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Re-conceptualizing journalism and media studies in Africa

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Abstract
The education sector in Africa, including the relatively new communication and media studies, is undergoing major changes, in parallel with global trends. However, the study and teaching of media education, as of other academic fields, has continued to be undermined by colonial legacy as well as economic difficulties and political challenges. Many decades after independence not many African journalists are fully trained to meet the challenges of journalism in the 21st Century. This paper explores ways in which the teaching and study of media in Africa, as seen by those teaching and researching it, could be re-conceptualized in line with new local and international demands.

Introduction:
This paper explores ways in which the teaching and study of media in Africa, as seen by those teaching and researching it, could be re-conceptualized to make it more responsive to local and international demands.

While the notion of 'African' is not unproblematic, it is fair to suggest that beyond differences in histories in the continent's 54 countries there is a shared concern about former colonial powers continuing to dominate education sector. As recently as the 1990s, this consensus was manifest in what was seen as a new awakening in Africa, born out of disillusionment and resentment of Western domination in intellectual, political and economic terms (Mafeje, 1992). African scholarship has engaged critically with Eurocentric approaches and in the area of

media, this has meant rejecting the universalising pretensions of Western theorising and evidence, including paying more attention to neglected 'indigenous' forms of communication and languages (Salawu, 2006). The growing body of literature on endogenous forms of communication and how they can be used for human development can be seen as a specific response to continued Eurocentricism in African education[1] (Ugboajah, 1985; Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005; Banda et al, 2007).

Africans have for long been misrepresented, both in history and in the academy (Mudimbe, 1988). Colonial domination in education matters because it makes Africa more 'amenable to control by Western social and cultural influences' (Mukasa and Becker, 1992: 36). Debates among African scholars have focused on the meaning and relevance of existing media education in Africa (Chimutengwende, 1988; M'Bayo and Nwanko, 1989). A review of mass communication research in west Africa by Edeani (1988), covering the period 1930s-1980s, noted that much of the excitement that attended the emergence of communication and media research activities in the 1960s appeared, as early as the 1970s, to have given way to a sober reflection over what African research was offering social science and Africa:

> A number of searching questions began to be asked: Was that research advancing scientific knowledge as it was supposed to be doing? Was the research capable of serving the social, economic, political, cultural, and other developmental needs of Africa? And were foreign Africanists really genuinely committed to the study of Africa as an intellectual pursuit or were they involved for certain ulterior motives? (ibid: 57).

Although these questions were not adequately answered, continued 'soul-searching' helped uncover further epistemological issues, mainly about the

[1] Africans particularly resented 'the most often mistaken impression that the Western text and Western ways of making meaning are universal, and therefore, to be copied by academics the world over' (Nyamnjoh,1999: 17-18).

continued importation to Africa of theories and measuring instruments developed in and for Western societies. To illustrate the magnitude of this problem, out of a survey of 20 randomly selected papers read at a 1987 communications conference in Nigeria, 87 per cent of citations were from Western sources, suggesting strong evidence of Western-dominance in African media education (Mukasa and Becker, 1992: 36). Such evidence clearly showed that Western 'liberal-democratic' perspectives dominated existing scholarship on the media's role in post-colonial African societies (Wasserman, 2006). The solution to the domination of Western knowledge systems in media studies requires more than 'decolonization' (Ngugi, 1986) or 'de-Westernization'[2] (Curran and Park, 2000). There is need to incorporate history in a dual sense: specific African cultural histories on the one hand and accompanied by an honest discussion of the academic history of existing concepts and approaches[3]. African media studies, as suggested by McMillin (2007: 194), must go beyond the present and 'draw in the residual function of colonial pasts or religious and traditional structures, in informing how viewers interpret and make use of media technologies and texts'.

The problem in media education is that it was firmly entrenched in the European colonial system in Africa. Journalism and mass communication were based on 'teaching materials, trainers and curricula from the respective colonizing powers whose policies were to ensure the dominance of their [European] culture in their colonial enclaves' (Mukasa and Becker, 1992: 41). Early African media education, therefore, saw syllabuses transplanted into training institutions, for example, with the Jackson College of Journalism (now the Department of Mass

[2] The solution is not to de-link African media studies from international media studies but to focus on critical local academic work while making links with other regional media studies networks. In saying this, I am inspired such academic journals as *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, which among other things, sees its role as responding 'to the re-centering of cultural studies outside the Anglo-American axis and participates(-ing) cultural politics at a local level, but with an international agenda'.

[3] Downing has observed how certain concepts have enjoyed the privilege of academic scrutiny over the decades: '[I]deology and the state were big in the 1970s, hegemony and discourse in the 1980s, and information society and public sphere in the 1990s, identity and globalization and civil society in the 2000s' (cited in McMillin, 2007: 194).

Communication), super-imposing its entire curricula on the University of Nsukka, Nigeria. American universities, funded by substantial American aid, supplied the structure, staff and much of the university curricula, including an entire journalism programme and, in some cases, the journalists themselves, who were mostly Western-trained (Mukasa and Becker, 1992). Western media theories and concepts based on 'liberalism, rationalism, realism and pragmatism' are not always applicable to Africa, yet Africa has continued to rely on the West for communication syllabuses and theories (Ndlela, 2007). UNESCO has raised concern about the implications of Westernized forms of training in Africa:

> The source of inspiration of teachers, curricula and textbooks is Western. Teachers are mostly Western educated, curricula are drawn from Western models and most textbooks are authored and published in the West and North America. Under these circumstances, communication training in Africa can hardly be said to be culturally relevant, although cultural inculcation was usually the main justification for its introduction and sustainability (UNESCO, 2002: 1).

The dominance of Western models in African media education has far-reaching consequences. Even in fairly advanced African nations such as South Africa, journalism and media were accused of being 'firmly grounded in a Western epistemology influenced by the Enlightenment and thus with an emphasis on observable and measurable facts, and on individualism' (Fourie, 2005:15). The very codes of ethics and professional values used by journalists in Africa today are heavily inspired by Western or Western-derived international codes: though some apply to Africa, most imported codes tend to dwell in the main on issues of relevance to the West[4] (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 87). However, it remains crucial that

[4] Couldry has suggested that one should not argue for de-nationalization or de-Westernization but rather for 'global media ethics' whose aim is to generate an entirely new discourse whose reference points are, from the outset, global: 'Global media ethics asks: what things should media professionals - in fact anyone who makes inputs to the media process - aim for, if media are to contribute to us living a good life, both individually and collectively'. This view is premised on the

those who make inputs in African mass media are guided by socio-historical and cultural values that condition the production of knowledge (M'Bayo and Nwanko, 1989; Ronning and Kupe, 2000). Some have suggested rethinking communication, journalism and media studies in terms of 'African-based epistemology' (Fourie, 2005: 15). South Africa, to its credit, has initiated broad and deeper debates on the meaning and relevance of its media education[5] (Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli, 2007). However, it is important to briefly map out other problems facing media studies in Africa.

Major problems impeding the academic study of media in Africa mainly result from the lack of a coherent policy on the nature and distribution of media education centres. More than two decades ago, Zimbabwean scholar Chimutengwende (1988) pointed out how countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and Egypt had more than two media training institutions covering both mid-career training for graduates who want to enter the communication field. He suggested that 'ideally there should be at least one national communication training centre in each country for mid-career training under a ministry of information apart from the in-service training programmes of individual media organizations' (Chimutengwende, 1988: 39). He observed that existing communication institutions were too few and not well distributed geographically: 'The few which exist lack adequate facilities, funds and are under-staffed. They are, therefore, not well prepared for the tasks for which they were established. They cannot as yet train enough media educators, practitioners, researchers, administrators, planners, technicians and other categories of media workers' (ibid: 40).

Such problems have multiplied or evolved into new ones, as will be shown below. Apart from a Western-dominated theoretical base there is little agreement in

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fact that 'everyone is affected by the way the media represent the world and its divisions' (Couldry, 2007: 249).

[5] An example is the two major meetings of South African journalism educators organised by Rhodes University in 2004 and 2005. For a discussion of the history of communication debates in South Africa see Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli, 2007.

terms of what and how media should be taught, resulting in different emphases among the existing journalism and communication training programmes. For example:

> In east and southern Africa, except South Africa, the emphasis is mainly on skills training with print and broadcast journalism, advertising and public relations dominating the curricula. In west and central Africa, as well as in South Africa, the curricula generally combine theoretical and practical courses. Programmes offered range from certificate and diploma courses and the Bachelor of Arts/Science in east, central, west and southern Africa to the Doctor of Philosophy in Nigeria and South Africa (UNESCO, 2002: 2).

It is possible to understand the above variations in training in terms of historical, political and regional factors. There are historical differences dating from the carving out of Africa by European powers at the Berlin conference in 1884, which created rigid vertical lines of command with little lateral interaction between African institutions, countries and regions:

> Thus the French colonies became an extension of the French colonial culture and social system. The communication education curriculum in Francophone Africa was modelled after schools of journalism in Paris, Lille and Strasbourg (Domatob, 1989). Students from journalism schools in Senegal and Cameroon did their third year in France, Britain, or North America, especially Quebec in Canada. The same applied to colonial empires of the British, the Belgians and the Portuguese. It is not surprising that communication and transport structures in colonial Africa linked the colonies directly with their colonial overlords with little or no lateral links or networks… In this respect communication education and journalism practice produced practitioners who had a tunnel vision about the world around them - not only in neighbouring countries but also in rural areas.

> They were essentially urban elites with strong organic ties to their colonial metropoles where they often went for internship or further training (Mukasa and Becker, 1992: 40-41).

This elitist tendency in media education has not gone away in postcolonial Africa, partly because of staff shortages and inadequate media training facilities. Well-trained, competent and experienced educators are subjected to extremely poor working conditions and low salaries. As a result staff turnover is high as many opt to join the private sector. The media studies programme at the University of Zimbabwe, formed in 1994, has lost all but one of its founding staff members to jobs elsewhere. Young staff members left because they were failing to provide for their families on monthly salaries that averaged less than $100. Those who stayed behind have had to 'moonlight' in the non-governmental sector. There was even a joke suggesting that such academics worked from, rather than for the University of Zimbabwe.

The recurrent shortage of relevant basic teaching resources for media courses is another issue that has made research and teaching exceedingly difficult. The few available textbooks are not enough for the huge classes and in any case they are published and written principally for 'Western' communication studies. For African media students and teachers the harsh reality is that:

> The content of these publications is, thus, often irrelevant to the social, political, economic and cultural reality in African countries. Besides, the textbooks are insufficient in quantity and variety, partly because of prohibitive costs. Apart from the textbooks, other teaching and training materials including libraries, radio and television studios, photographic laboratories, computers, printing machines and other equipment are rare in many African communication training institutions. It is evident then that

communication training in African countries faces a catalogue of problems of which curriculum improvement is only a part (UNESCO, 2002: 2).

Researching journalism and media studies in Africa

Doing research on media studies in Africa is made difficult by poor communication facilities as most training institutions in Africa do not have (functioning) web presences (Berger and Matras, 2007). What follows is based on information gathered in 2007 from research visits to the University of Lagos, University of Ibadan in Nigeria, Uganda's Makerere University, University of Zimbabwe, National University of Science and Technology (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe), Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg. At the time of writing the author was acting as an external examiner at two of the universities under study. Some of the evidence is from the author's experiences as a graduate media student in 1994 and later as a lecturer in the English and Media Studies Department, University of Zimbabwe. For research on South Africa, particularly useful were documented resources on journalism studies, especially papers presented at the 2004/2005 colloquium on 'Teaching of South African Journalists: 1994-2014' held at the University of Rhodes. The paper also benefited from on-going debates about media studies, both in and outside of Africa[6].

Survey of issues in journalism and media studies in sub-Saharan Africa

The study of communication and media has been in existence in Africa for many decades (Bourgault, 1995; Akinfeleye and Okoye, 2003; Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli, 2007). In sub-Saharan Africa, the Ghana Institute of Journalism, established in 1959, was the first journalism institution in the region. African independence in the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the growth and development of journalism training schools (Mukasa and Becker, 1992: 42). Among the oldest is the mass communication programme at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), the

[6] The Internationalizing Media Studies conference, organized by Daya Thussu and his colleagues at the University of Westminster in September 2006 is a good example of these initiatives.

‘home of mass communication,’ established in 1964. This arose from a regional meeting of African broadcasters organised by UNESCO, which recommended the establishment of a regional African radio and television training centre in Nigeria (Interview with staff at UNILAG, June 2007). Subsequently, the UNDP, UNESCO and the government of Nigeria started the programme at the University of Lagos in 1966. Throughout Africa, similar university level courses were introduced under different names: Communication and Language Arts (at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria); Media Studies (University of Botswana), Journalism and Media Studies (National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe and Rhodes University in South Africa); Mass Communication (University of Lagos in Nigeria and Makerere University in Uganda). At the University of Zimbabwe, the Media Studies Programme in the English Department offers specific media degree and diploma courses to graduate students. Other African universities offer separate courses both in media and journalism, as is the case at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. The programmes were first established in 2001, under the leadership of Zimbabwean Tawana Kupe (formerly of the University of Zimbabwe and Rhodes University). The media studies option in 2002, its second year, attracted 100 students. The University of Witwatersrand’s Postgraduate Journalism and Media Studies programme was reshaped in 2002, with honours and masters degree programmes being offered, following the appointment of Anton Harber, co-founder of the *Weekly Mail* (now *Mail and Guardian* newspaper) and now professor in journalism (interview, Johannesburg, 23 August 2007).

The Mass Communication degree programme at Makerere University, introduced in 1988, is an example of foreign involvement in the establishment of media training in postcolonial Africa. This came about through support from the United States Information Agency (now United States Information Service) through its Fulbright programme, which was influential in the establishment of the course, originally hosted by the Literature Department at Makerere University. American trained lecturers in the Mass Communication department, together with

practitioners drew up the first curriculum and helped with the recruitment of staff. For the first few years, the American Embassy offered scholarships for staff to be trained in the United States, donated books and materials and sent staff on the Fulbright exchange programme. Its name and course content had a clear American bias.

The Department of Communication and Media studies at Nigeria's Ajayi Crowther University started degree-level training in media in 2007 under 'Mass Communication'. According to its Head: 'We decided to retain the name Mass Communication for the programme so that we can remain within the ambit of the National Universities Commission which regulates University programmes in Nigeria' (Interview, July 2007). It can be argued that such new departments, although headed by locally-trained staff, are good evidence of the reproduction of foreign-inspired programmes in Africa especially when they uncritically adopt materials and syllabuses produced by early programmes set up by foreign agencies.

The purpose of journalism and media studies in Africa

The primary objective of media studies in Africa, according to my respondents, was both 'professional and academic'. It was pointed out that research and teaching should engage and critique existing 'theories, with the option to accept it, debunk it or improve on/contextualise it. Its role should also be to prepare scholars and practitioners so that they become relevant to both African and Global theoretical and practical realities' (Interview with teaching staff, Makerere University, 20 August, 2007). Staff at the University of Lagos, whose four-year degree programme catered for media, public relations, advertising and marketing. believed that media studies should focus on using the media for development, a sentiment echoed by Head of department at Ajayi Crowther University, who suggested that media must dwell on 'issues that are of relevance to African needs, society and culture' (Interview, 23 May 2007).

At Makerere University, media studies helped teach the 'political and media history of their respective country, region'; and the continent as a whole; 'issues/challenges of professional' practice; and the area of communication for development. The medium of radio (the emphasis in Uganda is on the print media), it was argued, should receive more focus in the curricula. It was also suggested that it had become necessary to be more responsive to the needs of employers, as one staff noted: 'We mostly target the mainstream media industry in Uganda as well as the public relations sector. Recently, we have been more deliberate about training communication practitioners to work for NGOs and other development agencies' (Interview, 20 August, 2007).Others posited that media studies syllabi should pay more attention to 'the role of the local languages in making the media meaningful for a participatory democracy' (Interview with teaching staff, 20 August, 2007). One lecturer wanted to see more research by African scholars on Africa's indigenous knowledge, which has not been properly harnessed: 'We should not look down on African traditional knowledge as primitive or useless!' (Interview, 20 August, 2007). The same point was made more forcefully by the head of department at the University of Ibadan, when he stated that: 'African traditional knowledge system should provide the bedrock of communication studies in Africa. It should explore the possibilities of exogenous and endogenous communication systems' (Interview, 23 May, 2007). The above views demonstrate the need to re-conceptualize the purpose and goal of existing media studies on the continent, making it draw more meaningfully from the local and global, so that it could engage with the changing needs of Africa.

The composition and role of staff in journalism/media studies departments

In the institutions surveyed, not all staff were adequately trained to cover key aspects of media studies. This was particularly so at Makerere University

'At the theoretical level, depending on where they did their postgraduate studies, some may have a [theoretical] grounding in the behavioural paradigm, while only a smaller number had a background in the 'critical' or 'postmodernist' paradigms. The majority of staff's training leans towards mainstream media practice, and

particularly the print media. At Ajayi Crowther staff had not been sufficiently trained to cover all aspects of the course, with a relatively smaller number focusing ‘on communication as opposed to journalism’ (Interview, July 2007).

As for the role of media studies teachers one staff said: ‘I believe one important role media teachers have in African intellectual development is to generate theory that takes cognisance of African political, social, economic and cultural realities and popularise it through research and dissemination of this research through their teaching, conferences and publication’ (Interview, Makerere University, 20 August 2007). At the University of Ibadan, it was felt that media studies teachers in Africa should advance the cause of African intellectual development by paying more attention to democracy and development, through communication. The role of African media departments should be to help produce ‘indigenous’ media texts. The theoretical and evidential basis of media studies was meant to be worked out from a synthesis of the ‘past and present’, ‘African and non-African’ scholarly traditions and from taking cognisance of African realities: ‘It should certainly not be an unquestioning adaptation of theory handed to us via available textbooks’ (Interview, Makerere University, July 2007). Media studies had a role in helping ‘improve the level of discourse about the media, and explore the dialectics involved in media offerings’ from local and global perspectives (Interview, University of Lagos, 23 May, 2007). The main challenge and impediment to achieving these goals was the limited resource base at most institutions.

Resources for journalism and media studies in Africa

The study was also keen to discover the rationale for choosing reading lists at the departments visited. Staff at Makerere University revealed that most of their existing ‘course content is developed by staff who teach that [particular] course’. Staff who take over courses from others are not always keen to amend/update the courses developed by their predecessors. The prevailing tendency is to ‘follow’ the existing syllabus (Interview, July 2007). Access to up-to-date books

was a general problem. There was limited access to publications from other regions in the South. In some cases, existing texts were outdated. At Ajayi Crowther University, students were using 'mostly foreign (American) books' but because of the local publishing industry, the students would sometimes access work by Nigeria authors. At the University of Lagos funds to buy foreign books were not adequate and as a result students had to use locally-produced books. At Makerere University too staff were worried about the lack of access to texts: 'The basic [undergraduate] textbooks would be similar to the standard textbooks used in an American undergraduate class. However, our graduate classes are more open to journals from all parts of the world and have access to recent African scholars' work. It is helpful that some members of staff have studied in South Africa and that we have had external examiners hailing from east, central and southern Africa. These normally infuse some 'Africanness' in our repertoire of teaching/reference materials' (Interview, July 2007). It should be added that at Makerere staff had access to foreign media journals and were provided with local and international publishing opportunities. Some were using their own publications in their teaching.

Internationalizing journalism and media studies in Africa

The above discussion shows that media studies in Africa is perhaps too internationalized: most syllabuses were conceived abroad, most students and staff are still trained abroad, major books and theories used are mainly written by Westerners for Western students in the first instance. The study sought to investigate this issue further by asking questions about the role played by African media scholars located in the West. In Nigeria, it was felt that on-going internationalization of the discipline would lead to a healthy 'cross-pollination of key ideas' and lecturers are as result, getting increased opportunities to train abroad, attending conferences and publishing in leading journals.

Internationalization was also benefiting Zimbabwe's National Science University, where in 2007 four staff were awarded grants for PhD-training in Britain, US and

South Africa and a Fulbright professor was seconded to teach in the department of journalism and media studies. Witwatersrand media studies programme had employed Zimbabwean academics trained in Norway, with one assuming the position of executive dean of the faculty. A Kenyan professor was also teaching in the department. Similarly, the media studies programme at the University of Zimbabwe has involved teaching staff, external examiners and students from other countries, especially from Nigeria, Norway, Britain, Kenya and Netherlands.

Increased internationalization and networking was seen as positive at Makerere University: 'African scholars based in the West could play a linking role between African and Western universities, in terms of staff exchanges, with the idea that African staff can share some African insights/experiences with their Western colleagues and their Western colleagues can share experiences with African universities and because they understand the conditions and needs in Africa. African scholars living in the West could also help identify relevant teaching/learning resources. They could also be key partners in collaborative research that gives a more balanced picture of the realities in the area of media studies' (Interview, Makerere University, August 2007).

Ugandans also wanted to establish partnerships with Asian scholars. It was felt that African media teachers could go for further studies in India and China. One respondent suggested that China should put some of its profits from increased trading with Africa into 'communication and cultural research'. The above problems should not be used to generalise about media education in Africa, as challenges and prospects are different from one country to another and to some extent between regions.

Media studies in South Africa: a model case

South Africa could be considered a model case for the rest of the continent in that it has a big 'community of media trainers' in constant dialogue about trends, prospects and future directions of media training in the country and in Africa as a

whole. For years, communication and media issues have been debated in such journals as *Rhodes Journalism Review*; *Critical Arts: A Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* (KwaZulu Natal University) and *Ecquid Novi* (Stellenbosch University), which in 2007 re-launched as *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* (Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli, 2007). Two major colloquia about teaching of journalism were organized in October 2004 and June 2005 at Rhodes University to 'foster timely dialogue among teachers, and between them and industry, at significant moment in South African history; Renew and deepen the community of journalism educators at tertiary level' (Berger, 2005: 2).

The colloquia showed that although advanced, South African media education had its share of problems, including the poor quality of students in media education. Media training departments have to enrol under-prepared students because of 'enormous market pressure from students and their families looking for qualifications that will give them immediate employment opportunities' (Gibbon, 2005) This has parallels with Makerere University where dwindling government support in 2007 prompted the department to offer more donor-driven courses so that it could attract regional students and donor-funding. Withdrawal of donor-funding at the University of Zimbabwe has meant that media studies programme chooses students according to their ability to pay rather than on academic merit. Another major challenge for South African universities is how to make media educational institutions 'fit for purpose' in a democratic society. This means having to (re-) define their missions so that they become relevant to post-apartheid reconstruction (Berger, 2005: 17).

The post-1994 democratic context has compelled South African academics to rethink journalism studies and media education and emphasise the need for media education with a progressive agenda to effect social intervention and change (Wasserman, 2005). Emerging out of debates is the question about indigenisation/Africanization of media education, inviting increased focus on the 'history, symbolic forms, culture (s), achievements and needs of Africa' as well as

involving ‘decolonizing the mind... a break with and questioning of Western epistemology (ies) as the foundation of thinking reality …’ (Fourie, 2005: 15). In such arguments there is an implied rejection of excessive Westernization at the expense of the local. African concepts such as *ubuntu*[7] should be debated, with intellectual skills preceding but not replacing professional training.

One major problem in South Africa, as well as in other African countries ‘is the lack of debate and self-reflection about paradigms, and about the field itself. Little discussion occurs on the relationship between journalism education, or media studies, to broader social issues…Adopting canons, rather than debating their relevance, seems to be an overriding imperative’ (Tomaselli and Shepperson,1999: 238). Nyamnjoh expresses disappointment with how ‘scholars of and in Africa have, in the main, championed Western intellectual hegemony, instead of restructuring, modifying, enriching and remodelling existing concepts and theories in order to accommodate the broader experiences and contextual variations that the continent offers’ (1999: 16). The theoretical ‘poverty’ discussed above could be a result of many factors that include poor training and a lack of attention to conditions in the African context. UNESCO has attempted to redress such problems in its model curricula discussed below.

The ‘model’ curricula for journalism and media studies in Africa

UNESCO has developed ‘model curricula’ for degree and non-degree level communication training in Africa, necessitated because ‘a number of issues seem to place Africa more at a disadvantage than other regions of the world with regard to the capacity to properly manage the transition from largely poor, non-industrial social formations to post-industrial information societies that the realities of the twenty-first century demand’ (UNESCO, 2002: 9). It was felt that Africa’s economic backwardness and poverty increased its need for information and communication technologies, if it was to progress. Communication and

[7] An African philosophy which emphasises collectivism, sharing, community and participation in a collective life.

information are necessary to engender the idea of community and improve social life and have significant functions to help fulfil Africa's political and governance goals. The contextual issues taken into account by UNESCO recognised the important role played by communication in the realm of kinship - family, values and interactions among social groups.

The initial stage of building 'model curricula' in communication training in Africa came in 1996, when UNESCO decided to survey curricula used in existing institutions in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It made three key findings: firstly, the main areas of communication training were traditional print and broadcast journalism, advertising, public relations and mass communication subjects. Lacking were policy-related courses and subjects such as new media, media management, community media, and communication for social change, democracy and human rights. Secondly, the communication training institutions surveyed faced shortages of qualified staff and motivation amongst the existing educators was found to be low. Thirdly, some of the communication training centres surveyed, periodically revised their curricula in responses to the media market or industry.

As a result a meeting on curricula for communication training was organised by UNESCO and the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE) in Cape Town in 1996 which made a number of recommendations on communication education in general and communication training in particular, including the suggestion that curricula developers must take into account the social, economic, political and cultural contexts in Africa. It was also emphasised that such communication training must be both inter- and multi-disciplinary (UNESCO, 2002: 4). In 1998, a follow-up workshop was held in Nairobi, and based on their recommendations, UNESCO organised regional workshops of communication trainers in Zambia in November 2000 for trainers from east and southern Africa;

in Accra in December 2000, for trainers in English-speaking west African countries; and in Yaounde in June 2001 for trainers in Francophone Africa.

UNESCO's concern in media curriculum development went beyond the mere selection and organisation of subjects into core/options or theory/practice. It involved establishing a consistent relationship between general goals and specific objectives to guide media teaching, carefully ensuring sound sequence or continuity and balance in the curriculum (UNESCO, 2002: 2). Questions were asked about the purpose, aim and content of the curriculum, including its assessment criteria. More importantly, UNESCO emphasised that various professional areas such as print journalism, broadcasting, public relations, marketing, advertising, publishing and development communication needed both technical skills and philosophical knowledge.

The proposed curricula included courses such as African media history; media economics; research methods; African languages; journalism; publishing; film; public relations and advertising. One key missing course was on audience studies - African researchers need to put people at the centre of what they do. Work on audience would help engage Eurocentricism in media studies and contribute to generating new perspectives more relevant to the African context.

Re-conceptualizing journalism and media studies in Africa

The level of agreement among African media educators and scholars on the need to rethink the role and quality of media education in Africa offers a sound basis to re-conceptualize media studies in Africa. In many ways, this study has shown that the process has already started. In 2007, a team of African media researchers led by Arnold de Beer submitted a report to the World Conference on Journalism Education[8] on what needs to be done to improve communication

[8] Presenters of the report to the WCJE in Singapore, and representing the Trans-African Council on Communication Education were Fackson Banda (Rhodes University, South Africa); John Mukela (Southern African Media Training Trust, Mozambique) and Arnold de Beer (Stellenbosch University, South Africa).

and media studies in Africa. The report included a critique of the continued dominance of American and European approaches in media studies in Africa (de Beer et al, 2007: 10). It noted: 'in order to enter the international and increasingly the national higher echelons of academe, individuals, just as institutions such as universities, will need to play the game according to the hegemonic rules of the North. This process is already quite clear for instance, in South Africa, where, apart from a journal list kept by the Department of Education, journalism and media authors only get full research credit if they publish in one of the few journalism/media/communication journals indexed in North by ISI and/or IBSS' (ibid: 5).

To redress this imbalance, the report suggests a progressive two-way scholarly system, a model in which 'American publishers and journalism authors take cognizance of African scholarship and publishing possibilities. African journalism authors then ought to make their voices pro-actively heard in the field of journalism scholarship publishing for and in Africa'. Approached that way, the publishing hegemony of the North could then become a 'valuable stepping-stone for the development of a viable and vibrant journalism publishing in Africa and other continents in the South' (ibid: 9).

Another attempt to re-conceptualize the field of media studies is contained in a report which examined the capacity and potential for excellence of almost one hundred journalism schools across Africa, using a set of indicators and criteria' for measuring potential for institutional excellence. 'The criteria and indicators for defining potential excellence offer each institution with an interest in self-improvement a tool for honest self-assessment' (Berger and Matras, 2007: 27). Such a project forced media training schools to scrutinize themselves, according to 'standardized' criteria, and gave them an opportunity to compare provisions with other centers. There is no doubt that a momentum for change in African media education is in evidence, indicated also by initiatives by associations for academics, collaborative publishing projects, conferences and staff exchanges.

Concluding reflections

It is clear from the above that media education in Africa is being re-conceptualized to make it more relevant to the needs of the continent. Interdisciplinary approaches could help deepen the theoretical element in African media education. However, I would qualify the view that Africa has a 'different tradition, philosophy, values and history' (Mukasa and Becker, 1992: 45). By focusing on radio, theatre, audiences and aspects of endogenous communication in rural Africa where the majority lives, media scholarship might be able to meaningfully engage with local issues. It is equally important for scholars to explore beyond traditional areas to encompass issues of global media industries, cultures, ethics and other world-wide processes of media production and consumption (*Global Media and Communication*, 2007). Themes of power and domination need to be central to media studies in Africa for the simple reason that the continent is affected by the rapid political and technological reordering led by US-dominated global media industries.

Ultimately, media education in Africa ought to be freed from what Zeleza, in relation to African history, has called 'the epistemological traps of Eurocentricism, the tropes of the 'colonial library''. Such a struggle requires a double intellectual manoeuvre: involving 'provincializing' Europe that has monopolized universality and globalizing Africa beyond its Eurocentric 'provincialization':

> The answer to Eurocentricism does not lie, I believe, in ever more refined auto-critiques within the 'Western' tradition itself, as seen in the fulminations of postmodernism, or endless critiques from its physical or paradigmatic peripheries, the province of post-colonialism, but in stripping this tradition of its universalistic pretensions and universalizing propensities, in producing new or alternative histories based on a fundamental reconstitution of world history, or what I would call human history, and the reconstruction of the

> provincial histories of the world's major regions including Africa and Europe in that history (Zeleza, 2006: 3).

This radical model suggests that having deconstructed West-centric disciplines in Africa, academics need to participate more actively in the deconstruction of West-centric subjects and disciplines in the West itself. It is posited that the discipline of history offers a powerful entry point because colonialism conjoined African and European histories and, over the last fifty years, the discipline of African history has 'developed the critical tools to undress the emperor' (ibid: 4). Media studies could learn from history and other disciplines. There is need for it to firmly (re)embrace living local cultures, languages, African philosophies, values and concepts. African media scholars abroad need to participate in the on-going deconstruction of West-centric media studies. This would help establish a new generation of media scholarship and curricula in Africa that engage with issues in ways that meaningfully respond not only to individual but to local, national, regional and international imperatives. It would allow the nascent academic field of media studies the space to evolve indigenized and internationalized theories, in tandem with other academic fields.

[*This draft is based on my previous work in the book *Internationalising Media Studies (*Routledge 2009) and is not for citation at this stage. I am in the process of expanding the argument to debate the education of African journalists/media students at UK universities].

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