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**'New Media' and 'News Agenda' in Africa:
Implications for Journalism Training in Tanzania**

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Abstract

Challenges posed by new media technologies in journalism education are rendering the existing training programmes obsolete. Media convergence, digitization, and miniaturization among other developments call for expertise largely non-existent in journalism schools across sub-Saharan Africa. While UNESCO and other development partners are obsessed with creating 'centres of excellence' out African journalism schools in the image of the Western institutions, the training remains stuck in an analog mode based on a traditional understanding of news production, distribution and consumption. However, trends are shifting towards multi-platform provision of content (mobile, online etc) that require multi-media skills beyond story telling. The main argument in this paper is that journalism education in Africa lags behind developments in modern newsrooms at the risk of becoming irrelevant.

Key words: new media, journalism education, multi-media skills, and curricula

Introduction

Several inadequacies pose a major challenge to the East African journalism: limited regulation of training,¹ failure to integrate new media technologies in training and lack of multimedia and online training. The media are offering content in multiple platforms: online, mobile as well as traditional analog formats. These developments require journalists with multiple skills sometimes characterized as, "jacks of all trades and masters of all."² The normative news structure is changing and no longer exclusively defined by an inverted pyramid structure. An assortment of models including 'a diamond news structure' emphasizing speed and depth are emerging.³ Lately, breaking news 'alert' has become an online lead in a news process passing through drafting, contextualization, analysis, interactivity, and customization. As information trickles in converged newsrooms a news story is re-written to create what some call "the story that is forever unfinished."⁴ Yet training is still trapped in a traditional news production paradigm treating news as a finished product written in a descending order of importance. Media convergence morphing mobile, online, and print news processing call for skills in videography, digital photography, web-design, and blogging not imparted in standard journalism classrooms in Africa.

The Training Context

A rapid expansion of institutions and proliferation of programmes witnessed since mid-1990s has become a hallmark of journalism education. The growth is driven by commercial rather than academic, vocational or technological imperatives. Most tertiary training institutions in Tanzania are registered under the vocational training system or the business license scheme outside the rigid accreditation system needed to ensure

¹African journalism studies within earshot. In *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies at* <http://ajs.uwpress.org/cgi/reprint/28/1-2/5>

² Trends in Newsrooms 2008: 80-81.

³ Trends in Newsrooms 2008: 19.

⁴ Trends in Newsrooms 2008: 19.

that the standards are met.⁵ Meanwhile, most tertiary institutions lack basic equipment; others lack even permanent addresses attracting derogatory sobriquets like ‘roof top academies.’

Journalism training usually occurs at three levels, namely, institutions level (media houses), tertiary (vocational level), and university level. At the level of institutions media houses organize short courses lasting from few weeks to several months for people with non-journalism background. While these programmes are popular, they are not regulated. The tertiary level offers vocational type of training with emphasis on transmitting skills. The university level programmes offer up to graduate level with emphasis on theory and research.

Notwithstanding, the increase in the type and number of training institutions, the characterization of the Tanzanian journalists as a veritable “army of ‘bare-foot reporters’ with little journalistic skills” remains largely true (Okigbo 1994). Similarly, the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) has characterized the contemporary journalism training as too “academic.”⁶ At independence in 1961 there were two trained indigenous journalists (Hamelink 1988: 48). By mid- 1990s, there was an estimated 600 journalists employed as civil servants in various government media (Sturmer and Rioba 2001). And the number in 2008 is estimated at 5000 journalists – a 700 percent increase in a little more than a decade. However, most media professionals are migrating into lucrative managerial positions in public relations firms and the burgeoning NGO sector depleting newsrooms of the most promising talents.

Similarly, the expansion of the media industry has been phenomenal spawning a huge demand for reporters. From six daily newspapers in 1992 and two TV stations in 1994 there were 35 daily newspapers in 2007; the number of weeklies jumped from 16 to 184 in the same period. And as of June 2007 there were 64 radio stations, 22 terrestrial television stations, 40 various television operators and 20 cable stations.⁷

Table 1

Years	Daily Newspapers	Radio	Television
1970 - 1980	2	1	0
1981-1990	2	1	0
1991-2000	10	6	4
2001-2008	35	64	82 (terrestrial, cable etc)

Theoretical Framework

Increasingly, a need to reassess institutional, pedagogical and curricula questions in journalism training has been recognized (Karikari 2008). African journalism curricula largely reflect western realities (Murphy & Scotton (1987), even though conditions are vastly different and non-replicable making the curricula largely irrelevant. Moreover, a 1998 UNESCO study discovered the dominance of the European and North American

⁵ Media Council of Tanzania. 2008. Tertiary Education Training in Journalism Diploma and Postgraduate Curricula in Tanzania, March 2008, pp. 2

⁶ For details see Programme strategy and description, January 2007 to December 2009. 2006. Media Council of Tanzania. Dar es Salaam. p. 19

⁷ Media Council of Tanzania. 2008. Tertiary Education Training in Journalism Diploma and Postgraduate Curricula in Tanzania, March 2008, pp. 2

literature acknowledging “the need to publish local textbooks with a regional orientation”(Nordenstreng et al 1998). Furthermore, a technological dependence on hardware and software used in journalism training mean that mostly journalism schools cannot afford costly technologies resulting in dated skills.

However, Hachten (2005), among others, has noted that a consensus on the best way to train journalists has never existed. The perennial challenge is how to balance the academic (intellectual knowledge) requirement with the demands of competence in skills (vocational technical side). The debate in Tanzania revolves around suitability of an emphasis on journalism (core skills) or mass communication (theory/research) dating back to the 1950s (Rogers 1994). Some favour an apprenticeship/vocational model focussing on skills. Others prefer an academic approach requiring formal training equipping students with a liberal arts background.

UNESCO (2007) proposed a template touted as a blueprint for journalism curricula development in the Third World. According to the template, an ideal undergraduate programme should have a distribution of courses in three axes: professional practice, journalism studies, and arts/sciences. The balance for a three-year programme is put at professional practice, 40%; journalism studies, 10%; arts and science, 50%. Although the template has been criticized as lacking grounding in the African context, the process of its domestication is underway in Tanzania with the proposed introduction of minimum standards in tertiary institutions.⁸ In the 1940s Wilbur Schramm proposed a template for an undergraduate mass communication curriculum composed of one-fourth journalism skills courses and three-fourths social science and humanities courses (Rogers 1994: 4465).

However, the emergence of the new media technologies are challenging old paradigms. Journalists need to have multimedia skills and editors must possess multi-platform savviness. The new media - defined as communication vehicles using new technologies: blogs, chatrooms, short messages, online video and digital photography are changing ways in which information is accessed and disseminated.⁹ Interactivity as in the case of wikis and other digital platforms has become a norm.

The impact of the new media in Tanzania over the last two decades has been tectonic. Blogs are leading in breaking news way before the mainstream media. Important stories making waves in Tanzania such as the Bank of Tanzania (BOT) External Arrears Account (EPA) payments of US \$ 135 million to phantom companies began life as electronic rumours. Meanwhile, the Tanzanian bloggers have adopted liberal motto like: “*All you Wanted to Know but didn't Know How and Where*” (See bongocelebrity.com) or “*We Dare Talk Openly*”(http://www.jamboforums.com). Such sentiments are largely alien in the mainstream media characterized by chronic self-censorship (Grosswiler 1987).

Yet journalism curricula have largely ignored the phenomenon of ‘new media.’ And lecturers are lacking in requisite skills needed to understand the new media reality. The

⁸ Media Council of Tanzania. 2008. Tertiary Education Training in Journalism Diploma and Postgraduate Curricula in Tanzania, March 2008

⁹ The technologies needed to create the New Media were the invention of digital communications in the 1940s, invention of the Transport Control/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) in the late 1960s, creation of the Internet in the 1970s and opening it to the public in 1992, invention of the personal computer as well as the Hyper Text Transport Protocol (HTTP) in the late 1980s. See <http://rebuildingmedia.corante.com/> 28/01/2008

dizzying new developments in communication industry are shifting the fundamental assumptions about what journalism is, the work journalists do and the relation between journalism and audiences.¹⁰ The new media as alternative sources of news are setting agenda in ways that are undermining the status quo. Still no study has looked into how journalism education is adjusting to the new media realities. This study seeks to fill this gap. The main hypothesis is that journalism training is lagging behind technological developments spawned by the arrival of the new media technologies.

Four questions have guided this study.

- R1 Do the existing journalism curricula incorporate the new media elements?
- R2 Is there a balance between academic and skills requirements in journalism curricula?
- R3 Do the training infrastructure meet challenges posed by the advent of new media technologies?
- R4 Are the lecturers prepared for the demands born of the new media technologies?

Method

Data was collected through two methods, namely, qualitative interviews with trainers from four institutions and content analysis of syllabi. The syllabi were analyzed with the help of the UNESCO (2007) template to determine structure and content.

Sampling

Multi-stage sampling process of training institutions and educators was adopted.

First two universities and two tertiary institutions were identified for the study. The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at St Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) and the Institute of Journalism and Mass Communications (IJMC) at the University of Dar es Salaam represented university level training. Both institutions have a journalism training tradition going back to the 1960s and the 1970s respectively. Two tertiary institutions selected for study were Time School of Journalism founded in 2000 and Royal College of Journalism established in 2001.

Second, a convenient sample of educators was obtained by approaching those who were available and willing to be interviewed between December 2007 and June 2008 in Mwanza and Dar es Salaam. The two cities host the four institutions and together constitute the most significant urban space in Tanzania. A total of fifteen trainers were interviewed. The interviews were based on a semi structured interview guide.

Case 1 Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication (IJMC)

The institute of journalism and mass communication at the university of Dar es Salaam has been offering a Bachelor of Arts in mass communication since 2001. The programme has been under review since 2007, however. Courses on offer fall under three axes,

¹⁰ African journalism studies within earshot. In *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* at <http://ajs.uwpress.org/cgi/reprint/28/1-2/5>

namely, professional practice, journalism studies and arts/sciences. The distribution of courses is summarized in table two below.

Table 2
Course Distribution

Axis	Course Distribution							
	First year		Second Year		Third Year		TOTAL	
	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%
Professional practice	12	28.57	9	18.75	3	15.78	24	100
Journalism Studies	12	28.57	39	81.25	12	63.15	63	100
Arts/Sciences	18	42.85	0		4	21.05	22	100
TOTAL	42	100%	48	100%	19	100	109	100

UNESCO Template vs IJMC Programme

The two programmes have significant departures.

One, professional practice courses that impart skills get only 22 percent of the total programme time at the Institute of Journalism. This compares unfavorably with UNESCO template requiring at least 40 percent in this category.

Two, journalism studies, which stress theory, get 57 percent above the UNESCO recommended 10 percent. This is a whopping 40 percent more meaning the skills aspect of the programme gets little attention.

Three, arts/sciences axis gets only 20 percent compared to the UNESCO recommended 50 percent which suggests that the knowledge base of the programme is narrow.

Four, no new media related courses in the programme.

The emphasis of Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication programme is on theoretical aspects of journalism training. The variance in professional practice courses is 18 percent below the recommended amount and 47.7 percent more in journalism studies above that recommend by UNESCO. This means the slant of the programme is towards theory not practice.

Case 2 St Augustine University of Tanzania

SAUT has been offering a three-year Bachelor of Arts in mass communication programme since 1998. The programme has three specializations in news reporting, broadcasting (radio/television), and public relations. The programme was last reviewed in 2005 and requires 114 credits of courses over three years.

Course Distribution

The courses fall under four axes: professional practice, journalism studies, arts/sciences, and institutional courses. Professional practices axis offers core skills in news reporting, broadcasting and photography among others. Journalism studies axis offers theory aspect of the programme, namely, media sociology and mass communication among others. Meanwhile, the arts/sciences axis offers courses including sociology, economics, and environmental studies offering a general knowledge. Finally, institutional courses

impart the university's core values. These are social ethics, introduction to philosophy, and logic. The distribution of courses is summarized in table three below.

Table 3
Distribution of Courses

Axis	Distribution of Course Work							
	First year		Second Year		Third Year		Total	
	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%
Professional practice	12	40	12	40	6	20	30	26.3
Journalism Studies	6	16	18	42	18	42	42	36
Arts/Sciences	12	50	6	25	6	25	24	21.05
Institutional courses	9	50	3	16.6	6	33.6	18	15.78
	39	34.2	39	34.2	36	31.57	114	

Source: SAUT programme, 2005

UNESCO Model vs the Department of Journalism/Mass Communication programme

The two programmes have some significant departures. The department of Journalism programme incorporates journalism, mass communication and public relations. More than 15 percent of the programme, however, is given over to institutional courses imparting core institutional values not journalistic skills.

Findings

The department of journalism's three-year programme is skewed towards theory and general studies. Professional practice courses intended to impart skills get only 26.3 percent of the total programme time, compared to at least 40 percent courses in this category recommended by UNESCO. Students get lower exposure to skills component of training despite the 'journalism' tag in the programme.

Journalism studies courses that stress theory get a whopping 36.8 percent compared to 10 percent in the UNESCO template. Naturally, theoretical aspects of the programme are overblown meaning the programme is academic in nature.

Meanwhile, arts/sciences axis gets only 21 percent compared to the UNESCO recommended 50 percent. This means students knowledge base is undermined by limited exposure to liberal arts/science subjects.

Finally, IT related courses are largely non-existent. There are no online journalism or new media related courses. This means students get little exposure to new media technologies that dictate the contemporary newsroom trends.

The variances show that professional practice courses get less attention than recommend and journalism studies get more time which means the programme is heavy on theory as well.

Case Study 3 TIME and Dar Es Salaam School of Journalism

Tertiary institutions are a phenomenon of the late 1990s. However, most practicing journalists in Tanzania now come from these mushrooming institutions. Table five below offers programme structure of the two tertiary institutions.

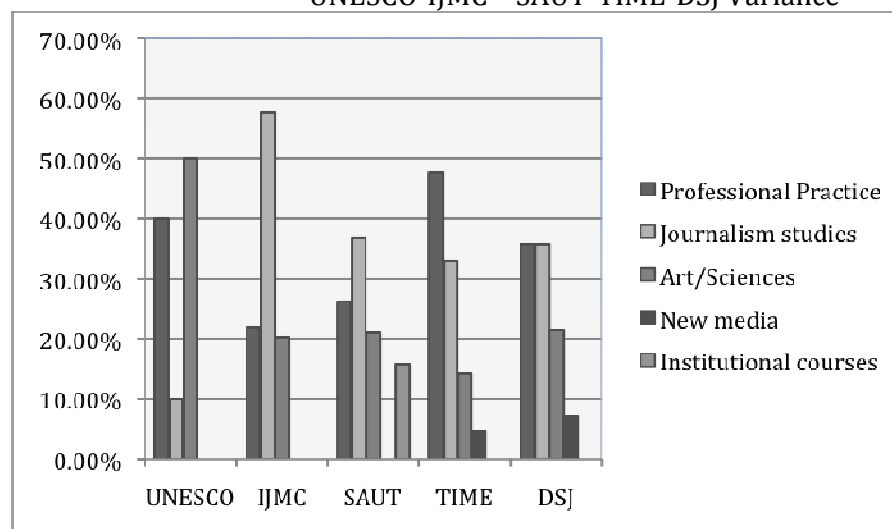
Table 3
UNESCO-IJMC – SAUT-TIME-DSJ Variance

Axis	UNESCO	IJMC		SAUT		TIME		DSJ	
	Exposure %	Exposure %	Variance %	Exposure %	Variance %	Exposure %	Variance %	Exposure %	Variance %
Professional Practice	40	22	-18	26.3	-13.7	47.6	7.6	35.7	-4.3
Journalism studies	10	57.7	47.7	36.8	26.8	33	23	35.7	25.7
Art/Sciences	50	20.18	-29.82	21	-29	14.3	-35.7	21.42	-28.58
New media	0	0	0	0	0	4.76	4.76	7.14	7.14
Institutional courses	0	0	0	15.7	15.7	0	0	0	0

Findings

The two tertiary institutions offer a two-year diploma programme whereby there are no online or new media related courses. The emphasis is on skills, namely, 47.6 percent for TIME and 35.7 percent for Dar es Salaam School of Journalism (DSJ). Both schools offer a basic computing course.

UNESCO-IJMC – SAUT-TIME-DSJ Variance



Interviews

A total of 15 interviews were conducted with educators in tertiary and university training institutions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The privacy of respondents is protected by using aliases or first names. Interview transcripts were analysed by compiling responses to each question across the pool of interviews taking into account demographic details (Miles & Huberman 1994: 9).

Findings

A number of issues have emerged from the interviews.

One, new media technologies are hitherto little integrated into journalism training regimes in Tanzania. A leitmotif in the interviews has been that training is largely analog while the industry reality is increasingly digital. As a result students are rarely exposed to technology based news analysis and production (Steven, personal interview, Mwanza, April 25, 2008).

Two, IT facilities are not adequate to address the increasing needs and demands of the new media. Computer labs are few and accessing the Internet difficult. This makes it hard for institutions to introduce effective multi-media journalism programmes.

Three, most lecturers lack grasp of the blogosphere and its impact on news production and dissemination. Also the lecturers lack multi-media skills needed to manage different platforms such as mobile, online, electronic, and print in integrated framework. More than 75 percent of interviewees don't have regular access to blogs. This is largely consistent with a 2007 UNESCO study which noted that 75 percent of journalism training institutions in Tanzania were uncontactable.

Four, existing education and training patterns have failed to create native technologies. Setting up adequate video shooting and editing studios needed to nurture multi-media skills is expensive. And students are rarely exposed to interactive milieu (Francis, personal interview April 25th Mwanza).

Five, while the trend is towards High Definition Television the training institutions lack adequate facilities to address the need. Furthermore, new media technologies take time to arrive in the African classrooms. And since most institutions are underfunded they barely afford the technology. As a result, students find new unfamiliar technologies in newsrooms (Juma personal interview, Dar es Salaam, May 15, 2008).

Six, the link between the academia and the industry is weak. Rarely do lecturers get to meet editors' and reporters in the field to get the feel of the field. The prevailing training model is paternalistic whereby members of academia decide what the industry needs with little in-put from the latter. This has created a chasm between newsrooms where innovations are happening and classrooms where old models persist. Furthermore, university employment criteria make it impossible for editors with relevant skills to teach excluding a valuable pool of knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

A number of conclusions may be drawn from the study.

One, journalism curricula are not addressing needs related to new media technologies. Basic online journalism courses are rare. And the schools lack facilities to produce multi-skilled journalists needed in the converging newsrooms where content is offered in multiple platforms: online, mobile, as well as traditional analog formats.

Two, the curricula lack adequate balance between academic needs and skills requirements. Theoretical aspects of journalism training get more attention than the skills aspects. Furthermore, programmes are not designed to provide multi-media skills.

Three, the training infrastructure do not meet the challenges of the new communication technologies. Most lecturers lack newsroom experience thus integration of theory and practice is minimal. Journalism schools have failed to invest in appropriate technologies needed to nurture multi-media skills owing to prohibitive costs.

Four, Journalism schools are outpaced by newsroom changes; there is a need to re-think the role of journalism education in the changing mediascape whereby journalistic reality is dictated by technological trends.

Some Implications in Journalism Training

One, journalism training evinces an ever greater dependence on the Western models and technologies in the era of media convergence and digitization. Failure to domesticate such western technologies and lack of expertise means training is becoming outdated as most schools cannot afford expensive technologies.

Two, journalism education is lagging behind developments in newsrooms and industry at large. There is a need to encourage a closer collaboration between the media industry and the academia.

Three, the evolving media technologies are more suited to peer-to-peer skills' transfer than formal classroom settings due to costs involved to bring the right technologies into the African journalism classrooms.

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