing usually falls within the jurisdiction of individual lecturers and model examinations set by HEXCO in conjunction with external examiners. In the end, self regulation at the level of course designing means that individuals have the power to promote either practice-oriented teaching or theory learning based on their preferences and training backgrounds. In the context of Zimbabwe, journalism education is a late-comer and as such has been driven by globalisation and its attendant discourses of neo-liberalism and human rights (Matenda, 2008) especially in the early 1990s when Economic Structural

Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) were in fashion. Thus a combination of forces have coalesced to produce what can easily be described as 'unity in diversity or diversity with disunity' given the two extremes of theory-practice that continue to inform the discourse of journalism education in Zimbabwe.

Throwing Stones whilst in Glass Houses: Trading Accusations over Journalism Curriculum

There has been considerable debate over the proper place of journalism education within the academy (Skinner et al, 2001: 341). This paper argues that there seems to be reluctance amongst most editors to employ university graduates in Zimbabwe because of the assumption that journalism is no place for academics, fear that young graduates will threaten their editorial positions in the long run and that university graduates are too critical and write highly opinionated copies. This despite the point raised by Skinner et al (2001) that programmes which compromise between vocational training and a broader programme of study based in the liberal arts remain unsatisfactory because they put too much onus on students themselves to bridge the gap between theory and practice. In this study, most editors believed that practice-oriented teaching curriculum at polytechnics provides graduates with a set of newsroom 'soft' skills that are easy to refine, whereas graduates from universities exhibit a high degree of reflexive thinking and a broader understanding of society but still fall short in terms of judicious story-telling. Most editors were oblivious of the fact that communication theory helps elucidate the social context in which journalists work, drawing attention to the particular historical, economic, political and cultural conditions which govern their practice. But while the debate over the structure of the journalism curriculum has come a long way in the last hundred years, exactly how far away from practical training journalism programmes should move remains a contentious subject (see Turner, 2000 quoted by Skinner et al, 2001). In the context of Zimbabwe, most editors interviewed were adamant that practical learning should be mainstreamed in all journalism schools. However, this view needs to be understood within the context that most editors in Zimbabwe are graduates from polytechnics set up soon after independence.

Extending the preceding argument further, results from in-depth interviews demonstrated that there are differences of opinions even amongst journalism educators with polytechnic lecturers endorsing practice-oriented teaching as opposed to theory-learning. Those with a background in university teaching emphasise theory learning whereas former journalists

favour practice-orientated training. Therefore it is clear that different stakeholders point to varying strengths and shortcomings of different forms of journalism curriculum. Those journalism educators and editors favouring practice-oriented teaching tend to pander to the whims and caprices of the media industry. Their arguments are concerned with the need to produce industry-compliant graduates whereas those advocating for theory-learning do so within the broader understanding of education as transformative social intervention, aimed at challenging and transforming the underlying assumptions of modern "professional" journalism practice (Wasserman 2005). Consequently, the above argument has resonances with suggestions made by the Centre for International Media Assistance Report (2007) that there is serious pressure on those who come into universities as media practitioners to start 'operating as academics' within their institutions. For instance, at MSU 'production staff' revealed that they are expected to do more than 'just' teach and produce media. In short, they are expected to publish academic work. In the case of the Harare Polytechnic, NUST and MSU such assimilation policies have not transformed the academy, rather it has simply reconfirmed the divide between the academy and communities of journalistic practice.

In light of the above arguments, there is also considerable resistance to such assimilatory tendencies within journalism schools themselves (Stephens, 2000 in Skinner et al 2001). This was evident in interviews at polytechnics where university and polytechnic trained journalism educators have difficulties co-existing under one department. The following quote sums up the mood of university trained journalism educators:

"*These guys from polytechnics have a shallow understanding of the media and most of them still cling to centuries old notions of the magic bullet theory whereas the world has shifted. All they teach students are the 5 Ws and an H throughout the semester. I think they are short-changing students who have to compete with university graduates with a broader understanding of the social world*" (Editor C, January 2010).

It is quite clear from the above quote that different constituencies assume their 'stock of knowledge' is better than the other. However, Anderson warns us that, 'it is difficult to generalise about the strengths and shortcomings of journalism-mass communication education because...few criticisms-or ringing endorsements...fit the entire field, 'one of the major difficulties in reforming journalism education lies in the structure of journalism faculties (1997: 37 quoted in Skinner et al 2001). In the same vein, Nyamnjoh (2005) recommends that the training staff must combine social science education and a working

knowledge of the media, and making a training school part of the university or higher educational system must not be mistaken, as has happened in ESSTIC and the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication in the University of Buea in Cameroon, for implying that candidates for lectureship must have a doctorate degree (3ème cycle, Doctorate d'état or PhD). In Zimbabwe, it is clear that the labour turnover that hit the academic sector over the past decade has led to the revision of educational requirements for lecturers. Most heads of departments interviewed acknowledged lowering the educational requirements for lectureship positions to remain in business. For instance, at the Harare Polytechnic, the Head of School conceded that they had to employ former students with diplomas in mass communication with no media experience to augment the existing staff. The same can be said of universities where graduate teaching assistants filled the shoes of seasoned lectures who left for greener pastures. The most hit universities hit by staff exodus were NUST, UZ and MSU.

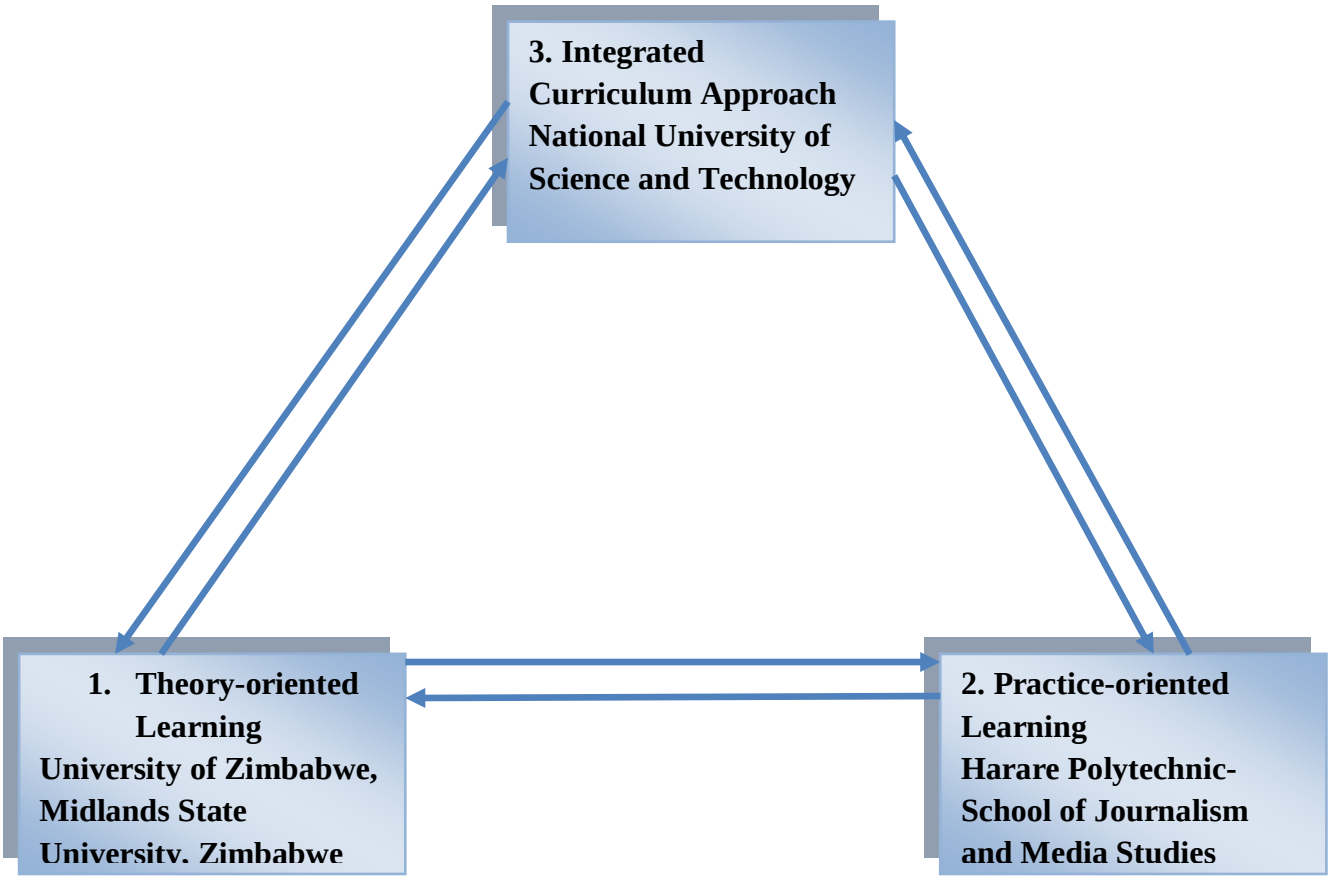
Long live Media Wars: Different Curriculums warring within the Bosom of the Zimbabwean Academy?

It is clear from the foregoing that 'media wars' which gathered steam within the Australian academy are far from over even in distant locations such as Zimbabwe. There seems to be two camps emerging amongst journalism educators and editors over the direction which journalism curriculum ought to take in the long run. This concurs with insights from Adam (1988: 9) that 'the academic and professional elements of journalism curriculum are like "two nations warring within the bosom of a single state". It is clear that journalism education in Zimbabwe is a servant of two masters (Skinner, et al, 2001: 344). On the one hand, journalism educators seek to satisfy the demands of news organisations providing a steady stream of graduates ready for the newsroom. On the other hand, journalism schools are asked to meet the standards of university administrators who perceive post-secondary education as something more than vocational training. However as already alluded to above, journalism curriculum is influenced by a myriad of factors some of which even editors and educators have no control over. In Zimbabwe, as editors and educators disagree on the 'appropriate' journalism education, the buck has been left at the doorstep of the job market. It is poignant to highlight that as debate rages on, advocates for doing journalism and talking about journalism (Bovee, 1999: 185 quoted by Skinner et al 2001) continue with mudslinging despite the cessation of media wars within the Australian academy. As such cessation clearly does not mean ceasefire. It only means continuation of the war by different actors using

different weapons in a different location. To a large part this dichotomy rests on differences in the training and backgrounds of journalism faculty (Skinner, et al, 2001).

In Zimbabwe, this scenario can be aptly described as a 'cold war' between and within the newsrooms and journalism education fraternity that somehow affects graduates more than those at the centre of the 'cold war'. Graduates resemble the 'grass' that suffers when giant elements fight for supremacy. However, on the issue of theory or practice learning, it's difficult to say which one is better than the other. The debate raises the question on what constitutes practice and theory-learning. As already discussed above, Windschuttle presupposes theory-learning equates to teaching cultural studies to journalism students. However, such a simplistic view has been critiqued repeatedly by Tomaselli and Shepherd (1998) and Strelitz and Steenveld (1998) who argue that it is difficult to separate theory from practice learning. In the case under consideration, the Harare Polytechnic's instrumental curriculum is renowned from producing 'ready-made journalists', the UZ is associated with the production of 'academic-cum-journalists' while NUST's integrated curriculum approach has been hailed as producing 'well-rounded graduates' (see fig 2). It is important to highlight that in the context of resource limitations and labour migration; journalism education in Zimbabwe has been adversely affected.

Figure 2: Triangular Model of Journalism Education Curriculum in Zimbabwe



In light of the highly polarised views peddled within the newsrooms and the Zimbabwean journalism academy, this paper argues for an integrated curriculum as posited by Parisi (1992). Parisi suggests that rather than a liberal arts emphasis, he maintains that critical, cultural or qualitative studies provide clearer focus and greater coherence for journalism education (1992: 5-7 quoted by Skinner, et al 2001). Such an approach would treat journalism as a site of public discourse and foreground the question of epistemology, examining journalistic story telling 'as a specific rhetorical form, not a transparent stenography of the real. Simply putting skills-based training and liberal arts courses side by side doesn't show students how to apply those ideas and concerns and concerns in the context of social communication in general and journalism in particular.

Underlying the integrated curriculum approach is the desire to merge theory and practice through inculcating self-reflexivity in journalists. This suggestion calls for the reorganisation of disparate components of journalism education into 'a single field of Journalism Studies...just as political science represents an integration of separate approaches into single subject of politics (Skinner, et al, 2001: 348). Moreover, the perceptions held by educators and editors in Zimbabwe are nothing new within journalism academy as already highlighted by the discussion of 'media wars' in Australia. Journalism as a field has had a chequered history given its genealogical roots in liberal arts and emergent social sciences. As Adam (1988: 77-8 cited in Skinner et al 2001) posits, journalism studies is a branch of the humanities and the social sciences and shares with them the methodological dilemmas, curiosities and disputes of the other disputes of the other disciplines. The 'dual imperative' pervades most of journalism's 'cousin brothers and sisters' within academy. For instance, in sociology the agency-structure (hen or egg) is a never ending question which has resonances with the nature-nurture couplet, qualitative-quantitative divide and cultural studies vs. political economy in media theory and research.

Hence there is need for much more interaction between academic researchers and practising journalists. If opinions raised by editors in Zimbabwe are anything to go by, then journalism scholarship requires a renewed independence to help academics resist domination by the demands of industry (Reese and Cohen, 2000: 214). It is the argument of this paper that multiple points of engagement with journalism and media professionals have to be strengthened (Reese and Cohen, 2000) while remaining alert to journalism training institutions' obligations to prepare students not only to be employed but also to participate effectively and critically in the democratic community.

Editors' Perceptions of the Performance of Graduates from Universities and Polytechnics

Interestingly, editors in Zimbabwe interviewed seem to reinforce the belief that polytechnics produce graduates who can be called 'technocrats' and who generally perform better in newsrooms. However, some editors were quick to point out that university graduates fared well in specialised genres such as politics and economics. On the other hand, graduates from polytechnics performed well in genres requiring simple news writing skills and a nose for news. According to G1, polytechnic students generally perform better in newsrooms as a result of specialisation. At polytechnics, students specialise in either print or broadcast journalism. This means that they have more time to develop their skills and competencies in their particular fields of journalism when compared to university graduates. On the other hand, J2 suggested that the Harare Polytechnic has been offering journalism courses for a long time which has given them time to fine-tune their curriculum. In the context of Zimbabwe, polytechnics began soon after independence when donors made available huge sums of money towards support educational development. In short, this explains why the Harare Polytechnic has more equipment for broadcasting and new media courses. Moreover, universities and polytechnics have different funding models despite their reliance on state-funding. Journalism education in Zimbabwean universities is a recent phenomenon. For instance, G2 cited the NUST journalism programme which was started in 2001, at a time when the country was going through an economic and political maelstrom. As such the department did not start on a solid financial footing. As a result, it has very few cameras and lacks broadcasting equipment for practical courses despite claiming to offer an integrated approach. We can see from the foregoing that rather than the theory-practice couplet being a resource which enables journalism students access to employment, it may lead to unintended consequences. Consequently, as Berger (2005) advises us that it is important to make sure accreditation systems and journalism curriculum should be re-aligned towards supporting the media industry. The reason being that as one experienced editor puts it:

"Most university graduates get into newsroom without any idea of how to write an intro, rather how to construct a story, how to look for a story, which is in the speech by a minister e.g. constitutes a story. Some even learn typing the first time they walk into newsrooms. It's worse if we talk of note taking. Worst of all, students graduate from college with a mentality that writing a story is the same as writing a primary school composition" (Editor C, February 2010).

The aforementioned statement has resonances with statements made by media players in Kenya. For instance, Berger (2009) cites complaints being made by media players that most Kenyan training institutions were offering sub-standard courses and "flooding" the industry with "half-baked professionals". Furthermore, Esther Kamweru, the Chairperson of the Media Council of Kenya is on record as saying: "The situation is so serious that people are graduating with diplomas in film production and they cannot even switch on a camera". However, in the case of Zimbabwe, the different interpretations of the performance of journalism graduates within the newsroom tend to intersect with the highly documented cases of media polarisation obtaining in the crisis ridden country. It is clear from interviews with editors that they emphasise on what journalists do, the product of which we read in our newspapers and watch on the evening news (Skinner et al, 2001) whereas journalism educators with academic backgrounds are of the opinion that journalism curriculum must entail the teaching of how journalism participates in the production and circulation of meaning in our society. For instance, H3 had the following to say:

"Generally I think that for one to make it as a journalist one needs to have some personal attributes such as courage, patience, a strong desire to know what is going on in virtually every sphere of society. One must also have that bulldog mentality, thus to get the information no matter what or who is standing in the way" (H3, December, 2009).

The above quote foreground attributes of a good journalist and the hunger for knowledge and information while backgrounding the need for relevant training and education. It is important to point that there seems to varied responses on the performance of graduates from polytechnics and universities by Zimbabwean editors. Most editors with academic backgrounds highlighted that there is need to imbue graduates with a broad social knowledge and craft competencies. On the other hand, editors who came straight from polytechnics argued that the newsroom is no room for academics. This gate keeping mentality was evident in most public media newsrooms where journalists with university degrees are often frustrated by diploma wielding editors who see them as threats. For instance, one editor trained at Harare Polytechnic said the following:

"Polytechnic graduates can identify news better than university graduates. This is mainly because polytechnic graduates have soft newsroom skills compared to their counterparts from universities with academic backgrounds. Polytechnics concentrate more on the practical news writing while universities are too theoretical" (Editor B, December 2009).

The above statement sums up perceptions held by editors tend to naturalise the separation of theory and practice. It reinforces the idea that university graduates have no role to play in the newsroom and theoretical knowledge cannot inform the journalistic method. It is also clear that most editors in Zimbabwe believe that journalism is a simple technique. However, this contrasts with views held by journalism educators from universities, who see journalism as a complex professional practice that involves the application of key vocational skills as well as a critical analytic eye.

In terms of newsgathering, editor D was of the view that graduates from polytechnics generally have sharper skills of news writing compared to graduates from universities. He revealed that polytechnic graduates tackle news writing in its entirety by exhausting all the five W's and an H. On the other hand, one editor at a state newspaper, accused university graduates of using an academic approach to news writing and in most cases failing to identify the most newsworthy aspect of a story. In terms of language, M1 pointed out that university trained journalists have a tendency to use advanced diction compared to polytechnic graduates who use simple language. However, another editor was quick to point out that language use depended on one's mastery over the English grammar. In addition, polytechnic graduates had no problems with most beats they were assigned to but tends to lag behind on those beats that require a lot of research. Another respondent cited the 'crisis of expectations' associated with university graduates within the newsroom while underscoring the need for thorough training. The following quote aptly sums it up:

"But then it goes without saying that journalists need to be trained. A university degree alone, without training means that an individual walks into the newsroom with only a slight understanding of what real journalism is all about. Granted there are great lecturers at university, but better journalists are moulded out of both theory and practical exercise and once in the newsroom, if you claim to have a degree, there is a certain level of ability which is expected so there won't be anybody to assist" (Editor A, April 2010).

On the other hand, university graduates fair better at the features desk while polytechnic graduates have a grip on hard news. Most editors concurred that polytechnic graduates have a better grasp of newsy aspects from briefs and press conferences when compared to their counterparts from universities. Moreover, polytechnic graduates were singled out as 'good sniffer dogs' for public events and newsworthy incidents as they go for the soul of the story first and then the body later while the reverse is true with university graduates. On the other

hand, editors from the private media were of the view that liberal journalism practiced in their newsrooms requires graduates from universities who are able to critically interrogate complex social phenomena and to engage with knowledgeable sources.

On the issue of the most relevant journalism curriculum for Zimbabwe, there was no consensus. At least three camps emerged with theory, practice and an integrated approach finding disciples amongst editors and educators. However, it was clear that most editors believe that practice-oriented teaching curriculum at polytechnics provides graduates with a set of newsroom 'soft' skills that are easy to refine, whereas graduates from universities exhibit a high degree of reflexive thinking and a broader understanding of society but still fall short in terms of judicious story-telling. In short, 'ready-made' journalists were touted as valuable to any newsroom because they save the organisation from training and refresher course costs. However, most editors interviewed were sceptical of training and re-training given the financial difficulties most newspapers are facing within the context of shrinking advertising and readership figures. On the other hand, university graduates were singled out as having problems to adapt to the rigours of newsrooms resulting in some of them leaving before completing their internship and probation periods. These graduates ended up joining non-governmental organisations as information or communication officers. This is despite the notion that the success of any journalism programme is generally measured by the number of internship opportunities it affords and the kinds of jobs graduates are able to land.

During interviews with both editors and educators, it was clear that pedagogy needs to catch up with the new media technologies and adapt some of its interactivity and peer-to-peer features. In the case under consideration, graduates from universities were rated as computer literate compared to polytechnic graduates who are still stuck in old media. Thus universities have been quick to embrace new media technology within their journalism curricula when compared to polytechnics. Editors from both private and public media organisations complained that while graduates from polytechnics have soft-skills they possessed outdated skills in type-writing and short-hand writing which have been overtaken by technological advances. For instance, HI complained that print journalism graduates from the Harare Polytechnic possessed outdated newsroom production skills. Most students from polytechnics struggled with basic computer skills during their attachment. M1 also lambasted the teaching of short-hand and typewriting skills by the Harare Polytechnic as archaic in a society where new media technology has opened up new possibilities. Most editors highlighted that it was essential for journalism education curriculum to mainstream new media courses focusing on

podcasting, webcasting, web-streaming, and citizen journalism, web designing and editing and designing in light of emerging strands of journalism.

However interviews with journalism educators demonstrate that lack of capital has stifled efforts to acquire new media technology. For instance, GI and G2 cited NUST and UZ as journalism training institutions with no production equipment and laboratories to train broadcasting and new media graduates. On the other hand, the Harare Polytechnic has an outdated studio suite equipped with both radio and television analogue machines. This situation creates a misnomer in a context where graduates train using outdated equipment only to meet totally different technologies in the world of work. For instance, ZBC, the country's sole broadcaster has since migrated from analogue to digital broadcasting. As interesting case is that of the Harare polytechnic, where resource limitation has seen the institution producing television reporters and disc jockeys instead of producers, VTR operators and lighting experts. Although nowadays, it is common sense that journalism is a 'technically intensive field' which requires practitioners that have mastered 'a variety of computer-based tools', in Zimbabwe journalism schools are still stuck in old media and ideologies.

On the other hand, interviews with a broad section of journalism educators reveal that although there a number of courses meant 'orient students to use new media tools', the shortage of equipment have left lecturers with no option but to ignore the practical component. For instance, G3 pointed out that:

"There is need for journalism schools to acquire new media technologies so that students keep abreast with current trends in the profession. Journalism training that lags behind technological advances risks losing its lustre as the market shuns its graduates. However, given the shoe-string budgets most of our schools operate with, practical based courses remain a challenge. Under normal circumstances, we would like to see our schools producing high quality broadcasting students and giving the opportunity to print majors to publish college-based newspapers and magazines (G3, March 2010).

In short, students do not have access to equipment and laboratories. Despite the acknowledged need to produce interdisciplinary students, journalism training institutions still operate within old ideologies. As a result, it remains to be seen how the Zimbabwean academy would close the gap that exist between them and the market as news organisations become more and more specialised which calls for the production of trans-disciplinary and

interdisciplinary students. It is clear that with the current set up that journalism students have difficulties gaining interdisciplinary skills in the curricula of their journalism programmes.

We can see from the foregoing that generally Zimbabwean editors have a 'soft spot' for graduates from polytechnics. This paper has also shown that the reluctance amongst most editors to employ university graduates is rooted in the misplaced notion that journalism is no place for academics and fear of the unknown. This perception raises critical questions on journalism education: what kind of education is sufficient for journalists? What is wrong with theory education amongst journalists in a knowledge society? How can journalism institutions balance practice and theory learning to produce industry-compliant graduates? What kind of journalism graduates is the media industry in Zimbabwe looking for? These are relevant questions begging for answers in a country facing massive unemployment rates. Addressing these questions will go a long way in closing the disconnect that exist between industry and journalism training institutions in Zimbabwe. Given the diversity of journalism curriculums currently obtaining in the country, the labour market has been left to choose between theory and practice learners. This practice has tended to short-change graduates who find themselves unemployable after investing their time and finances on programmes deemed by industry to be 'out-dated and useless'.

A thread of argument running across most editors interviewed seem to suggest that they believe that the core purpose of journalism teaching is to meet the needs of industry. This argument is not new to academy as it was once raised by the Jefferson Institute that 'years of theoretical studies at universities leave most young journalists unprepared for the practical aspects of the job'. However, Adam (1988: 9) quoted by Skinner et al (2001) suggests that too often in this dichotomy it is more 'academic' courses-those dealing with issues arising from the critical literature-that are 'downgraded' by both the market and students and considered as extras'.

Universities versus Polytechnics: Same Trade, Different Objectives

As noted earlier, it is important to understand the varied responses to journalism curriculum amongst educators within the framework of differing foundational objectives between composite universities, universities of technology and polytechnics. Essentially, universities are not founded on a monolithic set of educational and ideological goals. For instance, composite universities such as UZ and MSU are premised on the critical approach (theory learning) whereas universities of technology (NUST) claim to adopt an integrated approach

(Banda, 2008). In addition, polytechnics are anchored in the administrative approach or instrumentalism (practice learning). Hence, it is clear that the theory-practice dichotomy is in-built within the foundational goals of training institutions. As such whereas polytechnics are founded upon instrumentalism where emphasis is on practical exercises (Banda, 2009), universities foreground critical reflection and analytical rigour. In the same vein, Brand (2008) reflecting on business journalism education in South Africa, notes that most economics or business journalism curricula reflect current practice, and are in fact aimed at satisfying a demand from the media industry for particular skills. Consequently, instrumentalism which drives polytechnic media courses is concerned with fitting the students for industry specifications. For instance, B1 revealed that essentially universities and polytechnics proceed from different ideological frameworks which explains the salient 'media-wars' in newsrooms. The respondent noted that:

"*One should also consider the ideological framework that most universities also work from, there is the belief that universities are producing media managers and this is reflected in the courses that students take. In a sense, one feels that they are being prepared to be thinkers and strategists and not practitioners. On the other hand, polytechnics are skills-oriented training institutions which operates as human resource 'dispensers' for industry* (B1 April, 2010).

Precisely, this explains why educators at polytechnics are engrossed with giving students assignments specific to newsroom contexts such as press releases, briefs, hard news stories, feature articles and interviewing scenarios. This contrasts significantly with universities where students are given academic essays, research projects and a bit of newsroom assignments. Universities are generally seen as producing reflexive journalists who are not only able to practice their craft, but also to question and challenge accepted practices and procedures and reflect on the role and effects of their work (Brand, 2008). As a result, what is obtaining at the Harare Polytechnic chides with what Banda (2009) found out in Zambian journalism training institutions whose genealogy is traceable to American liberal influence. However, Bollinger (2002) writing in an American context advises that a great journalism school within a great university should always stand at a certain distance from the profession itself.

In an answer to disciples of 'instrumentalism', Berger (2005) reminds us that journalism teaching encapsulates broader goals than simply producing the so-called "professional"

graduates who satisfy the industry. In short, journalism teaching is not captive to one and single master, the market. It is a vocational calling with many masters. Despite the differences underlying polytechnics and universities' ideological frameworks, Berger (2005) suggests that the fundamental purpose of journalism teaching is to contribute towards journalism that can impact positively on society. Essentially, he shows that media-society linkages encapsulated in the social responsibility approach defines the parameters of journalism education in modern societies. On the other hand, the industry is not necessarily oriented towards the purpose of impacting positively on society. This concurs with the mantra: the business of business is business. Bollinger (2002) and Berger (2005) concur that unless journalism education goes beyond serving the 'market' by critiquing the way it works, then it is shallow. In short, training institutions need to have a wider and long term vision in order for journalism education to impact positively on society. In line with this argument, Berger (2005) points out that both journalism education institutions and industry cannot predict the future. However, training institutions have more leverage and fewer constraints to experimenting than the industry does.

Journalism Education Institutions and Media Industry Dialogue: What's wrong with Attachment Assessment Strategies?

The lack of dialogue between industry and journalism educational institutions manifests itself at the level of attachment assessment. It is only during attachment assessment that lecturers and editors have the opportunity to 'corporately shape' journalism curriculum. However, power dynamics that exist between lecturer-student shape much of attachment assessment practices in Zimbabwe. In the context of Zimbabwe, most editors have been trained by experienced journalism educators who regularly evaluate students throughout the country. This raises a number of problems on how best to proceed with the assessment process. As a result, editors have limited power to influence their former lecturers out of respect and the need to build social capital. Attachment assessment strategies have somehow failed to bridge the disconnect that exists between the newsroom and journalism schools. L1 revealed that for instance at the Harare Polytechnic, attachment assessment are judiciously enforced in order to assess 'what's working' and 'what's not'. However, G2 lamented the relevance of attachment assessment strategies as time-wasting and irrelevant in a context of high labour turnover and low morale within journalism training institutions. As such re-curriculation which should be informed by attachment assessment strategies remains a pipe-dream. On the other hand, H3 pointed out that NUST students were required to go for a one year internship programme. At

the end of the internship programme, students are expected to compile a report on what they learnt. In addition, lecturers make follow-ups on each and every student throughout the country assessing their attachment performances. Editors or supervisors are expected to furnish lecturers with a progress report and this form the bedrock of journalism education and industry linkages. Consequently, only Harare Polytechnic, NUST and MSU have mandatory internships whereas UZ has no such in-built platform. At UZ students are expected to gain experience while working for an in-house magazine. Interviews with most journalism educators revealed that in theory attachment assessment remained important but in practice nothing was done to revise curriculum in line with recommendations from the industry and students. For instance, G2 highlighted that:

A cursory analysis of attachment assessment forms in most journalism schools shows that the monitoring and evaluation indicators are vague. Questions are poorly framed which makes it difficult to tap into editors' views on the skills showcased by interns. The problem is that most questions are students-centred; as a result editors are only given little space to evaluate students on outcomes based curriculum (G2, November 2009).

In light of the above discussion, one can summarily conclude that the trainer-media industry interaction enabled by attachment assessment strategies is going to waste in most instances. For instance, H3 and H4 noted that attachment assessment strategies were popular amongst lecturers because they are associated with monetary gains and sleeping in hotels. H3 openly acknowledged benefiting materially from students' evaluation trips throughout the country. Instead of fighting to improve journalism education, it was clear that student evaluation trips were regarded as more than administrative procedures. Most respondents cited the monetary and non-material gains as the reasons why attachment assessment practices remain popular in most institutions. For instance, H4 revealed that such trips entitle one to substantial amounts of cash as per diem and access to university cars and fuel coupons for the period when the assessors are in the field. It was clear from the interviews that being chosen to evaluate students was considered by lecturers as financially rewarding in a context where international conferences are far and wide. We can see from the foregoing that attachment assessment practices have become a strategic ritual (Tuchman, 1972) to ward off criticism by administrators that they are not monitoring and evaluating the performance of students in the field. Tuchman (ibid) argues that a strategic ritual is instrumental for protecting professionals (journalism educators) from the risks of their trade. In this case a strategic ritual may be used by other professionals to defend themselves from critical onslaught. In the end, one can

summarily argue that attachment assessment strategies in most Zimbabwean journalism training institutions have become 'credibility enhancing tactics'. This is aptly summed by G1:

Attachment assessment forms are just for grading purposes and you will find that there is no motivation for developing better curriculum coz of poor remuneration (G1, 15 February 2010)

The other question is who is teaching in our universities, are they adequately qualified? If they were to develop relevant curriculum, is there staff to teach it. Maybe, it is a case of coming up with innovative ways of teaching. For instance, how can new media aid journalism teaching? Universities can also collaborate with industry for a total learning experience. This concurs with Hackett and Gruneau (2000: 67-9) quoted in Skinner et al (2001) who argue that media owners and managers do no generally welcome critical perspectives on media practices, particularly those that might impact negatively on the bottom line. University graduates were depicted as the most affected by the negative stereotype deployed by editors in newsrooms. Graduates from the polytechnic seem to be thriving at the expense of their university graduates due to a number of factors already mentioned in this study. As Hardt (1998: 210) cited in Skinner et al (2001) argues, 'any recognition by media organisations of particular educational institutions as certified sites of professional instruction reinforces an alliance with media interests rather than the needs and interests of journalists. In the case of Zimbabwe, it is clear from interviews with editors that Harare Polytechnic has more 'cultural capital' in terms of journalism training compared to the UZ and NUST which started journalism training fairly recently.

Concluding remarks

This paper has attempted to assess the perceptions of editors and journalism educators on the performance of graduates from polytechnics and universities in Zimbabwe by exploring an array of factors critical in journalism training. It acknowledges that although this exploratory study was based on interviews with a few respondents, it nonetheless sheds light on the journalism education and the performance of graduates in newsroom contexts in crisis-ridden Zimbabwe. It is clear that the 'media wars' that were popularised by Windschuttle in Australia are far from over in distant places such as Zimbabwe. In conclusion, both editors and journalism educators in Zimbabwe are divided on the way forward to improve journalism education and training. Journalism educators find fault with the curriculum, quality of students and lack of resources. On the other hand, editors placed the problem at the doorstep

of journalism schools. It seems that even the integrated curriculum approach favoured across board, accusations will continue to be traded as long as the industry believes that journalism education exist to meet their demands. It is clear from the foregoing that journalism educators in Zimbabwe walk a tightrope between theory and practice, industry and the academy, teaching and research. However, both educators and editors recommend the following strategies to improve media education: the reintroduction of budget supports for tertiary education, student loans, better working conditions for journalism educators, mainstreaming of new media technology, the discontinuation of the national youth service courses and the strengthening A' level education. They acknowledge that attachment assessment remains a viable option to connect industry with journalism education as long as findings are used constructively for re-curriculation purposes in light of globalisation that thrives on multi-skilled labour, home working and knowledge workers. It adds that constructive dialogue is crucial for improvement. In the end, media reforms are essential to promote media development in a country riddled with a myriad of challenges.

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