Social organising of African journalism educators: is linking to external resources the key?*

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Abstract:

Although this appears to be an age of online social networking, professional networking of African journalism educators is a complex matter, for reasons mainly related to the fragmentary identity and fragile resource base of this constituency. African journalism educators thus share many characteristics which ironically dilute the sense of a clear and common identity that could prompt networking as a community. The prospects for building a social network amongst this challenging category can be analysed in terms of theories of social capital and a review of various historical experiences in Africa, and the more-recent UNESCO-initiated processes around "Potential Centres of Excellence and Reference". The results of this tentatively suggest that "bridging" to external constituencies is the most fertile form of community creation, and a precondition for building social capital by means of internal relationships within the sector.

1. Introduction:

This paper addresses what it sees as a "problem" – a problem of the lack of an effective organisation of African journalism educators. That of course prompts the question: A problem for whom? In responding to this, it is necessary to concede that not everyone would agree that this is in fact a problem, particularly because formulating it as such implies that a "solution" can, and should, be found. It may well be that, given the territorial vastness, weak economies and disparate character of Africa's countries and media contexts, no solution can realistically be found. In the conditions of the better-off, more mediatised and more homogenous USA, it has been easier to organise journalism educators – as is evident in the Association of Journalism and Mass Communication Educators that approaches its one centenary of existence in 2012. In Europe, the European Journalism Trainers Association – a network of schools rather than individuals – marked its 20th anniversary in May 2010, having succeeded through a series of projects around cross-national student media production and criteria for journalism qualifications. The Australian Journalism Education Association and its New Zealand counterpart organise strong annual conferences and have a vibrant listserv. Comparing all this to the challenges in Africa, and taking in account the poor record of sustaining an organisation called the African Council for Communications

Education (ACCE) (see below), one can understandably take a cautious approach to assessing the prospects of contemporary efforts to network African journalism educators.

This diagnosis suggests that there should be a highly practical point of departure to the "problem" identified above, in order to avoid naïve illusions of a "full" solution to overcoming the obstacles to successful networking. At the same time, just because a vibrant Pan-African Association of Journalism Educators is surely a pipe-dream, this does not mean that partial fulfilment of networking is impossible. Further, one can argue that it does not help to displace the "problem" simply because of the huge challenges in addressing it. In other words, we can return to a qualified understanding of asking for whom the weakness of African journalism education networking is a "problem".

The answer to this is that it is problem for *everyone*. The problem especially exists for the people who live on the continent, because it indirectly deprives them of potential value they could be receiving in their media. The weak state of journalism education impacts directly on deficits in local, national and continental media. By contrast, that media, drawing on a different educational basis, could leverage all kinds of knowledge and skill in the interests of democracy and development – including health and environmental issues. That this is far from being the case, is also a problem from a global point of view, because information from and about Africa within global discourse is scarce, partial and often problematic. The continent is too often marginalised and misunderstood, and its potential contribution to the world's stock of knowledge and culture is far from being fulfilled.

A "full-on" organisation of African journalism educators could certainly help address some of these issues – for instance, by systematically sharing experiences and elaborating appropriate teaching materials, providing peer review and external examining systems, engaging in joint research projects, etc. But if such an organ is not feasible, are lesser options not possible? After all, this is, we are often told, the age of social networking – so, can a broad community of African journalism educators be crystallised into meaningful interaction using, for instance, Web 2.0 facilities? This paper assesses the prospects.

2. Analysis of the constituency:

Differences in nationality, language and varying educational and media regimes are particularly acute given the 54 nation-states in Africa. There is also a unique vastness of geographical scale and there is also, critically, a general underdevelopment of

communications infrastructure at large and that includes many of the journalism schools. [1] In addition, in a large number of African journalism schools, classes are massively oversubscribed and journalism educators are extremely overloaded with teaching duties.

These particularities intensify general complexities concerning the essential character of journalism educators. The people in this occupation relate, generally speaking, not just to each other, but also often to a wider educational institutional base (in those many instances where they are indeed located within these tertiary educational environments). Even more significantly, they also relate, at least in principle, to a highly variegated industry. In many African countries, this industry is not just internally delineated by medium (print, broadcast), but by ownership and political character – along lines of state, commercial and community platforms.

What this means is that journalism educators are pushed and pulled between many different poles of gravity. The media (in all their diversity) tend to expect the sector to be a service provider to their labour-power needs. The academy, however, often has a less instrumentalist and more creative view of its role in knowledge generation and dissemination. Students are of course a third factor, with their own several interests and viewpoints. For example, despite taking courses in journalism education, many students do not actually aspire to become journalists – as distinct, for instance, from other kinds of communicators (like public relations practitioners, or television continuity announcers) or even entering totally different careers.

As if this complexity were not enough, most journalism educators also work in schools that cover more than journalistic communication – for example, they also include education in practices such as public relations or business communication, and – often in Africa – development communications. To speak of networking journalism educators therefore hinges on whether the practice of journalism education is sufficiently distinguishable within this broader context of communication educators so as to constitute a constituency. And even within those who are primarily identified with teaching journalism, there are often big cultural divides between those who teach television versus those teaching print, and not to mention gulfs between these and their colleagues teaching media studies and also those embracing new media. The clear point that emerges from this is that efforts to network journalism educators into a community are never going to be a simple matter – there are

[1] Analysis of data collected for UNESCO by this author in 1997 revealed that of 188 identified journalism schools around Africa, only 15% had a degree of web presence – usually via a parent institutional site, or very basic information on a dedicated online space. In only 5% of the total, did the cyberpresence amount to a richer multi-purpose website for the school concerned.

severe institutional and cultural dynamics that have to be clarified and transcended, in Africa as elsewhere.

To zoom in even more closely, the "psychology" of journalism educators is another significant factor. Journalism educators are, it can be hypothesised, more or less one of the following types: retirees from the media – often burnt-out practitioners; refugees – former practitioners who are bitter; and remote rangers – individuals with little or no direct experience of the world for which they prepare their students. All have a contribution to make to journalism education, but the point is that this variety of backgrounds can militate against finding common ground.

Of course, there are also many hybrids, and not everyone fits into these categories. For instance, some teachers still see themselves primarily as journalists, and are reluctant or tentative embracers of an identity as teachers (let alone academics). This reticence is reinforced by the clichéd slogan that "those who can't do, teach". The arrogant stupidity of this view misses the observable fact that excellent journalists can make very bad teachers, and vice versa. Nevertheless the prejudice it conveys is not without influence in terms of reducing the profession's status and assertiveness and therefore diluting the foundations for social organisation.

The point in all this is that the identity of "journalism educator" cannot be taken as singular in character or something that is automatically in effect. Furthermore, it can be observed that in contrast to being a journalist which implies an identity of independence and at least claimed allegiance to professional ethics, to be a journalism educator is comparatively far more amorphous. Compounding all this further is the feature for many educators of being based in institutions that are renowned for fearsome politicking (famously assessed by Henry Kissinger as being a function of university stakes "being so low"). Trying to organise networking in this context can run up against petty politics, turf wars and power hierarchies.

It may also be suggested that, as middle class professionals with a degree of autonomy, few journalism educators are compelled to develop the labour organisational skills that are associated with industrial workplaces. This is not to say that (by contrast) those people employed as journalists in the media industry are automatically able to organise together as a significant force. It is only to recognise that part of being a journalism educator is the frequent experience of the individualism, and related competitiveness, of much academic life.

In short, there are multiple pressures and influences on journalism educators that impact on the prospects for networking. This is not even to bring into the picture other, and often over-riding, identity dimensions – such as to be, for instance, a woman (journalism educator) or French-speaking (journalism educator), etc. What all these variables mean is that it would be surprising indeed if any journalism educators automatically had a strong common sense of belonging, including clarity as to what institutional culture they ought to adhere (the academy or the media). All this impacts very strongly on the prospects for social cohesion – on the constituency of journalism educators becoming a conscious entity for itself, and not just one in itself. However, degrees of success in overcoming the differences have been experienced in some developed country environments at least.

The question this raises therefore is, given the complexities of African conditions noted at the outset of this section, whether the obstacles on this continent are particularly insurmountable.

3. Annexing theory to the project.

Networks are theorised as relationships between individuals or individuals with shared interests, voluntary participation, and a degree of coherent action towards joint learning of a common goal. They depend on a sense of ownership by participants, and also capacity and adaptability to sustain these relationships, although a successful network itself also builds capacity (See Taschereau & Bolger, 2006, cited in Wuite, 2008).

Despite hurdles to building networks (via networking), insights into the possibilities can be discerned from applying the theorisation of networks and social capital. These emerge from the writings of Bourdieu, 1980, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Putnam, 2000 and Coleman, 1998. Notwithstanding differences within these theories, they generally highlight qualities like trust and reciprocity as preconditions for, and characteristics of, social capital emerging from networks. Add to this a Marxist understanding of capital as having an incrementalising dynamic (see Berger 2008), social capital in this sense designates the sustained growth of collective general assets where active participation of each person or group enriches the whole. It is apparent that societies, associations, networks, neighbourhoods, institutions, etc. can all manifest social capital, and in varying degrees. Importantly, the inter-relationship between these different entities is also likely to affect social capital generation at any one particular scope (eg. the unit of an association) within the whole. Social capital is not the same as economic capital, but it designates relationships which can generate this kind of

capital – as well as other resources (eg. intellectual, experiential) which lend themselves to useful re-investment.

The implicated relationships in social capital can be categorised in terms of their quality, and distinctions are thus made between "bonding", "bridging" and "linking". These terms may be seen as points along a continuum that reflects the degree of diversity of the participants. At one side, "bonding" designates connections amongst people in highly similar situations (eg. amongst a family or within an institution), while the other end of the spectrum is characterised by the more difficult connections between people in very different situations (for instance, linguistic, occupational, national, etc).

These kinds of relationships can be investigated at the level of individual African journalism teachers, individual journalism schools, schools within a given country categorised as a national sector, and the pan-African sector as a whole. Importantly, a different substance can be given to the meaning of bonding, bridging and linking, as applied to each of these (and across them) depending on the kinds of connections being struck. For instance, there can – in principle at least – be bonding by individuals within a school or across schools, or bonding between schools. Likewise, there can be bridging or linking between individuals anywhere, or between institutions. On the other hand, as will be discussed later, the prospects for success of a given kind of relationship are not equal across all entities. As an illustration for now, it can be posited that it may be more difficult to bond, than to link, across constituencies divided by language barriers for example.

It can further be observed that there is likely to be a dynamic interdependence between the parts and the whole. For instance, it is hard to conceive of a vibrant sectoral network that rests on individual entities that are themselves lacking in cohesion.

The case of relations between individual African journalism educators, as with all these levels of entity, do not exist in a silo. However, independently to an extent of relations at the level of schools, whether nationally or on a continental basis, it is possible to conceive of bonding, bridging and linking by a number of African journalism educators on an individual basis. The relationships may be within or across institutions, nations and even extra-continental (especially where the persons concerned for example have made connections while studying abroad).

Individuals who network can generate a lot of social capital, but involvement of their institutions is an even bigger prize (although this is not to counterpose the two entities as

mutually exclusive). In considering social capital generation for an individual school, it can be noted that there is high correspondence here to UNESCO's criteria for excellence in African journalism education (Berger and Matras, 2007; Berger 2008b). These criteria designate three areas for any given school to approach excellence: internal strengths, external connections, and demonstrable sustainability. Relating the first of these to theories of social capital, the internal strength of a given school can be measured in terms of, inter alia, "bonding" among staff – and bridging to students and linking to other campus constituencies. The second UNESCO criteria area entails "bridging" to the media industry and also "linking" to communities/NGOs/policy makers. The third UNESCO area of sustainability is in part a function of the effectiveness of the internal strength and the external connections. For instance, effective bonding, linking and bridging helps to secure standing in the academy and its external partnerships, i.e. helps to create relationships with these bodies that serve to draw in resources on a durable and expanding basis. The reciprocity in this case is the value a school brings to these interlocutors.

It is also possible to examine such relationships at the level of a national sector more broadly. For instance, there can be "bonding" between a given country's schools (notwithstanding rivalries), or "bridging" between schools across different countries. There is also the possibility of "linking" between the sector and other groups with a national presence (eg. Human Rights advocacy groups) to mutual advantage. It is self-evident that building social networks through connections across a continental sector (for instance, between The Africa Editors Forum or the African Union's Commission for Human and People's Rights)[2] is much more difficult than within the ranks of individual journalism schools and their personnel within a given country, and even (as will be assessed below) this latter project is by no means an easy one. One issue in all of this is the question of trust, and by implication, legitimacy. Institutional and national inequalities, resentments and suspicion of motives can bedevil success here, although these can be overcome by participation in decision-making (Taschereau and Bolger, 2006, cited in Wuite, 2008).

Social networking at any of these levels, and across various degrees of diversity, is not an end in itself. The rationale (for the point of view of this paper) is to build "social capital". To give further elaboration to this concept, it is worth dwelling on the manner in which it can be understood to designate producing value that can generate further value, in the course of the interconnections between human beings. To provide an illustration: a Ugandan journalism

[2] A controversial initiative in 2008-9 by the African Union and the European Union to set up a pan-African Media Observatory (see http://media-dev.eu) and increase government control over the continent's media attracted critical responses from a wide range of NGOs, but there was no formation that could generate organised or representative comments by African journalism educators.

educator and a South African educator establish a (most likely bridging) relationship, which then unlocks funding (via a linkage relationship with a donor) enabling people in their respective institutions to travel to Salzburg, Austria for media literacy "camp". That experience and the connections developed or deepened there, lead on to further value – like intercampus visits.[3] While not all social connections generate social capital (indeed most probably do not), clearly one cannot even think of this kind of capital emerging, without having the social linkages to begin with. According to the literature, and as touched on above, what is critical to the sustainability, productivity and vibrancy of social capital being generated are two dimensions of relationships: the extent of trust and reciprocity. These are self-evidently central to all three realms of networking that knits across differences via bonding, bridging and/or linking. As will be seen, all these are also fluid and relative categories, meaning that a relationship may be bridging in some respects and yet bonding in others, depending on the breadth of the field of reference and the changing degrees of trust and reciprocity.

To assess the potential value of the different kinds of relationships, an example of fertile "bonding" within journalism education can be posited as follows: This is evolving a common mission and to have regular conversations is – at least in theory – with one's immediate colleagues within a given journalism school. An example of "bridging" would entail developing trusted and reciprocal connections with colleagues at other journalism schools, which could lead to external examinations, cross-referrals of students, mutual support for conference attendance, and resource sharing, etc. An illustration of the third level, i.e. "linking", might be assessed in terms of the growth of ties between journalism educators located in other national contexts. These same categories can also apply to journalism education more widely considered: for example, the extent to which there is bridging by educators with the media industry on a national sectoral basis, and/or linking to other stakeholders (eg. the International Red Cross) on an African regional scale. However, much as theory might suggest that the most potential in these cases is the bonding within the school, and the most challenging would be the African linkages (with a spectrum of degrees between the two), Section 4 below problematises this.

Likewise, the empirical experience in Africa suggests we should also be wary of a theoreticised conception might mechanistically assume that the bigger picture starts to grow on the base of individual journalism educators bonding within the unit of a school, bridging to other journalism educators, and finally linking to other external stakeholders. In this

[3] This example is based on the experiences of the Universities of Stellenbosch (South Africa) and Makerere (Uganda) and the Polytechnic of Namibia (see Berger, 2008a).

schema, this would then be seen as a foundation for the school itself to be engaged in bonding with other national schools, bridging to obvious national stakeholders and linking to less obvious ones as well. Finally, the top of the hierarchy would then be a national sector bonding with other national sectors, bridging with continental stakeholders like The African Editors Forum and linking with less obvious groups like a pan-African cellphone company. On that basis, it would follow that a pan-African presence could bond with peers around the world, etc.

This construction, however, is a radically artificial and uni-linear hierarchy. It ignores, for example, the way in which there can be connections, say, between a given African journalism school and one based in the USA, which in turn can generate more frequent and valuable connections, than those existing between the same African school and a national counterpart. It further ignores issues such as competition between individuals and institutions in the journalism education sector, which diminishes bonding relationships, while manifesting as competition to have the best relationships with the media industry. Particularly between national journalism schools, there is often competition for students, funds, reputation and research, which – like any industry – makes it structurally challenging to identify common interests and unite effectively. And sometimes individual connections without regard to institutional, sectoral or international obstacles or preconditions, may be a very rich resource for social capital.

4. Selected experiences of building a community of journalism educators.

Against all this background, it is possible to analyse what works and what does not work, based on past experiences of networking African journalism educators – particularly experiences within South Africa and Kenya, the unsustained record of the ACCE, more recent UNESCO-initiated projects, and the build-up to the World Journalism Education Congress. These cases suggest that the role of external resources (i.e. "donor-driven" networking), and prospects for potential resources, are important enablers (i.e. the strength of "linking relationships") at the very least, and indeed to a large extent are also drivers. In addition, where there is contact with media practitioners entailed ("bridging relationships"), this also appears to promote networking. It is also apparent that networking works best on the basis of limited and non-demanding projects. Another factor is where networking entails the power of pan-Africanist sentiment and aspiration. A sense of a community-for-itself vis-à-vis non-Africans has been a powerful promoter for networking African journalism educators, albeit not consistently. In this specific regard, motivation to build social capital is

thus a contribution to the "community", rather than solely to individual educators or their institutions.

An example of the bridging, rather than bonding, imperative generating results can be seen through a cursory review of South African experience. The country has tried and failed to set up South African associations of journalism educators over the years. The moves in 1998 to create the Print Educators Association of South Africa (Petasa) and the Broadcast Educators and Trainers Association (Beta) came to naught. Likewise with a trial balloon floated by Lizette Rabe, head of the University of Stellenbosch's journalism school some years later. Slightly more successful, albeit temporarily, was the Southern African Media Trainers Network (Samtran) which operated on-and-off in southern Africa from 2001 to circa 2008, bridging educators in the higher-education institutions with NGO and freelance trainers. Another linking relationship that has involved some, though limited, social capital is between journalism educators and other communications scholars meeting at the annual conferences of the South African Communication Association (SACOMM). Participation by key journalism schools, however, has remained marginal – suggesting that many of their staff see insufficient value in investing in relationships with other communications foci.

Perhaps the most successful experience (albeit not always on a consistent level) within South Africa has been the congregation of senior journalism educators (from various journalism schools) around the centre of gravity of the South African National Editors Forum. In other words, bridging with the industry has been seen by this tier of educators as more important than bonding with each other or linking to other kinds of communications experts. Their involvement with each other over 13 years (for instance in the Forum's Education and Training sub-committee) has been a secondary function of this larger involvement. This experience tells us that external relations (by senior journalism educators on an individual basis, although inevitably tied to their institutional bases as well) have been seen as more valuable than putting energy into formulating internal coherence, trust and reciprocity within the journalism education sector directly. Social capital for these educators has instead been generated through their participation in an editors' forum.[4]

In the Kenyan case, another case of bridging to industry has involved educators from four journalism schools through their participation in their country's statutory Media Council. The council enlists individuals who hail from the journalism schools at the University of Nairobi and Daystar University (both recognised by UNESCO as having potential), and from

[4] An exception here has been the six colloquia of educators (some national, some pan-African) convened over seven years by Rhodes University of journalism educators since 2003.

the United States International University and the Kenya Institute of Mass Communications. Controversially, the council is charged with accrediting (registering) journalists, and is investigating the accrediting (licensing) of journalism schools and journalism teachers. The risk of this kind of networking is to constitute a closed shop of journalism education practice, operating in concert with a cartel of media owners. This development could forfeit autonomy in the sector and also risk violating rights to free speech. (See Berger, 2010, forthcoming).

Another case of networking is the ACCE, noted earlier, which had been a network of broad-based communications teachers and researchers with members in the diaspora and countries like Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon amongst others. It declined due to poor governance and a funding fall-off in the second half of the 1990s. A chapter has, however, continued to thrive in Nigeria, and a revival conference was convened in Ghana in 2009. Although 73 papers were accepted at that conference, and a strength was involving African academics in the diaspora, there was little directly serving journalism educators and not much emerged subsequently in terms of pan-African communications. One reason was the wide range of communications interests entailed in ACCE, and another is the difficulty of sustained organising on a pan-African scale without having resources or dedicated leadership.

5. UNESCO and other experiences.

UNESCO has some history in supporting African journalism education (see Berger, 2007, 2008b). However, in 2007 it commenced a new initiative that led to support for networking. In this, the focus was on linking across national boundaries (as distinct from bonding and bridging). The exercise began with the process of development of UNESCO criteria for excellence for specifically African journalism schools, and it elicited involvement by persons attached to 19 journalism schools from around Africa. This was enabled by email and partly by participation in a Yahoo discussion forum http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UNESCOAJ over a period of approximately two months, with deliberations on draft criteria. The origins of the participating educators can be categorised as 4 Nigerian, 2 South African, 2 Zimbabwean, 2 Kenyan, and 1 each from Senegal, Botswana, Egypt, Mozambique, Cameroon, Madagascar, Uganda and Namibia. A total of 30 African schools then completed the resulting checklist, hoping to be deemed a centre of excellence. These can be identified as follows: 5 South African, 4 Kenyan, 4 Nigerian, 3 Zimbabwean, 2 Namibian, and 1 each from Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Botswana, Morocco, Madagascar, Benin, Senegal, Burkina Faso, DRC, and Cameroon. (See Berger and Matras, 2007).

In all this, the bridging was partly based on a common cause which transcended both national and language divides (Anglophone and Francophone). Enabling this networking to happen was UNESCO-funded agency in the form of this author and Corinne Matras from the French Ecole Supérieure de Journalism Lille (ESJ), which entailed translation, aggregation, production of new drafts, and chivvying participants to spend the time on the project. A primary reason for the success of networking activity, it can be proposed, was the potential linkage it provided to UNESCO. The prestige of this international organisation, and the potential to acquire resources through it, seems to have been a driving force for people to set aside scarce time to be involved. Indeed, the contribution made by the different institutions paid off when UNESCO identified 19 schools that were deemed to have "potential". The group was then brought together in a UNESCO conference hosted in South Africa at Rhodes University, in March 2008, and most of the 19 institutions were represented by the heads of the respective schools.

This UNESCO meeting was a highpoint of networking, and several participants there argued strongly that relationships should be formalised by setting up an organisation (see Berger and Kyazze, 2008). These suggestions, however, met with scepticism by UNESCO's assistant deputy director-general, Dr Abdul Wahid Khan, who argued that the organisation would not provide resources for such a purpose. He explained that UNESCO had "burnt its fingers" on pouring money into the ACCE without results. In his view, setting up an organisation intensified the place of politics in networking and it absorbed a lot of money in administrative costs. Accordingly, he stated, UNESCO would only support specific activities, rather than the setting up of a new body of African journalism educators.

To return to the case of the 2008 UNESCO meeting of centres in Grahamstown, the gathering had also been designed as an occasion to develop bridging relationships with journalism schools outside of Africa, and linking relationships with donor agencies. There was participation by representatives of US, UK, French and Australian journalism schools, and by potential donors from the Netherlands, US, UK and South Africa. A small number of actual relationships eventually materialised out of this (see Berger 2008), but it is unclear which have been sustained.

It can thus be argued that the March 2008 meeting, while significant for knowledge sharing and foundational networking in person, did not produce spectacular social capital in the short-term. This may be part of the reason why invitations to schools to have a follow-up colloquium in September the same year, only elicited participation by 8, rather than the full 19, participants. Another reason was the limited capacity of the schools to free up their

heads, or even an alternate person, to travel to Grahamstown for the second time in a year. Finally, relatively short notice, and communications and language difficulties, were experienced with at least four of the institutions.

The initial report on the Centres of Excellence recommended to UNESCO that the organisation assist the designated schools to network with each other, and especially to develop their use of ICTs. This was against a backdrop of the 2007 research findings that most of the circa 200 schools in Africa having very poor Internet access, and the experience of information gathering and site visits which showed limited ICT skill as well.[5] The report also urged support for schools to build relationships with industry, and for capacity-building for school heads and teaching staffers. Addressing the schools themselves, the report further proposed that they use the criteria (and indicators) for excellence as an ongoing tool for self-assessment and future planning. It pointed out that they could utilise their status as being named by UNESCO as potential centres, so as to elicit respect from "potential students and learners, from their own parent institutions where applicable (eg. University administrations), from the media that they serve, and from donors and foundations in general". (See Berger and Matras, 2007). In other words, the status could help them move closer to excellence by bridging them to sectors with resources.

It was in line with this original vision that the March 2008 meeting recommended that the schools work towards developing their potential through partnerships, but also through internal "collective projects such as critical research around African media issues and journalism education-training networking projects such as around Highway Africa and around media-conflict-and-security". The meeting also gave support to Rhodes University's bid to host the World Journalism Education Congress in July 2010, on the basis of hearing that only a handful of African journalism educators (from two countries) had been able to attend the first Congress in Singapore in 2007. (See Berger and Kyazze, 2008).

It is worth paying some attention to the detail of the follow-up September 2008 meeting of the centres. The delegates were asked in advance to "provide a list of knowledge/research outputs from your school (e.g. staff papers presented at conferences, textbooks produced, research reports, student theses or research papers) in the last three years," and what relevant knowledge areas were seen as most missing but would be useful. Finally, they were requested to provide two ideas for collaborative projects that could involve several schools (to the mutual advantage of each) within the network. (See Berger, 2008a).

[5] See footnote 1 above.

The results of the ten contributions that came in on the knowledge sharing issue allowed for common areas of research to be identified. These were media and democracy, journalism production; environmental journalism, ICTs in journalism and reception studies. The gaps were in: media and development, journalism and subaltern culture (i.e. place of journalism in non-elite social space), re-visioning journalism in African setting, gender and media, and history of media. A general pattern emerging from the contributions was that there was a concern with journalism studies, rather than broader media studies. It also appeared that there was a paucity of research, and a lack of big research projects and school specialisations that could generate coherent bodies of knowledge. The research paradigms were not discernible from the reports.

Common project ideas that were suggested in the contributions included a focus on community media, principles of journalism, a textbook on media and society issues in Africa, and exploring what epistemological and ontological issues informed journalism education on the continent. After considering these reports, the meeting then agreed to create a detailed database of research output, and another of staff expertise which could enable schools to identify external examiners. There was also a proposal to investigate staff exchanges, and to work on syllabi for modules in Mass Media and Society, and Research Methods, relevant to African conditions. In addition, there was to be a project on getting African media scholarship published and made more accessible. A research colloquium of students and senior scholars was proposed, as well as a focus on building strategic leadership in the schools, as part of a workshop to be convened in Namibia on 3 May 2009. Different individuals were allocated responsibility for each task area (See Berger, 2008).

In theory, all these activities would have contributed substantial social capital to the emerging UNESCO schools network. However, none of the plans to develop the databases, develop syllabi, resource exchanges and publish scholarship came to naught. Several calls to the schools to send in their data were indeed made, without results forthcoming. In general, this seemed to be a function of a lack of time on the part of the participants, and also a lack of co-ordination and accountability follow-up.

Nevertheless, the proposed meeting in Namibia did take place successfully. In part, this was a function of people understandably responding to invitations to go to new places, and to the resourcing and prestige provided by UNESCO's involvement. The event also saw institutions other than Rhodes do the organising (although Rhodes raised part of the funds) – namely, the UNESCO-recognised schools at the Namibia Polytechnic and the University of Namibia. This gathering drew 25 educators from 12 countries (see Gómez de Sibandze and du To,

2008). It covered issues of strategic leadership, and it also engaged with how new media impacted on curriculum. The event also planned for a Preparatory Conference (Prepcom) for the World Journalism Education Congress, and agreed to have this in September 2009 at Rhodes University. This planning amounted to a fairly simple and single-minded goal: participants would work on research papers to present at colloquium to be bundled into the Prepcom and co-ordinated by Prof Fackson Banda (see Banda, 2009).

Akin to the Namibian institutions contributing their time to organising African journalism educators, the journalism school at the University of Stellenbosch marked its 30th anniversary with a seminar in October 2008 that invited selected educators from eight of the UNESCO-recognised schools in other parts of Africa, thanks to support of South African company Media24. The following year, 2009, the journalism school at the University of the Witwatersrand took the initiative to organise a limited-participation "Conference of African Journalism Educators", with the assistance of the contact list built up by Rhodes University's journalism school. This event involved some 20 participants from around the continent, and received support from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). That gathering formed a loose grouping called the "Forum of African Media Educators" (FAME), and 10 members who had papers accepted for the WJEC were later sponsored by the KAS to attend the Congress (and also take part in a separate workshop on academic skills for writing conference papers). The other 10 either did not submit abstracts or were rejected. A follow-up FAME conference is planned for later in 2010.

In other words, while networking failed to generate social capital to carry forward project activities, it did play a part in boosting reciprocity in terms of convening knowledge-based meetings.

During 2009, there was, as indicated, a colloquium and a Prepcom held at Rhodes. This was during September, and paralleled the 13th Highway Africa conference (the world's largest annual gathering of African journalists). A total of 32 papers were presented at the colloquium, from delegates hailing from nine African countries (and from three educators in the diaspora), and subjected to peer review. The presenters represented a total 21 journalism schools across the continent, and 83 educators attended in total. Packaged with the sponsored attendance was complimentary attendance at the prior Highway Africa conference, being an opportunity to bridge with practising journalists from around the continent. The follow-up again was straightforward – to re-work the papers for submission to the selection panel for presentation at the WJEC itself at Rhodes in July 2010. However, delegates were also cautioned that for 2010, sponsorship was scarce and that participants

should seek their own local resources to attend. There was also a commitment to take part in an online discussion about developing a model syllabus for a course on Reporting Africa. And at the same event, UNESCO announced their new website for African journalism educators, which includes social networking dimensions.

In terms of follow-up, of the 38 people who presented papers at the colloquium, 11 sent in accepted abstracts to WJEC. Given the purpose of the "Prepcom" character of the colloquium, in relation to the WJEC, this was not a strong throughput. On the other hand, there was a total of 57 abstracts from Africans in general that WJEC accepted, within the 160 acceptances worldwide, indicative of interest in attending the occasion – and in contributing knowledge to the mix. It is acknowledged here that capacity constraints – such as heavy teaching loads, or limited academic training – can often block journalism educators from generating academic quality papers for presentation.

For its part, the model syllabus initiative drew minimal participation, although it was billed at the Prepcom as a pan-African collaboration that would benefit not only journalism education around the continent – but also be a resource for colleagues elsewhere who might want to offer modules relating to African journalism. It is fair to conclude that this collective project suffered, however, from the same lack of traction as the projects agreed by the schools in September 2008. It had appeared to lend itself to inspiring involvement and to taking networking to a new level of participation, trust and reciprocity. In its favour, it was a focused project with the envisaged outcome of a CD to be distributed to delegates at the WJEC. It enjoyed UNESCO endorsement and funding for the leadership (provided by Fackson Banda). UNESCO further provided a website for the educators to discuss the curriculum (and network more broadly). The initiative had seemed set to echo the earlier proven involvement in the online development of the excellence criteria (which secured a respectable degree of participation in 2007). Further, it capitalised on a sense of identity as African journalism educators – defined in relation to non-Africans. There was, as it were, a fertile bed of pan-Africanist sentiment, which could help to mobilise contributions to the discussion by those individual educators (eg. including Africans in the diaspora) who are concerned at how the continent is marginalised and misrepresented in much media both abroad and at home.

However, the actual participation was minimal, despite several calls sent out for engagement. A handful of educators commented on the need for such a curriculum, and four modules were commissioned and produced under Banda's leadership but received little feedback. One reason, gleaned anecdotally, was complexity of the UNESCO website, and

another was simply that the initiative seems not to have engaged the imagination and time commitment of the continent's educators. Pan Africanism on its own, it seems, is not a sufficient sentiment to enable social networking in practice. Another limiting factor may have been that the exercise was not presented as having potential follow-up – such as future resourcing potentially available for further syllabus development across many additional African media topics.

6. Conclusion.

In conclusion, while enormous obstacles militate against networking African journalism educators, this paper suggests that these can be transcended in certain instances so as to strengthen African journalism education more broadly. Assessing the experience to date, one can provisionally point to drivers of effective networking, and to factors that limit the success thereof.

The drivers – or factors in favour of successful networking – seem to hinge on simplicity, focus, travel and resources. They are activities that kindle, or resonate with, interest and passion in interacting as a community of practice around focused projects such as that of defining "excellence" or of working on papers for presentation at the World Journalism Education Congress. High among the drivers would appear to be interest in possible benefits, such as an association with an editors' organisation or UNESCO. Opportunities to travel and network in person, i.e. to experience bridging and linkages with new people, also seem to be drivers.

Limitations on successful networking appear to be when follow-up activities involve complex and time-consuming work, such as collecting and sending data without specific contributor benefit in sight. There is also lesser interest than smaller activities as distinct from "grand projects" like Africanising the curriculum, learning how to get on top of new media, or in presenting a strong African front at the WJEC. Language barriers, lack of resources and time constraints also inhibit networking amongst Africa's journalism educators.

Looking ahead, during the WJEC itself, a range of interesting things could happen – as will now be outlined.

To contextualise: theorists of social capital argue that while bonding is good for unleashing certain value propositions, exceptional value can be gained by linking together people and constituencies that are not alike. Bridging ties are seen as connections to external assets and

as generating broader identities (Putnam 2000). While bonding is good for getting by; bridging is good for getting ahead (Field, 2003:65). In other words, connections across wide differences can prove to be marvellous sources of mutual benefit precisely because there are not usually or easily resource flows (intellectual – knowledge capital, or financial) across these divides. In this light, it may be that the WJEC event itself triggers a range of bridging between African journalism schools and offshore counterparts. These could be powerful value-generating relationships for all concerned. On the other hand, these connections do not, as such, entail enduring and productive intra-African ties, except in-as-much as strengthened African journalism schools might then be better able to network with each other in a subsequent moment. Consortia of African journalism schools might also emerge in relationships with off-shore institutions.

The fact that the WJEC event will parallel the 14th Highway Africa conference may lead to bridging with the media industry. Highway Africa has become the largest annual gathering of African journalists (see www.highwayafrica.com). For example, at the September 2008 meeting which was parallel to Highway Africa, Makarere's journalism school struck up promising contacts with the CEO of their country's largest paper. The WJEC programme has also been set up to bring together journalism educators based in higher educational institutions, NGOs and institutes, and in industry. A degree of bonding or bridging amongst these entities (which – it can be argued – too often operate in silos) could develop. It could also be that the WJEC will see some bridging between African journalism educators of different languages and regions. Whether it will generate a level of bonding, however, within African parameters, is going to be a function of how well the constituency understands and executes the importance of social networking amongst itself.

Arguably, success in building networks to benefit African journalism education should encompass all levels of bonding, the bridging and the linking at the WJEC, whether individual, institutional, national or other. In some ways, these can all be interdependent and inter-energising activities. Although South African historical experience of journalism education suggests that bridging (to industry) is more successful than bonding (with each other), it is possible that intra-African bridging amongst schools or individuals could be pre-condition or foundation for all kinds of effective external linkages (internationally, to local industry, or to donors) and vice versa. Indeed, learning from the experiences reviewed here, if bridging generates resources of direct value to a given participant, such as via an articulation with linkage to a third party, it has prospects for continuing.

If the use of the new technologies such as another UNESCO website that is being developed to showcase the organisation's model curriculum and adaptations thereof, can evolve to help facilitate this, one could begin to see the elements emerge of a solution to the problem. Clearly, however, social networking technology itself (even web 2.0) is not a panacea or replacement for other forms and benefits of networking.

If it is to move to the next level, the African journalism educator networking to date has to scale up. It needs to generate more sustainable participation, leadership, activities, and especially tangible benefit (including benefit that goes wider than knowledge gains like conferencing) to the participants. To do that, however, reciprocity is a key element that is needed – participants have to invest if they wish to gain from a network. African journalism education has not yet reached at an exponential point where benefits of investing outweigh the comparative costs. If bridging within the constituency is a way to link to external resources, this may be the key to enduring relationships amongst Africa's journalism educators and their institutions. This may be an expedient rationale, but after all, the networking of journalism educators is not an end in itself. It's about social capital that can unlock other kinds of capital – prestige, knowledge, skills, experiences, collaborations, technology flows and monetary.

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