

# Journalism Education in the Southern African Development Community Region (SADC):1989 – 2009.

---

Bhekimpilo Sibanda is Professor & Head of the Department of Communication  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Fort Hare. [bsibanda@ufh.ac.za](mailto:bsibanda@ufh.ac.za)

---

## Abstract

*Approaches to journalism education have been influenced by many primary and secondary factors. Critical variables compared were: the programmes themselves, level offered, duration, mode of delivery, practical work attachment, staff, relevance of course to the job market, gender and partnership with industry. Journalism education has a very short history in Southern Africa and in Africa in general. There are still differences in perception about what a good journalism programme should entail. A longitudinal comparative study of the trends in journalism education in the SADC region, from 1989 to 2009 was conducted. Twenty eight institutions were visited in all, some more than once for varying lengths of time. In six institutions, visits were for more than a month in each case. The differences in the courses were striking in the early 1990s the programmes differed in the courses offered, staff qualifications, target students and job opportunities. There is now some degree of harmony in the programmes. New media, the opening up of the global democratic political space and other socio-economic dynamics have created new media producers and consumers. Journalism courses fall under several names: Mass media, Communication and Media Studies. Currently, every university in the SADC region offers a course in journalism or Media studies. Ten Universities in four countries were the core of the study.*

*Results show that there has been tremendous development in journalism education in the SADC region. Journalism courses are located in differing departments/disciplines and faculties. The courses offered are eclectic. Only a few Universities planned for journalism education. Most institutions employed new staff to handle journalism but with limited budgets. More than a thousand students have studied journalism from these universities and yet less than two percent are employed in journalism institutions, the rest are employed in a variety of communication related sectors. Of great concern, was that journalism curriculum development was not systematic, there was political interference with what was taught. Subjects were added on as and when it was felt convenient or from pressure from industry. Funding for most of these departments is limited. Students in almost all the universities lamented the lack of practical work in the courses offered. Media studies was often chosen as a soft option by students. The study found out that technological developments and levels of literacy have an impact on Journalism education. There are enormous challenges still faced by universities in this sector. The study proposes an investigation into the possibilities of harmonizing journalism education in the SADC region whilst still leaving room for healthy diversity.*

## Key words

SADC Africa Journalism education Journalism institutions media studies mixed mode curriculum course, programme.

---

## **Introduction**

The challenges faced by Journalism Education are fundamentally the same all over the world. Current developments in technology and the media may seem to conceal the universality of what journalism is about. Kovach & Rosentiel (2001: 17) put it succinctly, that “The primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self governing”. This is central theme of the study. Primary and secondary factors that are fundamental to the success of Journalism Education. These universal values, as Skjerdal (2009) argues in his paper ‘journalism universals and cultural particulars..’ form the foundation of any effective course in journalism. Deuze (2006) also observes that Journalism training and education still invoke much debate and therefore it is important to be accommodative and not be prescriptive. In Africa, journalism education is mainly of mixed systems and modes. That is to say, there are few stand alone centers, or departments that focus purely on Journalism. Many courses in journalism are still parts of Arts departments or even Social Sciences.

These models or systems are still evolving in most countries in Africa. Deuze (2006), lists five models: Training schools located within universities; mixed systems of stand alone and University level education; stand alone Journalism Schools; on the job apprenticeship or cadetship, and private academies, the most recent one in South Africa is associated with the Media 24 media group. Some countries in Europe have a mixture of everything. In the SADC region, all the journalism training is in departments, Schools or Units attached to tertiary level colleges and universities. Basic journalism training is still the preserve of public and private technical colleges and Open learning systems.

In fact, Skjerdal and Ngugi (2007) referring to journalism education in East Africa, which includes Tanzania, which is also in SADC, are forthright and point out that: “Journalism education and training in Eastern Africa has commonly been a result of fragmented initiatives by Western donor organizations”. However they do indeed admit that there is currently movement towards formalization of journalism education. This movement towards excellence, is confirmed by the UNESCO consultative report on Journalism Training in Africa. Kyazze and Berger (2008). This report brought together journalism educators from about thirty five countries in Africa , who all expressed similar challenges as those observed by Deuze and Wasserman (2005).

What is clear in the UNESCO report though, are the disparities among the Journalism institutions between the skills training and the theoretical/ intellectual capacity development. Additionally, Skjerdal & Ngugi outline some of the more perennial challenges of Journalism Education. High on the list, are questions regarding the curriculum and study discipline mapping which are still raging and appear to be far from being settled.

## **Social aspects of Journalism Education**

The Southern African Development Community comprises of fourteen countries now . SADC started off as front line States which got together to protect themselves against apartheid South Africa in 1981. Seven of these countries achieved their independence during the first wave of the winds of change in the early 1960s. The two Lusophone countries in the Community got their independence after bitter armed struggle and the collapse of the Caitano regime in Portugal in 1974. The fight for independence in Zimbabwe and Namibia, ended in 1980 and 1990 respectively. It would take South Africa up to 1994 to transform from apartheid. This historical context has a direct impact on the context and format of the training and education of journalists in the region. The colonial communications policies channeled all media communication to their colonizing capitals. Very little communication was there among the countries themselves. Before independence the media reported on Africans and not for them. It was vital therefore that this state of media changes after independence.

The colonial legacy, divided the countries that make up SADC into four communication zones, with the following forming a broad top tier of official languages: English, Portuguese, Afrikaans and French. South Africa had a dual and overlapping Afrikaans zone after 1949. Namibia which was a German colony until after the First World war used mainly Afrikaans for official business and remains with a strong German cultural base until independence. The four colonial powers followed two different governing strategies: The Portuguese and the French used the assimilation strategy. The British used the indirect rule approach. The governing strategies adopted have tremendous impact on how the media operate in the given scenario. But all the powers controlled the dissemination of information tightly. In addition to the business languages, the region has more than one hundred and twenty indigenous languages and dialects.

Given the arbitrary method of the colonial land sub-division, each of these SADC countries has one or two languages which dominate the others. Almost all the countries have minorities within their borders, who otherwise would have been on the other side of their border, were ethnic boundaries followed. This has led to the development of politically dominant languages, and the new ruling group mentality. Some of these boundaries are a direct cause for political instability, as they have re-enforced the perception of the other, on those who speak different languages. But most importantly, the limited development of these languages as written languages, meant that they were not used for print journalism which was the only media genre available at the time. Language is a critical factor in journalism education.

Even though newspapers were introduced in South Africa in the 1860s, it was not until the 1890s that these newspapers got established north of the Zambezi. Most of these newspapers were not meant for the black readership. In South Africa, a few religious papers based right here in Grahamstown were published for Africans. One of the most important publications for blacks was by John Tengo Jabavu's, Invo Zabansundu and Sol Ptaatji,s African National Congress sponsored paper, who attempted to publish newspapers in local languages. It was not until 1952,

that Bailey's Drum was published in English, but focusing on black issues. Even in this case, the editor had to be imported from Britain. It is important to note that most of the reporters of the South African Cape Argus and the Star came from Britain too and were in effect self taught journalists who had degrees mainly in English.

In Central Africa, many newspapers sprouted and quickly faded due commercial factors. Cecil John Rhodes was instrumental in the development of the media from the Cape, Johannesburg, Palapye in Botswana to Salisbury (now Harare). But the funding and the English language journalists and printers were imported from the colonial metropolis, London.

It was not until 1931 that the first major newspaper for blacks was published in Central Africa. The Mirror/Isibuko/Chirangariro. It was published in English, Sindebele and Shona and distributed all over Southern Africa. Its editor was a white missionary, one, Garfield Todd, based at Dadaya Mission, about one hundred and fifty kilometers East of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. After the Second World War, there was a new impetus in African Nationalism and media, a few more organizations sponsored newspapers for blacks.

International developments fanned the flames of African Nationalism. The winds of change spread right through the continent. Many Media houses saw where future developments were going and began to sponsor newspapers for blacks. One of the most influential of these newspapers was the Daily Mirror sponsored by Central African Newspapers and the Daily News sponsored by a Mining syndicate. In the late 1950s and sixties genuine African opinions began to pop up in newspapers. Self taught black journalists, often teachers and correspondents were used. But many complained that there was too much editorial control which muzzled black voices. Major Newspapers in Zambia and Malawi were controlled from Rhodesia since it was where the headquarters of the Federation was. In brief, there were no journalists who were trained in Southern Africa Until after independence in the 1960s. This interestingly, applied to both blacks and whites.

The advent of Radio and television added a new dynamic to the training and education of journalists. Radio in general was introduced early in some countries of Southern Africa. In South Africa as early as 1923, Egypt about the same time and Zimbabwe, 1933. Television came much later in 1976 South Africa due to political perceptions. But journalism training still did not change much. Radio and television were regarded as government tools, whose sole mandate, the government dictated.

The longitudinal study examining Journalism Education in Southern Africa started from the premise that there was need for accurate information dissemination in the new global order. The free space thus created was problematic to interpret and understand. An effective media was therefore of paramount importance in unlocking the gig-saw puzzle for the majority of the people. Africa in general found itself wanting in many fronts. Particularly in information and education.

The dominant political terrain had not only changed but the power dynamics had shifted as the United States was left without a counter balancing power propellant. Africa was still locked in the Cold war myth of Communism versus Capitalism.

### **The birth of journalism studies ?**

Journalism training at the craft level has been around for a long time in Europe. But that is not the same at university level. In most cases, it evolved as Media/cultural studies. Media studies courses have been taken under many disciplines: Sociology, Psychology and the Languages. Early attempts in Europe to study the media and its effects, began in earnest in the 1930s. The Frankfurt School in Germany under, Max Horkheimer (Lunby & Ronning 1991) took the media debate to the United States after fleeing Nazism and then brought it back to Europe in the 1950s after the war. The development of the mass communication technologies after 1945 also saw mass communication developing as an important field of study. It is logical there for that subjects like broadcasting, radio and television, could not be offered until the technologies were available.

From 1945 up to about the early sixties, broadcasting, journalism and film were generally regarded as crafts and at best, as technical professions. They were taught as skills, and often confined to Technical Colleges. During this period, radio broadcasting and print journalism were developing rapidly, but separately until the advent of television which became popular in the fifties. Advancement of these technologies saw a convergence in not only print and sound but with pictures as well, due to the advent of the computer. The computer's marvelous ability to handle complex data has now made it possible to have multi- channel satellite television.

After the 1968 student uprising in many parts of the world and Europe in particular, there was a decline in University student numbers. Many University courses had become irrelevant. Many countries tried to find out new methods and courses to attract students into universities. In the UK, the Robins Commission (1968) was tasked with the job of reviewing the future of Universities. In the United States, project "Head start" was started. One of the Robbins Report's recommendations, was that new Universities be established to concentrate on new subjects. Topping the list of courses universities were to teach, were new courses: computing, electronics, film and media studies, journalism, Aquaculture, etc.

Many Universities were caught unawares by the decline of traditional subjects they neither had the staff nor the technologies they were supposed to use to teach. At the same time, many traditional courses were irretrievably affected and had to be radically transformed or closed down. Many academics, particularly in languages and Classics were retrenched or those who were able to, were retrained in order to cope with the new challenges. In some instances, new language courses were included in the University curriculum; Spanish, German, are just but some examples. Many affected members of staff in the UK for example were sent to the University of Manchester, where they did Masters degrees in Mass Media, Journalism, Media and broadcasting for the first time, before joining media departments. These courses were run under the auspices of the Sociology Department, which at the time was very vibrant. It was the view then that Cultural studies is not a fixed body of thought that can be transplanted from one place to another,... but rather, the place and relevance of cultural studies varies from context to context and has to be related to the specific character of local forms of political and intellectual discourse.

The above statement is very critical and relevant to universities in Africa in general today, which are charting fresh waters, of transformation and mergers. In the United States, France and the rest of Europe, similar trends were emerging. The Soviet Union and its satellite States were also emerging from the worst periods of the cold war. There was a need everywhere to redefine what media was. Needless to say that at this time too, there were “discipline turf wars”: those academics who came from languages, emphasized those aspects of media most close to them; ie. Communication, sociolinguistics. etc. . The sociologists emphasized those aspects affecting the rest of humanity; the media effects and audience research issues. Scholars from psychology formed yet another strand of media development, taking a lot from Freud and Piaget. It is important to note that there is no need for these turf wars as there is enough scope for everybody if programmes are carefully designed and indeed because of the convergence of the media.

Media impact studies had been popularized by the German Frankfurt School mentioned above, under the directorship of Max Horkheimer. The psychologists as indicated above were not left behind either. Many pursued Piaget and Sigmund Freud’s concepts of perception in order to create meaning. Later, many film scholars have used Jung’s research on psychoanalysis and De Saussure’s theories on linguistics to make films and documentaries, thus using theories from linguistics and psychology effectively. As the technologies developed, they became a subject of study themselves. Raymond Williams and Marshal MacLuhan are some of the leaders in this approach. As technologies become universally adopted, there is a need for policies, not only on how they should be utilized but on their impact on individuals and communities as well.. Media policies impact on people, societies and nations. These advances have led to the development of the International Telecommunications Union and many other regulatory bodies, which seek to maintain a harmonious relationship in the use of communication technologies. This has to happen, especially now, that it is no longer possible to control all messages as they are transmitted from a variety of sources through space.

The fundamental factor in all this, was culture. Media products were produced and consumed in cultural contexts, it was argued. Thus emerged the Cultural Studies movement. Media Studies grew as part of Communication and Cultural studies and now has established a place of its own. Whereas Cultural studies is broader and mature, media studies is new and focuses on the media, ideology, impact (communication) and effects. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably, but they are different and often contextual.

From the 1980s onwards, this mixed bag of courses has been broadly called “Media Studies”. Like technology, Media Studies has grown very fast and is now regarded by most scholars as a discipline on its own. But confusion is still evident. Departments are still more or less seeing that part of the “elephant” they want to see. However the leaders in this field have crystallized what they understand as media studies, to mean that core of subjects which lead to an understanding of the production, use and consumption of mass media products. This means that, the core of media studies subjects should lead students to be able know what mass media is; who uses media and why? They should be able to produce media products either in print or electronic form. That is the gist of the matter.

## **The Journalism education band wagon**

Before independence, as has been pointed out SADC countries did not have a black press. After independence, some countries like Zimbabwe merely inherited the wagon, painted their own colours on it and continued with the media as it was.

Relenting to pressure from industry in Zimbabwe since 1985, the University of Zimbabwe for example, initiated research into what curriculum they could adopt. (Sibanda, 1991). That research has been on-going, and is the basis of this paper. The then vice –Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe, Prof. Walter Kamba was extremely skeptical of Journalism and demanded solid research on what could be achieved before he could support, Journalism education. He was so adamant that he was prepared to send three members of staff for appropriate staff development overseas before a Post Graduate Diploma in Communication and Media Studies could be launched. Later, in the 1990s staff developed continued through a partnership with NORAD and the University of Oslo. Before the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) based in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe could introduce a Bsc. in Journalism, in 1999 it conducted extensive research and consultations right through Zimbabwe. Prof. Pheneas Makurane, the Vice-Chancellor realized the value of journalism but was equally cautious. When the curriculum, which was developed by an independent consultant was ready, Nust had problems getting the staff and the funds to teach it.

Only after two members of the Media and Technology department returned, did the University sanction the development of the Media and Journalism course. The core group which drove the project came from an eclectic group around the University: Educational Technology, Education, English and Sociology, Economics and a little bit of Law. The next problem was the housing of the new unit. There was intense discussion, lobbying, and even back stabbing in order to take control the project, but finally it was housed in the English Department, which promptly controlled the resources including annual travel exchange programmes to and from the University of Oslo, what the author termed Academic Tourism.

This brief sketch illustrates what Skejerdal and Ngugi (2007) say has been a result of fragmented initiatives sponsored by donors. Among the countries in SADC, South Africa the latest entrant to the current democratic order, seems to have made tremendous start up strides. This is because of its vibrant constitution and a large Media base with well over fifty National and local newspaper publications. The media climate in a given country is a critical factor in the development of critical Journalism Education. Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho, while being democracies of varying degrees, are not as accommodative of Journalism education as they publicly proclaim. There is sometimes ultra sensitivity to voices which do not resonate with the government live. While conducting this study in 1993, the author was detained on a highway while driving to Maseru airport because he had given a television discussion about the need for journalism Education and the media on Lesotho television. While it is critical that journalists maintain the public protector ‘eye’, some institutions driven by donors seem to over focus on

corruption. This sometimes affects the development of journalism education, as government reaction sometimes spills over to the Universities or journalism institutes. In Botswana, there was tremendous cooperation with the research project, until the name and the fate of the minorities surfaced, the Baswara and Kalanga. The media and journalism course at the University of Malawi, still bare the “scars” of the long and repressive Kamuzu Banda regime. It was based in the English Department.

In Swaziland, the Ministry of Culture did not open up beyond discussing the new television project. If fact much later, Rooney, (2007) in ‘Revisiting the journalism and mass communication curriculum: some experiences in Swaziland’ categorical states that ‘Swaziland is not a democracy’. This lack of democracy may not be that obvious to an outsider. In 1994, journalism education was limited to a diploma based in the English Department. The then Dean, Mr Simelane, was enthusiastic and pushed for the development of a degree in Media Studies, to include journalism. But expatriate staff, soon moved to South Africa. This is one major problem all over SADC. Namibia and Swaziland complain that they are always used by expatriate staff as conduits to move to South Africa.

Mozambique boasts that it has one of the most dynamic media constitutions in SADC, but it took more than two decades for the Journalism department to take off at Eduardo Mondlane University. In spite of the limited resources, in 2009, as this section of this study was drawing to a close, the department of media at Eduardo Mondlane, was the most well staffed in the region. It had about five hundred students and twenty five members of staff, all called professors. This was a clear indicator of the impact of the secondary factors, which are a more open political environment. During a final research visit in 2009, the researcher was sucked into the air of freedom around Maputo and walked around from restaurant to restaurant on foot and taxi. While in Maputo, two corrupt government ministers, were dragged to court for corruption, to the thrill of the media and the opposition. This does not happen often in Africa.

In the same period under review, Zimbabwe has registered the most regression, in freedom and repression of the media. The journalism Education inertia of the eighties and early nineties has gone. There are now about seven Institutions training and educating journalists. But all of them have almost no staff at all and certainly no recourses worth talking about. The fun fare which saw the introduction of journalism training at the Harare Polytechnic in 1982 with the support of UNESCO, has long evaporated. This emphasizes the point which Susan Greenburg (2007) makes about the impact of the political climate (primary factors) on Journalism education.

The visit to Augustino University in Angola in 1995 was an eye opener. As we moved into the arrivals hall, a colleague suddenly gave me her computer to carry. It was only later that I discovered that if I had mentioned that I had an interest in journalism, the laptop could have landed me into serious trouble. The trouble was waiting as I was getting out. I had to account for everything I had including my pen, which I refused to give away but was none the less searched thoroughly. At the departures point, a health certificate was demanded, and since I did not have



it, I was to undergo an injection. I paid up, to avoid the injection. This kind of climate affects media and journalists, and I have not been back yet.

The President of Augustino Neto University and the Minister of Education were extremely nice and pointed out to me the importance of communication zones in Journalism Education. They both indicated that even if they would have liked to collaborate with the rest of SADC in training journalists, their language and culture was a major hindrance. The Minister pointed out that they would rather cooperate with Mozambique, with whom they had something in common.

The President indicated that they were already working with Brazil, and that Brazilian media was much more vibrant than that in SADC. Of course it is of interest that the common bond they had with Mozambique and Brazil, was Portuguese colonialism. The concept of Communication zones has an impact on what primary and secondary factors have on journalism education.

As we queued to be processed at the unfinished arrivals hall in Dar as Salaam in 1992, I was amazed, as an Asian male in front of me, suddenly got animated. He was accompanied by two young women, they did not have visas. He slipped something in the officer's hand and the stamp promptly came down and they went through. Nyerere was still alive then, and I had tremendous respect for him. I was shell shocked that this corruption was happening in Tanzania. But as a news person would I report the incident in my newspaper? Effective journalism training must produce journalists who will help stop not only this rot but the bright too, as I discovered.

I failed to get a Taxi to take me to the Open University of Tanzania, and tried to walk there. I walked through the town. My police and people experience as I was accompanied to the University by a policemen is unforgettable. The people were extremely friendly and nice in spite of what appeared to me as poverty. It was found out that most of the materials in use for media/journalism students at the Open University, had been imported from the Open University UK and the University of Nairobi. These materials had little relevance to Tanzania per se but had a lot of relevance at the secondary level.

Skjerdal and Ngugi confirm that Kenya proved to have the most sophisticated media environment despite the autocratic government. Daystar University was among the first Universities to offer journalism at University level, through its American connections. But very little development was evident.

In tracing twenty years of journalism training of the Center for International Media Education (CIME) Teel (2007), identifies very similar critical factors which need scrutiny in this center's development. The critical stages were: 1986 – 1994, Development of curriculum. This was done through a variety of methods, which included overseas workshops and campus media forums. 1994 – 1997, securing funds and finding educators. 1997 to 2007, securing more funds, finding students and teaching. And yet they still experience challenges. An analysis of this one center's developments by Teel, highlights similar challenges to journalism education in the SADC region. The period under review in his paper is 1989 – 2009. This was a particularly turbulent period,

politically and economically. The Gorbachevian glasnost feat slid into the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Berlin wall. With the thawing of East West relations, most of Southern Africa lost its theoretical bearings. Whereas in the past SADC would merely push its problem matters to the UN, from about 2000, SADC is making a stand on issues affecting its members. The Zimbabwean problem Lesotho, Madagascar and so on. This shift requires the media, to report on issues, problem and give analysis. The success of the media in all this, depends on how the public views the media and the quality of those trained in journalism. The collapse of the global economy in October, 1998 has had a negative impact on the growth journalism schools. That and the opening up of the Eastern block, has seen donors' interests shift, East.

### **Current Initiatives in Journalism Education Research.**

This study began by default, because The University of Zimbabwe was very skeptical about introducing journalism education. The University firmly believed that journalism was a craft, and therefore a subject of Technical colleges. In 1990, there were only eleven SADC countries excluding South Africa, DRC, Mauritius and Madagascar. The researcher was instructed to visit all the SADC countries and selected overseas and record any important observations and trends. The first study visit was to the UK in February 1990. The institutions visited there were, The University of Stirling, The British Open University and the BBC in Scotland and London. This visit formed the basis of the initial report submitted to the Prof. W. Kamba the Vice –Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe. The critical observations from the UK were that the BBC still preferred graduates who had a solid arts education. They preferred that their journalists developed the BBC way, what ever that meant. They would take graduates from new universities with Media Studies as good candidates to learn on the job.

With that background visit, trips were undertaken between 1990 and 1995 to the Universities of Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Open University of Tanzania, University of Nairobi, (though not in SADC) University of Botswana, University of Swaziland, Kwaluseni Campus, University of Lesotho, University of Namibia, Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique), and Agostino Neto University (Angola). Prior to January 1993, no visits were made to South Africa, in fact the researcher could not allow his passport to have a South African entry stamp as this could jeopardize travels to some countries. The first visits to include South African Institutions was to the University of South Africa, in January 1993. In May the same year a one month study visit was conducted to the Centre for Cultural and media Studies at the University of Kwazulu-Natal.

The visits between 1990 and 1993 revealed that there was very little journalism education training in SADC at the University level at all, except for the University of Zambia. The department of Mass Communication in Zambia began in the early seventies.

The University of Zimbabwe organized a communications conference in September, 1993 at Masvikadei about a 100km west of Harare in order to review progress in the teaching of media and how communications. Even though this conference was not for journalism instructors only, the majority present were interested in Journalism education. Professor Francis Kasoma gave an interested report on journalism education in Zambia. All the SADC countries were represented except South Africa. Decisions were taken to collaborate in journalism education, and the Mozambique which chaired the SADC sector organ on Media and Communication would drive the process. Even though many donor

driven initiatives were undertaken in Mozambique, very little was achieved in coordinating tertiary level journalism education.

The second wave of study visits were conducted between 1996 and 2000. This was a very vibrant time in journalism education. All the SADC Universities were at varying stages of developing their media/journalism degree courses. There was tremendous improvement in the quality of staff, courses and enrolment. All the universities adopted the mixed mode. The University of Zimbabwe cooperating with the University of Oslo introduced a taught MA degree in Media Studies. On average, there were about twenty students majoring in journalism related subjects at each stage of the four year degree in each of the Universities. Those students taking journalism or media studies as a minor were in some cases as many as five hundred each year. New universities which introduced media courses were: The University of Botswana, Eduardo Mondlane, Lesotho, Solusi University, The National University of Science and Technology and the Midlands State University.

Another important development during this period, was the entry of South African Universities into the scene. Many of the universities revamped their curricula in order to be congruent with the times. A lot more international students were enrolled in South African journalism institutions, particularly, Rhodes. International scholars from SADC and everywhere were employed in order to show transformation.

From 2000 to 2009 visits were made to six institutions in the SADC . In order to check development in Journalism Education, visits were also made to Michigan State University, George Washington University, Harvard University and Boston University. In 2003, the researcher was invited by three SADC universities to spend three months in each University, in part to assist Media Departments review their curricula. But ended up spending almost six years at the University of Limpopo. During this time, I served as an external examiner in several SADC Universities. This was an opportunity to gain greater insight as to what was going on in journalism education.

Holistic Journalism Education Research in the SADC region has been limited. Europe has had the most influence on the development of Media Studies Departments in Africa. This is due to historical factors and the new global media scenario. Francophone regions in Africa, which are concentrated in the North have been influenced by developments in France. Anglophone Africa has been influenced by the British cultural studies tradition; the Sahel regions have remained close to the Islamic traditions with a heavy influence of American and French cultural studies especially in the oil producing regions.

Lusophone Africa has really remained in limbo due to the long periods of conflict after independence. They have also not escaped the American media imperialism inertia. The tradition of getting an education in Portugal seems to be still very prevalent. Brazil is influencing media Studies developments in a very limited way, at the Augustino Neto University in particular. There have been genuine cries about that “the media are American”. This implies that what we see and hear through the media is in the main dominated by American perceptions and Culture.

### **The state of journalism Education in the SADC region: through the key hole**

The questions raised by Dueze (2006) on the key factors of universal journalism education are critical in focusing our views about what is currently the state of journalism education in the Southern African region.

Dueze asked the following questions which will be used to pool the issues together:

- Why journalism education?
- What ideas guide journalism education?
- What is the position of journalism education vis-à-vis the profession and its publics?
- On what aspect of journalism is the education based?
- What are the ideal characteristics of those graduating?
- In what social context is the journalism education grounded?
- Is journalism a socializing or individualizing agent?
- What is the structural or preferred pedagogy, and why?
- How is the balance between practical and contextual knowledge resolved?
- How is journalism education organized?

The questions formed the core of the study.

The need for the peoples of Africa to be free and be self governing is self evident and has been central to this paper all along. Even the detours taken to report on some of the personal experiences in the different countries are meant to highlight this view. Journalists play a critical role in giving people voices.

In Africa, the Universities of Ibadan, Cairo, Kenya, Zambia, Rhodes and several others have been teaching Journalism since the early seventies. But Media Studies is a recent development. In Southern Africa, in the seventies, the University of Rhodes has been in the forefront of teaching Journalism courses, while the university of Natal has pioneered what can closely be called Media studies. South African Universities can not deny the impact of apartheid on media courses in particular, they really are in different stages of opening up in the last decade.

The University of Zambia was one of the pioneers of journalism education in Southern Africa to introduce a formal degree in mass communication. In Zimbabwe, journalists were always imported from the UK via South Africa due to ownership structures. Rhodesian papers were subsidiaries of the Argus group. They had similar editorial policies. Journalism courses began in Zimbabwe after independence in 1982, with a Diploma in Mass Communication at the Harare Polytechnic. Plans to introduce courses for senior Journalists began at the University of Zimbabwe in 1989. This led to the introduction of a Post Graduate diploma in Communication and Media Studies in 1992. This developed into a taught MA degree. The main reason for offering a taught MA degree is that, there is a need to develop expertise media in order to conduct independent research at MA level and above. It follows therefore that you cannot have good research degrees in a discipline where you have no expertise, even among the staff. All you will have are essays which follow the general research outlines but lacking depth.

The National University of Science and Technology in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe is offering a more technically oriented four year Journalism and media degree. This is because of the availability of expertise to teach subjects like broadcasting, computing and telecommunications theory and practice in other departments. The University of Botswana has also introduced Journalism and Media Studies degrees in the past ten years. Many other universities in Africa have Media courses as majors in

conjunction with Language subjects especially English and are facing problems on how to move forward due to shortages in staff.

Not all endeavors to develop media studies have been successful however; the University of Swaziland as been already alluded to above tried to introduce Media Studies in the early nineties. The course has not developed due to lack of staff and the one or two communication courses on offer are at the general level and still in the English department. At the University of Zimbabwe, as has been seen, tremendous strides have been taken in teaching media at the postgraduate level but no steps have been taken to introduce a media degree at the undergraduate level.

Research evidence showed how difficult it has been for African newspapers and other media to develop and be sustained. This coupled with the global recession has impacted negatively on donor dependent programmes.

### **Guiding ideas**

The introduction of journalism at most Universities was pushed by industry players. Those journalists who had gone through Technical colleges felt challenged by the younger journalists who came into the industry with degrees while they only had diplomas, and something with no formal qualifications in journalism at all. The experienced players felt that they had the experience while the new comers only had theory. Many experienced journalists will scorn at this but it really had some influence on the introduction of courses. But one should not under estimate the quest to improve the quality of journalism. In the late 1980s all the countries in the SADC complained that their newspapers were owned by outside forces and needed to change their ideological make up to keep up with the new freedom in the air. It will be noted that on this score, Nigeria helped Zimbabwe to buy out Argus which owned the majority shares in the Zimbabwean press at independence. The contradiction in some cases is that the government wanted to get its voice heard not that of the people. This is the source of the problems for the Zimbabwean media and journalism in general.

### **Professional standing**

In the early 90s, journalism and media Studies in SADC were perceived as glamorous. However newspaper journalism has never really been highly regarded within SADC. But media convergence has made it possible for print journalist, to find themselves in radio or even television.

One of the factors which has impacted on the profession, are technological developments. New media has penetrated SADC countries and this has expanded the availability of news sources. Students in all the universities find themselves technologically challenged. In Tanzania, it was found that internet was so affordable, and students and ordinary users spent a lot of time on the internet. While in Zimbabwe, internet is the most expensive when compared to other countries. In Zimbabwe it costs about US\$1 (one) to surf the net for thirty minutes. In the other countries, it is slightly less and yet in Tanzania, that one US dollar can take the consumer for the whole day. If the internet is unaffordable, people are pushed to get their news from the public media and other cheaper sources.

The price of newspapers is also another factor, especially national newspapers. The price has risen in all the countries. Again, Zimbabwe being the most expensive. Dailies, the Chronicle and the Herald, cost one US dollar each. Weeklies are US\$2.00. The steep increases in prices have seen a decline in newspaper

circulation which in some cases is balanced by online versions. The public's perception of news has also affected journalism education. Where there is repression, the public become suspicious if what they are getting is the truth.

### **Characteristics of grandaunts and staff.**

In the early 1990s, entrance to degree studies in journalism or Media studies was a matric certificate in South Africa, Ordinary level passes in Swaziland, Botswana and Lesotho. The rest of the SADC countries required six years of secondary education. The subjects required are English, (65%) and any other Arts subjects. These subjects varied from History, (40%) Geography, (15%) Local language, (55%) Afrikaans, (3%) Economics. (3%). Portuguese (2%) In Zimbabwe there is the basic requirement that entrants to degree studies should also have passed at least five Ordinary level studies including English and a Science subject. The emphasis on English, shows the colonial link to the press. There is an assumption that those studying media will be news reporters.

The duration of the degree courses vary between three years to and four years. Those Universities offering the four year Honours degree also have an aspect of industrial experience varying in length from a couple of weeks to a whole year as the case at the National University of Science and Technology and The Midlands State University in Zimbabwe and Rhodes University School of Journalism. Attempts to squeeze practical work in the three year degree has proved problematic in many institutions. The demand for more practical work time, emanates from the practical skills perspective observed by Ngugi. This is as a result of the convergence of the technical college education and universities from the 1990s in the UK.

The staff characteristics have changed a lot in most universities. Whereas in the 90s most Journalism educators were from an eclectic group of disciplines: Linguistics, English, Sociology, politics, history and education. The restructuring witnessed in British and other European Universities played its way into Southern Africa. As many other subjects in the classics were declining, communication studies were expanding. So it was natural that those who could, were retrained and given media teaching duties. In several Universities, there were no retraining opportunities. Retrenched staff either sank or swam. In the Early 1990s mixed mode courses in journalism taught the following subjects in addition to the other subjects they were taking from the main department or Faculty.

- Print Journalism . Press history
- Media and Society . Editing
- New Media . Media Theory
- Radio . Advertising
- Television . Public relations
- Film . Computer literacy

In general, journalism education meant teaching the traditional discipline capped with practical oriented courses like the ones listed above. But this has all changed now. Journalism is much more demanding. Simple computer literacy courses have now been replaced by *Information Science, Media Economics, Communication in History Studies, etc.* It may be the time that journalism matures into its own and not rely entirely of the craft side. Tremendous steps have been observed in the new millennium. Many more universities have staff trained up to PhD level in various areas of specialization in journalism and media

studies. This development has had a revolutionizing effect on the courses being taught and ultimately change in the focus of the course.

### **Balance between practical and pedagogy**

Teaching has improved much in the new millennium. The subjects taught are much more grounded in journalism. Subjects like “Critical media theory, Information Science, Globalisation, Global media etc. are now common in the curriculum. The experience all over Africa is that it is easier to find an academic to teach the more theoretical courses than the practical. Students lament the lack of hands on experience. This brings into question whether universities are actually the right places to do this. Perhaps it is about time Technical colleges and Universities struck a new partnership as regards the question of practical skills.

Several universities are using what is referred to as “sandwich” mode. In two Universities, students go on attachment for the whole year. The real draw back is that there are very few relevant media houses in SADC which can effectively absorb all the students. In most countries except South Africa, there is one small national broadcaster and very few newspapers or media houses for students to go to. In any case the attachment is limited to Honours students. There is very little chance that those who take a three year journalism degree subsidiary subject will have enough time or places for practical or industrial attachment. There are however serious reservations by some academics on the value of this attachment. It is claimed that students spend their time doing menial work or making tea for the boss. There is no doubt that the effectiveness of practical work will vary from situation to situation.

It is sometimes easier at the beginning when numbers are small to place students on industrial attachment, but it becomes much more difficult as the numbers grow, and initial excitement by concerned industry wears off. As an example, it was discovered in one university where attachment was a requirement that students were placed in meaningless positions, and many never bothered to go. Two universities who are part of this study, initially introduced industrial attachment but have since abandoned it due to logistical challenges. What was worse, no staff member in the departments wanted to coordinate industrial attachment. Nust seems to have managed this process fairly well. This has been possible because the University has an industrial liaison office which assists departments with placement and supervision.

### **Preferred pedagogy and organization**

The general observation made by Skjerdal and Ngugi (2006) was confirmed in the SADC region too. Organizationally, most journalism education is still of mixed mode. This is to be expected if journalism is to be accepted as an academic discipline. All institutions still rely on lectures, tests and assignments as media of instruction. Students and even lecturers complain about the quality of teaching and research.

In most Universities visited, classes are large. First year classes are about three hundred and fifty on average. Final year classes have about a hundred students (100). With a staff of four, this is clearly unsustainable. Large classes and unsupportive administrative systems were cited as the reason why many young lecturers leave. The question of enrollment needs cautious handling as it was found out that many Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities use media/communication/journalism to attract students into other declining courses. One University which had a total enrollment of about eight hundred and fifty students in Media Studies and over a hundred at third year level, had only graduated fifteen

students with clear majors in journalism. Over sixty percent of the students who filled in the evaluative questionnaire complained bitterly that they were not aware that they would graduate in a different degree not journalism or media studies. It was this group which registered the most negative comments about their courses. They wondered why they had never had any practical work. Of course this view has to be balanced by the fact that there are several other universities which are doing well.

There is an attempt to develop staff by engaging post graduate students as tutors . This was viewed by those involved as a wonderful idea. They lamented the fact that most of these tutorials were unstructured and therefore their effectiveness limited. 90% of all the Journalism department visited pointed out that their post graduate courses by research were below expectations. All these universities offer research masters and Doctorates. But they do not have adequate resources. Students' attrition and drop out rate is very high in all the universities. Those who complete and graduate, do not always join the teaching profession. The three universities offering a taught degree, seen to be getting a higher though put rate. This should say something in the present climate.

A related question may be about where journalism graduates go. The study estimated that in the past twenty years, well over a thousand graduates with journalism majors have completed their course. Many thousands more have studied journalism in one way or the other. Most graduates (65%) have been employed by government, municipalities and other public organization. The rest are employed in industry, but a very insignificant number actually join the journalism profession. The rest go into public relations, advertising and even the new media industries. Those who believe that they have entered the journalism profession often start out as DJs in radio, then they move into television. Few move from television or radio into print but there is a lot of movement from print into the electronic media.

## **Conclusion**

It was humbling to find out that the challenges facing university level journalism education are the same across Africa, they are universal as Ngugi and others have found out. The institutions are enrolling far too many students than they can handle. Staff still has to be developed. But there is a worrying attrition rate as far as staff is concerned. Staff move to well paying jobs in industry and sometimes in government.

This research pointed to the need of developing one or two SADC institutions as not just centres of excellence in journalism education (which often invokes negative nationalist feelings) but those which can focus on the training and education of Journalism Lecturers. This can be done at institutions already offering a taught masters degree. Perhaps it may even be more attractive to offer a Post Graduate Diploma or Masters in journalism Education.

The lack of adequate funding is a perennial issue in higher education in the new millennium. Those Universities which have the cord with private industry seem to be doing well. Those that have relied on donors need to look elsewhere for their funds ever since the global recession. Most donors who are active in the journalism sector get their money from their governments. Due to the recession and policy shifts money for journalism seems to be dwindling. Almost 80% of journalism schools offer fee waivers for post graduate students. This was initially to encourage gifted students to advance media and journalism in particular. Given that graduates move into other sectors after completing their studies, the policy on fee waiver at this level may need to be reviewed. This affects mainly South African Universities, who get reimbursed by government on successful candidates. This aspect needs further investigation in order to



justify the economics of supporting these students in the current mode. Because easy media access to people and media convergence, it is critical that we rethink the way we teach journalism. Perhaps it is not as exclusive as we think.

Finally, this researcher had a humbling experience. A former student was walking briskly across the street when he noticed me. He turned and greeted me enthusiastically. But before I could ask him what he was doing he exclaimed, “prof.. I am still looking for a job. I have moved to this small town in the past weeks because Joburg (sic) is hard. I have no place to stay, At least here, I have someone I can live with. You remember that I got distinctions in journalism. Nobody even wants to look at my certificates. Now I am just looking for any job”. Perhaps it is not wrong after all to teach journalism across disciplines. Those students with other subjects seem to be getting absorbed in other sectors. It is just a thought. As we fill the journalism classes to the brim, perhaps we should spare a thought as to where they will go after university.

---

## References

- Deuze , Mark (2006) Global journalism education, A conceptual approach, *Journalism Studies*, Vol. 7 No 1 pp19 -34
- Greenburg, Susan (2007) Theory and practice in journalism education, *Journal of Media practice* vol.8 number 3 pp 289 – 302.
- Kovach, Bill & Rosentiel, Tom. (2003) *The elements of Journalism*, The Guradian/ Atlantic Books, London
- Rooney, Richard (2007) Revisiting the journalism and mass communication curriculum: some experiences from Swaziland, *African Journalism Studies*, Vol. 28 No.1&2 pp. 207 – 221.
- Shaw, Ibrahim Seaga (2009) Towards an African journalism model: A critical Historical perspective, *International Communication Gazette*, 2009: 71; 491.
- Sibanda Bhekimpilo & Northcot, P (1989) Distance Education in the Southern African Development Community, *Distance Education International*, Vol. 3 No.1, pp. 19 - 30
- Sibanda, Bhekimpilo, (1991) Teaching Media studies: A report to the Vice- Chancellor, University of Zimbabwe, unpublished report.

Skjerdal, T. & Ngugi, Charles, M. (2007) Institutional and governmental challenges for journalism education in East Africa, *African Journalism studies*, Vol 28 No. 1&2 pp. 176 – 189.

Skjerdal, Terje (2009) Between Journalism Universals and Cultural particulars: Challenges facing the development of a journalism programme in an East African context, *Journal of African Media Studies*, Vol. 1 no. 1 pp. 23 -34.

Teel, Leonard Ray (2007) Journalism Education in a global context: The Center for international Media Education, *American Journalism*, Vol 24 No. (4) pp. 175 - 191.

Wasserman, Herman (2005) Journalism education as transformative praxis, *Ecquid Novi*, Vol. 26 No. 2 pp. 159 -174.