

**Cover Page**

**Topic:**

**Broadening Horizons: A Case Study of a Training Newspaper at  
the University of Botswana**

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## **Abstract**

*UB-Horizon* newspaper was launched in August 2007 as an intentional student learning tool for the University of Botswana's Media Studies Department. The main goal of the newspaper was to help the students put into practice the theories they had acquired in the print journalism courses. Students are expected to write, read, observe and discuss constantly, the media as they see and use it. The students, led by an editorial team, do all the work pertaining to the newspaper from collecting and writing stories, editing, soliciting adverts, designing the newspaper and distributing it. The lecturer in charge of the newspaper supervises the entire process, including the final editing to ensure the newspaper is up to standard for publication. Two years on, the newspaper's circulation has grown from the initial 3500 to 10,000, thanks to a partnership with a publishing company, Simply Marketing. But with this partnership, where they took over advertising, printing and distribution of the newspaper thus offloading major economic hardships the paper was undergoing, came other challenges: censorship on stories the company, which is partly owned by a politician, deemed 'politically' unfit. Other challenges were in distribution. According to the management at the company, for the purposes of being registered with the Bureau of Statistics, the company introduced a system where each student picking a newspaper had to sign. Students refused to sign and many newspapers would remain unpicked. Besides these, there have been other challenges through incorporating the newspaper into the curricular. The marks assigned to the work done for the newspaper – 15%. Many students took advantage of the high mark for each story done to do mediocre work as they knew their stories had to be used. However, from the findings, it is clear that *UB-Horizon* has played a key role in training students to write and design better, preparing them for a 'real' future out there. This paper examines these and many other challenges and successes, as well as lessons learned since the paper was launched.

## **Key words**

University of Botswana, journalism, professional, media studies, intentional learning tool.

## **Introduction**

*UB- Horizon* is a newspaper in the University of Botswana's Department of Media Studies (DMS). DMS, the first of its kind in the country, was started in 2002 to train journalists and media practitioners across the nation, in five main streams – Print, Radio, TV & Video, Public Relations and Cinema. Cinema was later shelved when it was realized that only external students registered for it as an elective. Whereas the department started off small with only 30

students, the numbers have since grown to 104 students currently.<sup>1</sup> The Bachelor's program is both practical and theoretical and therefore highly intensive. The practical courses in print journalism, television and video, radio production, script writing and public relations management and writing offer students exciting channels for their imagination and creativity. Commitment, professionalism and respect for deadlines are some of the attributes expected of the students.

The idea of establishing *UB-Horizon* newspaper was mooted in 2006. The newspaper was envisioned as a journalism teaching tool, providing students with hands-on professional journalism experience. It was also to serve the university as a whole by providing fair, balanced and accurate news to the UB community. "Establishing *UB-Horizon* was an ambition to make professional programs practical so as to help students practice what they had learned in their courses, in other words, linking professional courses to practical work. Print media was the easiest to work with as a test stream. There was also the very important aim of raising the profile of the Department from being seen as only theoretical to a practical one like others such as Rhodes and Wits in South Africa."<sup>2</sup>

The courses that would help print media students practice what they had learnt in beat reporting, health, environment, science, tourism, industry, business and investigative reporting, editing, feature and magazine writing, media management, desktop publishing and advertising. The media management course was expected to enhance marketing research for the newspaper, the desktop publishing would help with the design work while advertising would help obtain adverts for the newspaper. Whereas the students would not be paid for their work, those who got adverts for the paper would be paid a 10% commission. Towards this end, DMS partnered with the McGee

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Prof. David Kerr, Head, Department of Media Studies at University of Botswana on May 5, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Foundation, a U.S. private foundation dedicated to promoting sound journalistic practices in Southern Africa. Until 2008 when the recession affected the foundation enormously, the foundation regularly sent at least one fellow every other semester. The fellow would usually be a seasoned professional in his or her field and he or she would teach journalism skills and provide general assistance to the Department. For the establishment of the newspaper, the Foundation was dedicated to supporting *UB-Horizon* in the form of allotting much of the fellows' time and energy to helping the students in their publishing efforts.<sup>3</sup>

To start *UB-Horizon* off, much of the initial advisory work was done by Mr. Doug Cospers, a visiting journalism lecturer from the University of Colorado, Boulder, with assistance from the McGee Foundation. The paper was to appear three times a semester and was to be run entirely by students of the Media Studies Department, but with supervision by departmental staff. Cospers, had done this in Azerbaijan and Romania earlier. "The idea was that journalism education can be far too academic, especially if taught by academics, and there's nothing like practicing the trade to learn journalism."<sup>4</sup>

Before the newspaper began, there was a college wide survey conducted by students in the Media Management course, to find out whether it was a viable project and if so, what the students wanted to see in the newspaper. Based on the findings of this market survey, the paper focussed on the following: student politics, students' academic issues, social problems on campus, economic issues, administration & management issues, school gossip, sports news, local advertising, academic staff issues, editorial/opinion pieces, off campus students challenges, , UB support staff issues, culture and religion.

Following the survey, it was agreed that the *UB-Horizon* would be a 16-page, full-color tabloid published monthly during the academic session. Although it would be published under the

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Prof. David Kerr, Head Department of Media Studies at University of Botswana on May 5, 2010

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mr. Doug Cospers via Email on May 6.2010

supervision of the DMS, it would strive to be a truly independent voice for the students and staff. Students were to generate the stories and photographs in the department's journalism classes and beyond. They were also to participate in story editing, design and lay out the newspaper and design and maintain a web site. They were to sell the advertising space, distribute the paper and manage the business. It was agreed that the *UB-Horizon* would not imitate a real newspaper but will be unique. It would carry news stories relevant to students and staff including sports, politics, feature stories related to student life and arts and entertainment. It would have a full editorial page including student-written editorials, cartoons, letters to the editor and guest opinions.

At its inception in 2007, *UB-Horizon* started as a 16 page tabloid meant to serve a population of around 15,000 students and about 1000 members of staff. The first issue targeted the celebration of 25 years of existence of the university as well as the fifth birthday of the department. While the initial issue was free, the second issue was sold for P2 in the college and a number of newsstands in the super markets. The experience of the sale however was not good. Out of 3500 copies, only 900 were sold. Many of the initial advertisers threatened to withdraw their ads and the editorial board decided to distribute it free but seek strong adverts to help run it.

To date, the aim of *UB-Horizon* remains to provide practical print journalism training and thereby graduate job – ready graduates for the journalism industry in the country. It also fulfills the University's Teaching and Learning Policy to wit'

This guiding policy statement is supported by a learning and teaching philosophy that is based on the principle of "intentional learning", which puts an emphasis on pedagogical strategies that encourage active learning, the achievement of learning outcomes and the development of self-

directed, independent learners who have learned how to learn. This is in contrast to content-oriented teaching strategies that focus primarily on “covering the material” and passive learning.<sup>5</sup>

The newspaper also exists in line with the University’s vision and mission which amongst others includes offering’

...quality academic and professional programmes that ensure a commitment to and a mastery of life-long learning skills as well as encouraging a spirit of critical enquiry. It also does this through developing a student-centred, intellectually stimulating and technologically advanced teaching, learning and research environment and thus producing graduates who are independent, confident, self directed, critical thinkers, professionally competent, reflective practitioners, innovative, socially responsible and thereby marketable and competitive nationally and internationally”<sup>6</sup>

## **Literature Review**

*UB-Horizon* is an intentional as well as service learning tool in the Department of Media Studies. Intentional learning refers to cognitive processes that have learning as a goal rather than an incidental outcome (Bereiter and Scardamalia (1989). The experiences that students get can have outcomes from incidental learning, but only some cognitive activity is carried out according to procedures that contain learning goals. Whether intentional learning occurs is likely to depend on both situational and intrinsic factors-such as what the situation affords in goal-attainment opportunities (in this case, writing publishable stories) and on what the student's mental resources are for attaining those goals, that is the theoretical and practical training they get

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<sup>5</sup> University of Botswana’s Learning and Teaching Policy – Approved by Senate February 20th, 2008, 2.2

<sup>6</sup> University of Botswana Vision, Mission and Values, <http://tirisoano/aboutub/default.aspx>

(Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1989). At the University of Botswana, “Intentional learning entails an over-riding focus on learning and teaching strategies that enable students to ascend through levels of study in diverse academic programmes to achieve their learning outcomes.”<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, service learning integrates the two objectives of providing a service and gaining knowledge through organizing and taking part in an activity. This is meant to have positive outcomes for both the recipients (students) and the providers of the service (lecturers) (Strickert, 2010). UB-Horizon involves the two systems of learning which helps the students incorporate theory into practice for both themselves and the audience they write for. When students use service tasks with structured opportunities that link projects to self reflection and self-discovery, the acquisition and actualization of values, skillfulness, and wisdom, both objectives of service learning usually are accomplished (Strickert, 2010). Learning through service projects may also offer opportunities to explore contentious societal issues, including inequalities prevalent in race, gender, socioeconomic status, and accessibility in direct, meaningful ways.”<sup>8</sup> (Strickert, 2010)..

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent is the campus newspaper – *UB-Horizon* – integrated into the print journalism curricular?
2. How are the students’ evaluations of the courses applied to UB Horizon?
3. Does the transition in students’ management team impact news production?
4. What are the benefits and challenges of outsourcing the advertisements and printing of the paper?
5. What mechanisms have helped improved the paper’s quality and quantity?

### **Methodology**

To answer the research questions, a case study method was adopted. Specifically, this entailed, in-depth interviews with eight key informants involved in the formation and production of the

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<sup>7</sup> UB Teaching & Learning Policy, 2008, 2.2.

<sup>8</sup> Lori Stricket. Service Learning for Health, Physical Education and Recreation:A Step-by-Step Guide,1

newspaper and an analysis of 32 student assessments since the newspaper was incorporated into the curricular in the 2009/2010 academic year. A case study uses as many data sources as possible to systematically investigate individuals, groups, organizations, or events and it is best used when a researcher needs to understand or explain a phenomenon” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

The research utilized unstructured interviews to obtain information from persons who were involved in the initial stages of creating the newspaper. This type of interview is unique as, “broad questions are asked that allow interviewers freedom to determine what further questions to ask to obtain the required information. Interviews enable a researcher to obtain information that they cannot get by observation” (Berger, 2000) and in this case, due to the fact that many of those who were key to the creation of *UB-Horizon* and later stages of the newspaper are no longer in the. Interviews such as the ones this researcher has used here can be said to be a “conversations between a researcher (someone who wishes to gain information about a subject) and an informant (someone presumably has information of interest on the subject).”<sup>9</sup>

The students’ assessment involved results of the student/lecturer evaluation known as Students Evaluation of Teaching and Courses (SECATS). Every end of the semester, students are asked to voluntarily and anonymously evaluate their lecturers in SECATS. Until this past semester when the system started incorporating an electronic form of evaluation, the completed evaluation forms were taken to the Teaching and Learning Unit where they are evaluated and a lecturer gets results of their teaching skills.

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<sup>9</sup> Berger, A. A. *Media and Communication Research Methods*, 111.



## **Findings**

### **Integration of UB-Horizon into Print Journalism Curriculum**

The extent to which the campus newspaper – *UB-Horizon* has been integrated into the print journalism curricular is that currently it occupies 45 per cent of grade points out of the 100 per cent marks for the practical print journalism courses. This is at the rate of 15 per cent per story per newspaper. Through this process, the students learn how to choose stories, interview, write the stories and finally submit for editing. Whereas this has worked in the past two semesters, other challenges have emerged from this process. Some students write more than one story while others do not write at all. Further, it has emerged that the high marks for the newspaper, (15%) per story and the fact that the probability of the story being used are very high have brought with them hurriedly written sometimes mediocre stories that put a strain on the student editors editing these stories as some stories have to be almost re-written. Another challenge that has emerged from this is the fact that since the newspaper has only 16 pages content, which includes photos, rarely are any stories written by a single student as all students have to do the assignments and there is not enough room for single byline stories. So, most stories end up sharing between three and four bylines. When this happens, it is often unclear who did what and one cannot find out the weakness of a particular student. Due to time constraints and other duties, the lecturer involved cannot have one on one tutorials with students.

From the qualitative responses, respondents spoke positively about the impact of the newspaper on their writing skills. Some of the comments were: “I learnt how to write colorful stories, I was drawn more to writing and the course was interesting as it helps an aspiring writer to enhance/improve his/her ability writing skills”; “the course was challenging and pushed me out of my boundaries as a student taking it as an elective, it was hard work but fun and it helped me

improve my standard of writing and approach towards stories.” Other respondents said: “it helped me to apply it to real life environment/working area, concepts are easy to grasp, it was challenging and demanded a lot of attention and hard work thus adding to experience as in real world, broadened my horizons as a journalist and helped me learn how to do science writing, prepared me for my future career, journalism, challenging, yet fulfilling, it was informative, contributed a great deal to my professional growth.”

However, not all the 32 respondents liked writing for *UB-Horizon*. There were three negative answers while one student did not answer that question. The negative answers were that: he/she had hoped they would learn more about magazine writing but they ended up writing more news stories which fitted *UB-Horizon* style while another said there was nothing worth noting about the course and one said it contributed nothing to his/her knowledge.

Interviews with past editors and chief designers of the newspaper also elicited almost similar comments. Angela Mdlalani who worked with *UB-Horizon* since October 2007 until August 2009 first as a writer then as an editor said that, “I saw it as a tool for improving and gaining writing skills in writing as I intended on following a career in print journalism.”<sup>10</sup> Mdlalani further shows the impact of *UB-Horizon* both within UB and beyond. “Working for the newspaper was a challenging experience, yet fun and very engaging. It gave me a name at UB and outside UB. I learnt a lot as a practicing reporter from my experience at *Horizon*”.

The training that the editors get from the retiring editors and their lecturers also impacted greatly on their training. “I first trained under Julia Cass and then Wanja Njuguna. Both ladies were very good at what they did and have helped a lot in my development as a writer. Julia was fun to work

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Angela Mdlalani, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email.

under and she was very interesting and made the experience all too easy for me. Wanja on the other hand was very hard working and pushed for the best. It was great working under her as she showed me that there shouldn't be any limitation in what I pursue as a writer. Cheryl was a very passionate writer. She instilled in me the patience that had to come with being Editor of Horizon.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Evaluations of the courses as applied to *UB-Horizon***

There are two courses per semester that are involved in providing stories for UB Horizon. During the first semester when the newspaper was incorporated into the curriculum, BMS 204 (Feature and Magazine Writing and BMS 404 (Health and Science Reporting) played this role. The evaluation from the semester that just ended has not been done. The courses involved this past semester were BMS 208 (Beat Reporting) and BMS 313 (A-Environment & Science and B-Business, Industry & Tourism Reporting) with a total of 46 students. The attitude of the students in the courses evaluated was positive as many saw it as an important tool in helping them practice what they do in the newspaper.

The first semester of the academic year 2009/2010 saw the incorporation of the newspaper into the curricular. A total of 32 students evaluated the newspaper related courses in the SECAT. This paper will only document questions that directly impacted on the newspaper.

It was evident that students appreciate the presence of and their work in the newspaper as seen in the table below from key questions from the SECAT that impact on *UB-Horizon*.

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Angela Mdlalani, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email.

Table 1

Attitude of Students to Incorporation of *UB-Horizon* into Curricula

<b>Students' Views</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
Interest in enrolling for the course prior to its commencement	Strongly Disagree	8	25
	Disagree	1	3.13
	Neutral	3	9.275
	Agree	12	37.5
	Strongly Agree	8	25
	<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>
Views on recommending the course to others	Yes	28	87.5
	No	4	12.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>
Clarity in stated learning objectives	Strongly Disagree	1	3.125
	Disagree	-	-
	Neutral	10	31.25
	Agree	10	31.25
	Strongly Agree	10	31.25
	Did not answer	1	2.125
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>	
Organization of the course	Strongly Disagree	1	3.125
	Disagree	1	3.125
	Neutral	9	28.125
	Agree	11	34.375
	Strongly Agree	9	28.125
	Did not answer	1	3.125
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>	
Course coverage of learning objectives	Strongly Disagree	1	3.125
	Disagree	2	6.25
	Neutral	6	18.75
	Agree	14	43.75
	Strongly Agree	8	25
	Did not answer	1	3.125
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>	
Extent to which the course contributed to students' professional growth	Strongly Disagree	1	3.125
	Disagree	2	6.25
	Neutral	3	9.275
	Agree	12	37.5
	Strongly Agree	14	43.75
	Did not answer	1	3.125
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>	

Course facilitation of acquisition of problem solving skills	Strongly Disagree	2	6.25
	Disagree	1	3.125
	Neutral	5	15.625
	Agree	12	37.5
	Strongly Agree	12	37.5
	Did not answer	1	3.125
	<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Transition in students’ management team impact on news production**

The experience of past students who have been involved in *UB-Horizon* at various levels also shows how important the newspaper is to the training of print journalists. Most of the previous editors and chief designers work together with the lecturer to identify a good incoming successor. Angela Mdlalani chose her successor based on knowledge of his work as a classmate and with help from this researcher. “Chenjerai Warambwa loves reporting, is a good writer and very hardworking. He also had this charisma about him, something I believed would help him spearhead the paper. He proved to be willing and a responsible young man too.”<sup>12</sup>

Though he was a generally a quiet student, he proved capable and dedicated to his work. Cheryl Ntuny, one of the students who was in the initial team that helped start *UB-Horizon* and who has since graduated and is working for business newspaper and a publishing company in Gaborone says that the newspaper played a very important role in who she is today. “Doug (Cosper) tried to get as many of us involved as possible from the start. I was reluctant to join the team because I had intended to specialise in Cinema, which ended up being removed from the programme. Doug convinced me to give it a try, so I attended the first meeting. I soon realised how useful it was going to be – it was really the only way we were going to learn how to work in the media before leaving school. We were a small team, we were all learning the ropes together and I felt it was an

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Angela Mdlalani on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email.

honour to be part of the founding team of something so big, so I changed my mind and stayed on board.<sup>13</sup>

Chenjerai Warambwa who recently passed on the baton to Eric Paulo says, “I chose Erick Paulo as my successor. This is due to the fact that he is a hard worker, editing is no joke. He has proven himself as the deputy editor and I felt he had the love and dedication to pick up from where I left”.<sup>14</sup>

The designers too have had their reasons for choosing their successor but they also fingered professionalism and commitment as important qualities Kibo Ngowi, outgoing Chief Designer feels that the training he received from Tafazwa Ranganai, former Chief Designer helped a lot in the work he was able to accomplish: “Training under Tafadzwa was very educational and I like the fact that he made it so as I never felt intimidated to approach him for help.”<sup>15</sup>

The kind of training that each of the former editors and Chief designers got impacted immensely on news production. “Cheryl showed me how to do a lot of things, how it all operated in the paper and how to handle a lot of things that involved production of the paper.”<sup>16</sup> As an editor, Mdlalani’s duties included, reporting (editorial), general managing of most things for the paper, like chairing the editorial meetings, delegating articles to be followed up, drawing the dummy, editing the articles and writing headlines and captions for the paper.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Cheryl Ntuny on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 via email.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Chenjerai Warambwa on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Kibo Ngowi on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Angela Mdlalani on, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email.

Ntumy started off as a reporter and the resident book review writer, then became deputy editor when Cosper suggested that the founding editor, Ruth Kedikilwe, would need some help. “When Ruth graduated, I took over as editor, then after leaving that post at the end of my term, I continued as a reporter and book reviewer.”<sup>17</sup>

Answering a question on the impact of working for *UB-Horizon*, Ntumy’s answer shows the importance of the newspaper to the department and the student community. “It was definitely beneficial. The Horizon probably taught me more than the entire four years of study, simply because I got to know firsthand what it means to work in the media. I got to experience being in charge of everything as the editor, being a reporter, and also learned a bit about the advertising and design aspects of the paper. It certainly prepared me for the working world – I find that now I’m in a better position to see the bigger picture because I’ve been there before, as opposed to only seeing things from a reporter’s perspective. Besides, the professional benefits, being part of the Horizon brought me out of my shell, forced me to learn how to approach people and how to deal with different situations. It was also the reason I got the chance to work overseas, so it has opened many doors for me.”<sup>18</sup>

On whether the experience in UB-Horizon impacted on her current work today, Ntumy answered in the affirmative. She says she “absolutely had no real desire to be a journalist before I got involved with the Horizon. I now have a deep respect for the profession, and a passion for the ideals on which journalism is based.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Cheryl Ntumyon, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 via email.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

The challenges that the students have working with *UB-Horizon* also impacts on the quality of news as the students too are balancing many things that include their personal lives, studies and the paper. “Balancing between working for *UB-Horizon* and my many classes, dealing with the unorthodox times during deadline when we had to spend nights at the lab laying out pages and proof reading was very difficult.”<sup>20</sup> For Ngowi, the experience at *UB-Horizon* outgoing Chief Designer has been “enjoyable at times and usually frustrating/stressful but very educational.”

Another accomplishment of the *UB-Horizon* is narrated by Cosper who started the newspaper as a McGee Fellow. “I was and remain very proud of the students who made the *UB-Horizon* happen and kept it going with as much integrity as they could muster. The *UB-Horizon* is the only paper among the three I have had a hand in starting that has survived. I am a very proud parent, indeed.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Benefits and challenges of outsourcing advertisements, printing and distribution of *UB-Horizon***

The partnership with Simply Marketing started in January 2009 and will last until December 2010. The partnership was an agreement that the company would solicit adverts for the newspaper and the revenue therein would be used to pay for publication of the same. Further, SM would take care of publishing and distribution of *UB-Horizon* at venues agreed upon by the two partners. In return, *UB-Horizon* would provide thoroughly edited stories layed out on pages and compressed in pdf form, then saved in a flush drive and taken to the company.

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Angela Mdlalani, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Doug Cosper, on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email.



The newspaper has undergone a lot of challenges since its initial stages and also since the partnership with Simply Marketing started. These challenges have impacted on the quality and quantity of the newspaper both positively and negatively but the process is one of learning and bettering the next copy. For example, soon after taking over the newspaper coordination and editing, this researcher was faced with a student team that wanted to run the paper the way they knew best as compared to what the researcher believed was the best model. The advertising team downed its tools during preparation for the second edition of the 2008/2009 second semester after they felt a rule that had been put in place before the preparation of the first edition for the year was unfair. The newspaper run with only one advert and only a good relationship between the department and the publisher at the time, Mmegi Publishers, saved the day. This researcher had realized that whereas the advertising team would solicit for ads, it remained the duty of the coordinator and editor in chief to follow up the payment. This was above all other duties the person had. This had brought about either delay in getting payments or getting no payments at all and many cheques had been cancelled by the advertisers after they had remained uncollected for many months. To ensure responsibility for their work, this rule was put in place and every student who had brought in an ad was paid their commission after they delivered their cheques. This helped ensure that the UB-Horizon kitty had continuous resources.

Many of the students in the initial team believe they knew it all and could not be taught how to run a newspaper professionally. And yet, according to Ntummy, none of the students had ever worked in a newspaper or knew what really needed to be done. “The main challenge was the fact that none of us, with the exception of Doug, knew what we were doing. We were all learning on the job, and it was tough picking up all the rules of journalism, ethics and creating a balance

between advertising and journalism. Money was also an issue, because we had to raise our own printing funds through adverts. The paper had to borrow a few times from the department staff to cover costs. It was also extremely time consuming, especially for Doug because he had to compensate for our lack of experience. There were many sleepless nights, a few disagreements on how things should be done and lots of panic when it came to deadlines.”<sup>22</sup>

Outsourcing of advertisements, printing and distribution of the newspaper has had its challenges both in quality and quantity in various ways. The transition to the new company, Simply Marketing had many challenges and at the same time benefits. “It was rough when we had to hand the advertising department of the paper to Simply Marketing. They proved to be a hard to work with as it seemed they did not understand how a student newspaper operates. It was worrying that the students were not directly involved in advertising anymore even though this was also a result of lack of interest by many students in soliciting for adverts.”<sup>23</sup>

There were also issues of censorship of stories that students wrote. Due to the ownership of the Simply Marketing where one of the key shareholders is a politician, the kind of stories UB-Horizon carried had to be ‘right’. After removal of some stories in two issues, an anonymous audience member r called one of the radio stations and also reported to Media Institute of Southern Africa (Botswana Chapter) on the removal of political stories from the newspaper. This was received very negatively by the company which called an urgent meeting threatening to cut short the contract. However, during the meeting, these issues were resolved and it was agreed

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Cheryl Ntuny on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 via email.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Angela Mdlalani on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email

that the company will have a rough idea of stories to be carried so that they know how to deal with them before hand.

Besides the advertising problems, when this writer took over the newspaper coordination and editing in January 2008, a number of other problems continued until the new partnership with Simply Marketing started. Some of these challenges included financial, getting adverts, deadlines and distribution.

The team at Simply Marketing, a Professional Publication Production and Management Solutions Provider, has also benefitted in working with UB-Horizon, amidst various challenges. Tendai Bunhu, Consulting Creative & Business Development Solutions Provider who oversees production of *UB-Horizon* says that the reason they got involved with the newspaper is because one of their goals is to realize the potential in publications and provide effective professional publication management solutions. From his experience, *UB-Horizon* has improved in various ways. “On design, after some meetings with design students, we have seen some change in the following; File size is smaller-easier to handle (for images have been cropped to specific layout size) –Some images optimized for newspaper printing, consistency on captions as regards font sizes, all links are updated and packaged, a plus in production saving time on if we were to have missing images or links, improved layout (text clear from object frames), establish style sheets and follow them while the layout has improved and design principles are being applied. On stories, these come to us edited but have only minor corrections.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Tendai Bunhu, Simply Marketing’s UB-Horizon coordinator on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via telephone and email.

In general, *UB-Horizon* has benefitted on quality and quantity from the relationship with Simply Marketing despite challenges that include censorship of ‘politically’ incorrect stories as well as printing and late publication deadline. Another area that students have benefitted from in the SM partnership is that “through partnership with SM, the regular meetings at the initial stages, allowed students attending the meetings to view how a variety of interest groups run a paper and how they were to be accommodated into the interests of this large company, not only for core business but others such as publishing, advertising and design..

Since Simply Marketing came on board, the number of copies increased from a previous 4000-6000 depending on funding to a regular 10,000 copies. Of these, 6000-8000 copies are distributed in the university while the remaining 2000 are distributed to our publics outside the college. These include various ministries, foreign missions, organisations such as MISA, all media outlets – both electronic and print while another lot is distributed to a number of towns outside Gaborone. The distribution team from Simply Marketing also makes the paper available to other parts of the country.

### **Mechanisms that have helped improved the paper’s quality**

Incorporating the newspaper into the curricular has greatly impacted on the quality of the newspaper. Students either pick the stories they want to work on or the stories are given to them in a main meeting that is called soon after a newspaper comes out. Some students have taken to beats and follow up on particular beat religiously and this has been a good learning experience for those who would like to become beat reporters. We have such beats as Maintenance, Ministry of Education, Crime and others.

During the meeting, issues emerging from the newspaper such as quality, pictures, kind of stories etc are discussed. Deadlines are set for the stories and students must electronically send the stories to the lecturer who in turn sends them to the editor. The editor, who has a team of two deputies edits the stories and then returns them to the lecturer. This atleast reduces the workload of the lecturer so that she is able to concentrate on more important issues in the stories other than grammatical errors among others.

For many students, having their bylines on the stories or lack of bylines because a story was not good enough impacts on how they write their next stories. Whereas the marking of the stories and assigning them 15 % has come with other challenges mentioned elsewhere, this has however encouraged students to work on their stories more serious as getting a low mark out of 15 means that the students ends up getting a very low percentile.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Due to the agreement with Simply Marketing where we stick to a specific deadline to hand in the final copy for distribution, students have been forced to stick to deadline for writing, editing and designing the stories. Students write deadline oriented stories either in groups or individually, the stories are then sent to the lecturer who looks through them to see if any information needs to be added then sends to the student editors to edit them (through track changing) after which they send back to the lecturer who final edits the stories. “The fact that they know the paper will be published has given students an incentive to write deadline stories. I have also seen improvement in writing assignments now that the students know what is expected of them.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Prof. David Kerr, Head Department of Media Studies at University of Botswana on May 5, 2010

During the preparation for the publication of *UB-Horizon*, two processes happen at this stage: one, the lecturer edits, cleans up the copy and puts all the stories in a folder for the design and editorial team to work with during design time which is normally the second last weekend of the month. This is so that the stories come out on the last week of the month when the students have allowances as advertisers target students. The second process is that the lecturer now gives a mark to the story which is based on grammar, creativity and thoroughness of information. The lecturer then sends the story with the corrections and grade to the students so they can look at what work went into their stories. The negative comments that students have if they do not see their stories in the newspapers are further proof that they are keen to see what they wrote published. They are slowly learning the importance of bylines to create a portfolio for themselves as they go to solicit for places to do internships during their holidays or for their compulsory end of first and third year internships. From the findings, it is clear that the *UB-Horizon* newspaper is already playing part of the role that it set out to play: practically train students to use the skills they have learnt in theory.

However, *UB-Horizon* has been able to accomplish many of the goals it set out at the beginning, albeit the many challenges it has faced. Ntuny is witness that the newspaper has come a long way. “At first we were afraid the paper would not be sustainable. We were worried that all our hard work would be for nothing because at some point there would be no money, or the students who followed us would lose interest, but I’ve seen a few recent copies and it’s doing very well. It is now an ingrained part of UB culture, as it should be. It may only be seen as a campus paper by outsiders, but by producing graduates who have a real understanding of the working media it is

adding value to the local industry and playing a big role in shaping the future of the media in Botswana.”<sup>26</sup>

The research is not exhaustive and the researcher would like to do a further study that will incorporate for example, a college-wide survey on the impact of *UB-Horizon* newspaper.

Another area the researcher would like to explore is how to reduce on the challenge of not having a one on one tutorial with the *UB-Horizon* specific trainees. This would enhance their capability on writing well researched and quality stories compared to what they are doing now. A real feel of a newsroom is another recommendation that would enhance the student learning. “I feel the enthusiasm of a newsroom is missing and the emergence of one instead of the mac lab we are using now would really help the students get the real feel of reality.” (Kerr, 5.5.2010)

A supplement that highlights what UB alumni have been doing since graduation and fully funded by them is another idea that has been recommended. (Bunhu, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Cheryl Ntumyon May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 via email.

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