

**WJEC2 Syndicate 2010 – Rhodes University, South Africa**  
**Journalist Research and Journalism Education:**  
**Setting an international agenda**

**Syndicate leader: Herman Wasserman**  
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**Syndicate report back: July 2010**

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This year's syndicate focused on three central questions, formulated after initial discussion:

1. What topics, especially those of importance to countries outside the Anglo-American axis, are still under-researched in international journalism education scholarship?
2. What can be done to make journalism education research more global in its reach – or, should and can journalism education research be de-Westernized?
3. What research methods are best suited to broaden the field of journalism education research internationally?

Dane: Pointed out that there are also under-researched topics in the Anglo-American axis – for example, little on law, much on ethics.

Bob: Asked how one internationalises journalism research. He pointed out that the context in Africa is very different from America and European countries, and that there is comparatively very little research. Each region has a different stage of socio-economic

development. Journalism in Africa is far more important than in the US – the “conscience” of Africa more than any other organisation.

Herman: Pointed out that internationalisation is not standardisation, and asked how one gets to hear the voices of Africa.

Bob: Raised the issue of it being problematic that little discussion is ongoing in Africa.

Marco: There is a lack of journalism education research on the national, regional and international level.

Dane: His journal is working towards making it more international – for example, he has been actively seeking out conference papers, as the problem is that they don’t receive enough manuscripts from outside North America. One needs to be proactive as an editor. Previously not much attention was paid to internationalising *Educator*.

Lynette: Perhaps one of the issues – isn’t there a sense that the periphery’s experience is seen just as a periphery’s experience. How does one relate that to what is seen as a norm? What are the norms in those kinds of spheres? When you are outside, you write ‘into’ that space, and in some way you have to talk ‘into’ that space.

Lee: Using Beate’s book as an example, pointed out that there is some openness to non-Western perspectives.

Jyotika: Journalism education research is also informed by journalism itself in the respective countries. The question is, what is happening in journalism education and how can it be internationalised? We need to try to identify the levels at which we conduct journalism education research and how can they connect or overlap between countries. What kinds of journalism education research are being done, and which are in need for internationalizing?

Levi: Raised the question of collaborative research, and pointed out that the Australian Research Council places a great deal of emphasis on collaborative work.

Bob: Questioned what this research was about. He said research in an African context is neither cumulative nor collaborative, but goes off in all kinds of directions, neither coherent, not couched in theoretical framework.

Lynette: The diffuseness of research coming out of Africa is a problem. We are still predominantly on the level of teaching institutions rather than research institutions – how do we move an institution from a teaching institution to a research institution, and what does that mean?

For Tuesday:

Everyone to think of a research question and how that question could be “internationalized”.

Tuesday:

It was agreed that there are three aspects to internationalization:

- 1) Research itself – and the resultant topics
- 2) Publication issues – how to “internationalise” in order to get published in academic journals
- 3) Implication for journalism education

### Research topics:

- The idea of a profession in crisis - with regard to social responsibility; print media vs online; and a crisis in the profession - were raised, together with mention of the internalisation of issues such as literacy, and training journalists to speak to a minority elite. Should researchers be helping to find the way?
- Journalism itself: should it be taught as a profession or an academic subject?
- Defining journalism today is difficult. In journalism education that is difficult – how do we follow those changes in the industry in our education – and how does that trajectory of change differ in various regions of the world? (It was also suggested that self-reflection would help journalism teachers to understand their own motives, as well as how those influenced who and what they taught).
- How do we sustain journalism education against the allure of public relations and marketing communication?
- Analysis of former students and how that feeds into journalism education.
- Journalism as effecting democratic social change (or just commodification and commercialisation?)
- How do we introduce indigeneity into journalism education in the developing world? How do we make journalism education indigenous and not import the liberal model from the US?
- How do we train our students to use the power of their words to affect social change?
- Political function and role of journalism – how journalism education can contribute to democratic deepening, issues of cultural diversity and particular relations with civil society. How do we get civil society/ordinary people involved in the practice of democracy? How do we educate journalists to practice a type of journalism that enable that kind of social engagement? How do we engage with cultural diversity and enable students to practice a type of journalism that engages with that diversity?
- Afrocentricity: how are Africans are represented in the media? The whole issue of postcolonial identity in journalism education.
- Publication: Peer reviewers impose paradigms on articles from Africa. There is a greater need for an awareness of conditions in the developing world, and a concurrent emphasis on under-researched topics from the developing world.
- Digital divide: Often indigenous people don't have access to the information others have. Added to this, access to publications/literature is difficult, as it can take up to an hour to download a journal page! How do these challenges prevent educators from African countries competing for research grants internationally?
- There is enormous variability between journalism education and the labour market in different parts of the world, raising the issue of adaptation and survival of journalism education institutions in response to changes in the labour market. Questions to be explored comparatively – how institutions have either linked to or separated from the labour market.
- Journalism programmes need to be made more relevant to the media landscape – how should we be structuring our j-schools for the evolution that is taking place?

- A need for comparative studies to discern trends in regions with similarities was suggested.
- The selection and admission of students to journalism courses, and the criteria for their entry, was raised. How are those criteria influenced by changes in the industry, and also by the socio-economic context in various countries?
- This was followed by more enrolment issues: who are our journalism students in terms of age, race and gender, and why are they there? Are they interested in democracy, or sports and entertainment?
- We also need basic data in student experience and where they end up, or in other words feedback from students after they have completed their study – has their education had any effect? We need basic data to assess what they thought of their education and how effective it was.
- How can journalism educators assist postgraduate students, or returning ('mature') students from the profession?

#### Issues to be addressed by journals and journal editors

- Educators should deal with the crisis – as a research topic find out how people are dealing with the crisis. Concentrate on under-researched topics.
- There is a lot of research to be conducted about what is going on right now, in the present – perhaps before trying to predict the future.
- Every issue should contain a section on journalism education.

#### Possible suggestions for the next WJEC – to enable research into these topics:

- Work session with journal editors.
- Create a reading list of international sources – the WJEC could establish a website or try to write a grant to establish a site for journalism education similar to the Communication Initiative's website.