

**Report of the French-speaking Syndicate  
WJEC  
Grahamstown, July 5-7th 2010**

**1. Members:**

- **Expert** : Eugénie Aw (CESTI, Senegal)
- **Chair** : Marie-Soleil Frère (University of Brussels, Belgium)
  
- Radwan Badini (Salahadin University, Irak)
- Serge Théophile Balima (IPERMIC-University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso)
- Espérance Bayedila (IFASIC, Democratic Republic of the Congo)
- Abdellatif Bensfia (ISIC, Marocco)
- Laurent Charles Boyomo-Assala (ESSTIC, Cameroon)
- Fulgencio Francisco Muchisse (Escola de Jornalismo, Mozambique)
- Firmin Gouba (DCJ-University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso)
- Jean-Pierre Ilboudo (Unesco, Yaoundé)
- Adélard Mambuya Obul'Okwess (IFASIC, DRC)
- Habiba Mejri-Cheikh (African Union, Addis Ababa)
- Léon Mukoko wa Mukoko (IFASIC, DRC)
- Hary Lala Razafinimpiasa (UFR Communication, Madagascar)
- Jean-Pierre Uwimana (GLMC-UNR, Rwanda)

**2. Background:**

The members of this group all came from various countries and their only common point was the fact that they shared the use of the French language. No particular theme had been identified for this workshop.

Among the 11 countries represented, the majority (9) were African countries, and some of them were experiencing:

- a particular “post-conflict” or “post-genocide” context;
- a situation where freedom of the press (and especially freedom of broadcasting) is still in formation;
- a hostile environment (economic, technological, political) for media development.

Each of these particular backgrounds brings up questions and issues about the way local journalists should be trained. Nevertheless, beyond these differences, the members of the group could identify some challenges that were relevant to most of them and to their institutions. They also tried to think about possible solutions to face those challenges.

**3. Challenges**

**1. Dominance of English**

This issue was shared by all the represented institutions, not only the “Francophone” ones, but also the ones using other languages for teaching journalism: Portuguese, Arabic and Kurdish

- The teaching material for journalism educators is mainly published in English
- The debates about journalism education are mainly held in English
- Scientific research published in English is more valued at the international level but also more and more in the local assessments of the scientific careers of the journalism educators in non-English speaking countries and institutions.

### **Recommendations:**

- The existing networks should be reactivated and reinforced (as the “Theophraste” networks that gathers all the Francophone schools of journalism), and new networks could be built.
- Exchanges and translations should be facilitated (especially when it comes to scientific journals and teaching material)
- The experiences from non-English speaking countries should be more visible (especially in Africa) and new tools that are more open to language and cultural diversity could be promoted (for instance, after Unesco supported the publication of a journalism curricula mostly based on references from English-speaking Africa, another curriculum was produced based on the Francophone references, data and experiences.)
- The African Union (which has 4 official languages: English, French, Portuguese and Arabic) could play a part in promoting more contacts and exchanges. The AU already has a project to set up a Panafrican media website and to publish a special issue of its publication about “Media and Development”. The AU is also proposing to welcome more journalism students from the African continent to do internship in Addis Ababa so they could have a wider view on their continent and build continental networks.

## **2. Widening gaps between the content of teachings and political and newsroom realities**

- Political context: in some countries, the development of the media sector (and the content of the teachings in training institutions) is far ahead from the current understanding and state of mind of the political elite when it comes to media freedom and media development. Therefore, young graduates who come to practice journalism have to face a political regime that is often backwards and unaware of the changes in society.
- Newsrooms realities: media companies are generally still weak and not very well structured, so the young graduates that join those companies are faced with professional conducts that are contradictory to what they have been taught in school, especially regarding ethics. Internship that the students have to complete in local newsrooms can sometimes be supervised by media professionals that are even less trained than the students themselves and that give advice or orders that don’t match with what the students are learning in school. Very often, the graduates are therefore over-qualified and they turn to other professional activities where they will be better paid, leaving the newsroom in the hands of young untrained people. The consequence is that, for instance, the newsrooms of the media that have the bigger audiences (local community radio stations) are using young untrained staff.

### **Recommendations:**

- Bring industry on board and involve them in curriculum development (so that they share the responsibility with the educators about the content of journalism education and the professional future of the young graduates).

- Try to better take into account, in the teachings, the expectations of the local publics towards the media (for example professionalizing the more popular approaches and types of programs).

### **3. One-size fits all curriculum imposed by national and supra national institutions**

- In several African countries, national or supra national institutions are interfering in shaping and validating the curricula. (For instance the former French colonies are still under the authority of a common body called CAMES: Conseil Africain et Malgache de l'Enseignement Supérieur). In many countries there is a ministry of higher education that frames the curricula of all university programs (e.g. in the DRC). Therefore, journalism schools don't have a total agency in defining their curricula and they sometimes have a hard time in integrating the peculiarities of journalism education (especially the practical aspects) in "one-size fits all" curriculum that is shared with other types of University education. This is especially a problem for the J-schools that are fully attached to a University.
- Several institutions are currently faced with the obligation to reform their programs to enter the "License-Master-Doctorate" (LMD) system, with not enough discussions with the local or supra national authorities in order to have the peculiarities of Journalism education recognized and acknowledged.
- One of the countries represented (Rwanda), has been forced to switch to education in English when most of the teachers were French speaking.

#### **Recommendations:**

- More dialogue with national and supra national institutions in order to make them take into account the peculiarities of journalism education (which has to be open to practical training and to the outside world).
- More dialogue between the journalism-schools in the several countries that are undergoing a similar reform.

### **4. Reducing government support vs. increasing student numbers**

- In most African countries, the proportion of the national budget that is devoted to higher education has been reduced, while the amount of student was increasing as higher education is turning into mass education (vs. elite education as it used to be). In the DRC for instance, the part of the national budget devoted to the education sector has dropped from 30% (in the 1970's) to 2% today. Journalism students are increasing in number but they arrive at the journalism school with levels of basic knowledge that are reducing. Journalism schools have to work with reducing budgets while face with more students and a growing necessity to teach the basics (grammar and writing for instance).
- In some countries, the shortenings in teaching staff is also a major concern and there are not enough qualified educators and the education sector (including University that used to be prestigious) doesn't attract the most brilliant teachers anymore.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Advocacy to secure more support for the education sector in general
- On the African continent, a call should be launched to national governments through the African Union so that the issue of the budget devoted to education is put on the agenda.

5. **Integrating issues and experiences of specific importance to Africa into journalism curriculum** (environment, conflicts, good governance, rural information, health...)
- Being tailored out of the African continent, most of the journalism teaching contents and material don't integrate some specific preoccupations of the African people and the African journalists. For instance, the African media have to address a population that is still rural in majority, sometimes in a conflict or post-conflict context, and evolving in an environment where good governance and freedom of the press might be lacking or threatened.

**Recommendations:**

- Develop projects (as the one recently launched by Unesco about teaching African media) that aim to a better integration of African issues and realities in teaching material for African journalism schools.
- Support practical training where the students have to do field reporting and work about the issues and concerns that are important for their own communities.
- Encourage African journalist to step into the newsrooms of international media so that they can put forward another perspective on the African continent.

**Conclusion:**

The group has underlined the necessity to build more bridges between relevant expertise and experiences from various countries, over the gap of cultural and language differences. Indeed much has to be learnt from the specific situation of journalism education in countries that are not in the "mainstream".

**Report : Marie-Soleil Frère**