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Journalism education and practice in South Africa and the discourse of the African Renaissance

Gilbert Motsaathebe*

Abstract

At the turn of the century there was sheer optimism that 'Africa's time' to address all its problems had come, and as a result the 21st century was widely hailed as the 'African century' (Ban 2008; Makgoba 1999; Mbeki 1999; O'Reilly 1998; Zoellick 2009). This pronouncement was accompanied by the parallel call for the African Renaissance, which challenged many institutions to align themselves with this 'crucial phase' in the history of Africa. In the process, expressions such as 'de-Westernisation', 'Africanisation', 'indigenisation' and 'domestication' became buzz-words. Yet, after almost a decade of such claims, there appears to be very little, if anything, gained from these confident pronouncements. This article is situated within embryonic debates on the Africanisation of the curricula. The article explores the current thinking on journalism education (the teaching of journalism) and practice (the practice of journalism) in the country, with a view to furthering our understanding of journalism agility deemed important for the 'African century'. It further explores the opportunities and limitations of situating journalism education and journalism practice within the discourse of the African Renaissance. The key data that form the basis of this article were collected through interviews and an open-ended questionnaire from a sample consisting of journalists, journalism educators and senior journalism students. The findings point to the need to rethink journalism education and journalism practice, given the trends of globilisation and the equally compelling need to Africanise.

Key words: African century, Africanisation, African Renaissance, journalism education, journalism practice, journalism skills

INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a leading country in Africa, both economically and politically (Chidaush 2010). Perhaps this fact was even more apparent during the tenure of former president Thabo Mbeki, who actively sought to use South Africa to champion what he believed to be Africa's 'Renaissance'. Addressing a conference on 'Education for African Renaissance in the 21st century', Mbeki intimated that 'if the next century is going to be characterized as a truly African century, then the success of this project is dependent on the success of our education systems' (Mbeki 1999). Mbeki's point underscored the importance of education and has since prompted many institutions to embrace what he heralded as a crucial moment for Africa's recovery following the onslaught of colonialism and apartheid, in the case of South Africa. The implied change included bringing education in line with the African Renaissance ideal, which, among others, promotes the assimilation of the indigenous knowledge undermined by colonialism and apartheid (Higgs 2009). Journalism educational institutions also responded to this debate, as evidenced by symposia and conferences such as the 2008 South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) seminar in Cape Town, with specific focus on media and the African Renaissance, the Journalism Department at the University

* Gilbert Motsaathebe is a senior lecturer in Journalism at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.
E-mail: gilmot2000@yahoo.co.uk

of Stellenbosch's 2008 conference titled 'Africanising the curriculum'; and a range of debates and papers such as those presented at the 2010 World Journalism Education Congress.

In spite of these efforts, journalism education in South Africa is often criticised for being out of sync with Africa due to much of 'the Northern knowledge hegemony and way of doing things' (to use De Beer's phrases) underpinning much of journalism education and practice (see Banda 2008; Banda et al. 2007; De Beer 2010; De Gouveia 2005; Fourie 2005, 2010; Mogekwu 2004; Ochilo 1997). This implies that journalism education and practice do not account for what Skjerdal (2009) refers to as journalism 'particulars' (cultural and local context) which need to be balanced with 'universals' (fundamental values). The research on which the article is based, was prompted by a discussion with media practitioners during an in-service training visit by this author, to assess the progress of our students placed in the industry. During these meetings, industry representatives and media practitioners spoke openly about their expectations regarding journalism students from institutions of higher learning, with some referring to 'the next generation of journalists to take journalism in the 21st century to the next level', as one of them put it. The significance of this article, therefore, is to broaden our knowledge regarding skills deemed relevant for journalism practice in the 21st century. A clear understanding of industry requirements, attitudes and expectations could inform curriculum reviews, and teaching and learning approaches. The first section of this article looks at the educational landscape in South Africa and at emerging debates on the Africanisation of the curricula, and tries to point to possible tensions amongst scholars and practitioners. Lastly, this article attempts to highlight opportunities and what might be viewed as the possible limitations of aligning journalism education within the African Renaissance paradigm. As a preliminary account of a much longer, more elaborate and broader study, this article focuses only on the Western Cape Province.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN SOUTH AFRICA

At the official end of apartheid, South Africa had over 35 universities and technikons (similar to polytechnics in the United Kingdom and Germany). However, these institutions were the brainchild of a system which designed different educational infrastructures for blacks and whites, based on a discriminatory practice of apartheid, described by Derrida (1985: 291) as 'the unique appellation for the ultimate racism in the world'. There were amongst these universities and technikons those which were referred to as 'black institutions' and 'white institutions', with the latter being more advanced in terms of resources and quality of education. From 2005, all these institutions were restructured to enhance quality and make sure that they cater for the educational needs of the country, while offering a range of study and research options for both local and international students. Technikons had to apply and meet certain requirements for full university status. Those technikons were then renamed *universities of technology*, while former universities that merged with some technikons were called *comprehensive universities.* The latter institutions were to provide a wide range of qualifications, including those that would normally not be offered by traditional universities. Thus,

following this restructuring process, the country ended up with 23 public institutions of higher learning divided into three types of universities, namely a) conventional types of university; b) comprehensive universities and c) universities of technology, each with specific priorities. Further, as part of the broader transformation, many institutions sought to position themselves within the discourse of the African Renaissance, by increasingly focusing on research that challenges the myths and prejudices about Africa and its history, and that recognises knowledge systems indigenous to Africa.

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), which represents the setting of this article, came into being after a merger between the former Cape Technikon and the Peninsula Technikon. The journalism department at this institution operates within the ambit of train-for-the-employer context, where the emphasis is on imparting core skills such as writing and operating equipment, in order to match the exact skills required by the envisaged employer. As with many universities of technology which are still steering their way cautiously to assimilate their new roles, after converting from technikons to universities, there is a strong linkage with industry.

Students in the Department of Journalism at CPUT are required to complete 12 months of supervised experiential learning, which is considered crucial for the effective learning and mastering of skills and competencies. However, one of the major shortcomings of these internships is the inability to provide for a holistic experience in all streams of journalism, i.e. a student placed in a newspaper house will miss the opportunity to consolidate what he or she learned about television or radio, and vice versa. In general, the journalism curriculum at CPUT adheres very closely to the basic requirements of the UNESCO model curricula for Journalism Education (2010), with the only exception being that the journalism qualification offered by CPUT does not give students the option of a second major in other fields.

ONTOLOGICAL CONCEPTUALISATION

That Africa's normal development was ruptured by slavery and colonialism is no longer debatable. As Kromah (2002: 3) puts it: 'The two experiences effectively stopped the progressive growth of the technological society Africa had begun several hundred years earlier.' To support this argument, Kromah cites some of the contributions to civilisation that history attributes to Africans:

1) The Sciences: accomplishments included astronomy, the 365 1/4-day calendar, the study of anatomy, embalming, chemistry, and mathematics (geometry and trigonometry), and the production of high grade steel and large scale architectural works.
2) Inventions and Discoveries: the Africans are credited for phonetic writing, paper and ink, aspirin, tetracycline, pregnancy testing, front porches and the house clock.
3) Social Structures: national government, universities, libraries, and belief in one God, grand funerals and beliefs emphasizing the afterlife.
4) Social Customs: circumcision, dice shaving; belly dancing, and branding animals with hot irons. (Hamilton cited in Kromah 2002: 2)

Kromah argues that Africa has never fully recovered from the economic, sociological and psychological residue of colonialism and slavery. The African Renaissance was thus seen as a moment of recovery from the abovementioned raptures. According to Aristide (2006: 165) there can be no African Renaissance without a psychological renaissance: 'As an important first step to an African Renaissance, psychological renaissance can raise among all of us, our level of self-awareness and historical awareness […] to renew ourselves and overcome the legacies of slavery and racism.' The concept of the renaissance of Africa was first highlighted by Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop in 1948, and later intimated by Kwame Nkurumah and Nelson Mandela (Asante 2006; Bongmba 2004). This was, in turn, taken up by Thabo Mbeki, who made a passionate plea for the African Renaissance when he delivered what became known as 'The African Renaissance Statement' in 1998. Whereas Asante (2006) sees the African Renaissance as a call for 'African unity and resurgence', Nabudere (2006: 13) sees it as 'a call for a continued African resistance to Western domination and exploitation'. Concepts such as de-Westernisation, Africanisation, indigenisation and domestication have been highlighted as key constituents of the African Renaissance debates.

Africanisation, literally speaking, implies 'to make African'. However, this definition is too reductionist and raises more questions than answers. Such a shallow definition begs questions such as: Who is an African? Does 'African' refer to race or nationality, i.e. belonging to a geographical region, race, culture, or a way of thinking? (Chetty 2006). What is clear is that Africanisation presupposes that 'we are not African enough' (ibid.). To better understand the concept of Africanisation, as used in this article, it seems sensible to refer to Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech, which is much more inclusive in its articulation of 'Africanness' as opposed to the binary opposites usually ascribed to the idea. This speech challenges the compendium that only black people can be regarded as Africans. Mbeki ascribes his 'Africanness' to a range of experiences and to nationalities that transverse geographical, national and linguistic boundaries. Thus, the concept will here be used in somewhat similar way, as conceived by Outlaw (1997: 267), to include

> those persons who are neither African nor of African descent but who recognize the legitimacy and importance of the issues and endeavours that constitute the philosophizing of persons African or African-descended and who contribute to discussions of their efforts, persons whose work justifies their being called 'Africanists'.

From this vantage point, Africanisation could be seen as a means of 'championing that which is uniquely ours [African]' (Chetty 2006).

Horsthemke (2004: 571) understands Africanisation in this way:

> Africanisation is generally seen to signal a (renewed) focus on Africa, on reclamation of what has been taken from Africa, and, as such, it forms part of post-colonialist, anti-racist discourse. With regard to knowledge, it comprises a focus on indigenous African knowledge and concerns simultaneously 'legitimation' and 'protection from exploitation' of this knowledge. With regard to education, the focus is on Africanisation of institutions, curricula, syllabi and criteria for excellence.

To appreciate Horsthemke's point, one must note that during colonialism, the Western system of knowledge was privileged over African knowledge. Often, African knowledge was reproduced as a Western discovery to deny African claims to knowledge and civilisation (Makgoba 1997). However, a reclamation of Africa's indigenous knowledge system does not mean an erosion of the Western knowledge system, and thus, as Makgoba puts it, 'Africanisation is not about expelling Europeans and their cultures, but about affirming African culture and their identity' (ibid: 199).

The term *de-Westernisation* denotes attempts to disentangle Africa from the colonial legacy introduced by Western nations during colonialism. Like Africanisation, de-Westernisation is a necessary process for the renaissance of Africa. This is what academics such as Banda et al. (2007: 157) refer to when they say 'Journalism education in Southern Africa must contend with defining a new academic identity for itself, extricating itself from dependency on Western oriented models of journalism education and training'. De-Westernisation is often used interchangeably with localisation and Africanisation, in the African context, where Westernisation becomes important because colonialism discredited African languages, cultures and ways of life, seeking to Westernise Africans by introducing their cultures and languages into Africa.

Domestication explains 'the process of making an imported resource more relevant and appropriate for the African situation' (Osei 1991: 7). This process has been advocated by many Africanists such as Ali Mazrui. A good example of domestication can be found in several works by Sol Plaatje, which are based on Shakespeare's plays. In adapting Shakespeare's work to his native language, Setswana, Plaatje incorporated the grammatical and lexical structures of Setswana as well as local cosmologies.

Indigenisation refers to the resuscitation, reintroduction or rediscovery of the culture, knowledge, languages, values, resources and histories of indigenous people, all of which were displaced during colonialism. Nyamnjoh, however, finds the notion of 'indigenous' to be very limited, and instead proposes what he terms '*endogenous*', which, in his opinion, is more suited 'to capture the dynamism, negotiability, adaptability and capacity for autonomy, creativity and innovation in African societies, and correct the widespread and stubborn misrepresentation of African cultures as static, bounded and primitive' (Nyamnjoh 2011: 2). While it is clear that there is a need to challenge the present colonial frame, it would be unwise to consider Africanisation as a cut and dry solution. Similarly, it would be foolish to see Africanisation as a complete replacement of what is perceived to be 'Western'. This author argues, instead, that there needs to be a conversation between the two paradigms, so that the approach becomes complementary rather than antagonistic.

DIVERGENT VIEWS ON JOURNALISM EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

In line with efforts to challenge the knowledge hegemony of dominant countries such as Britain and the United States, current debates on journalism training focus on the quality and relevance of journalism education. The topic always veers off into the old question relating to what is perceived

as the best way to prepare journalism students. Generally, scholars and practitioners raise two critical issues, namely (1) that journalism training and practice are not (South) African enough to respond adequately to the local context; and (2) the question of how journalism students should be prepared to work in journalism in Africa. With regard to the former, there are those who question the foreign influence (particularly the Anglo-American influence) currently underlying much of African journalism (see Banda et al. 2007; Fourie 2005; Mogekwu 2004). With regard to the second concern, some believe journalism schools should be thorough in teaching students all the hard skills (i.e. skills learnt in practice when performing specific duties), while others think such skills can be further developed in the industry, as evidenced by the 2005 colloquium on journalism education convened at Rhodes University.[1] Instead of harmonising all the writers into a critique of Western journalism practices and a celebration of African values in journalism, this article rather aims to point to areas of contestation between authors.

African values include concepts such as *ubuntu*, which has its detractors as well as its supporters. According to veteran journalist, Joe Thloloe (2008), '[t]he journalism that starts from the foundation of *ubuntu* would go a long way towards bringing understanding to readers of newspapers and magazines, listeners of radio and viewers of television programmes'. However, the incorporation of *ubuntu* raises other concerns. For instance, Botha and De Beer (2006: 3) observe that

> it raises perplexing questions of how educators working from a libertarian, Western background – both in terms of culture and newsroom practice – will manage to align the philosophies of African ubuntu and western notions of 'objectivity' let alone the individualistic drive for personal freedom and attainment, as well as a market-driven economy vis-à-vis the collective nature of ubuntu.

Fourie (2005) recommends that South African journalism studies focus on the development of what he calls an 'African-based epistemology'. An epistemology entails the way in which knowledge is constructed and acquired, and thus constructing knowledge within an African perspective would require one to deploy lenses which are intrinsic to Africa, as opposed to those developed elsewhere (as is currently the case). Fourie's point resonates with observations by many scholars who argue that journalism institutions in Africa – and South Africa in particular – have not made sufficient attempts to Africanise their curricula. South Africa's situation as far as journalism curricula are concerned is not unique. Similar concerns are often raised elsewhere in Africa. In his study entitled *The growth and development of African media studies*, Salawu (2009: 81) poses a difficult question: 'If the media are American, would it still be logical to talk about African Media?' Mogweku (2004: 7) puts it candidly: '[W]e are so concerned with grooming our students to see and identify newsworthiness along the same lines as the *New York Times* reporter or the *Washington Post* correspondent. News values are western, news structure is western, and news interpretation is western.' Banda concurs: '[A]frican journalism education reflects, in almost every conceivable way, Western forms of journalism training and education' (2008: 50). This concern is echoed by De Gouveia (2005: 9), who cautions that 'African media do not need to closely resemble the BBC or CNN to be good'. This comment reverberates with Mogweku's concern that African journalists

ignore poignant African values in their news reportage, which could address some weaknesses, especially on the question of ethics.

Ochilo (1997: 54) also questions the reliance of journalism curricula on foreign models: '[M]any African scholars argue that this kind of curricula orientation is not based on an African philosophy and therefore, fails to take into account the continent's cultural diversity, the environment, political and social developments.' Explaining why journalism in Africa was heavily influenced by the American model, when in fact the continent was not colonised by America, Salawu (2005: 82) concludes: 'This was because the Europeans who were the colonial masters had no clear academic model of journalism education.'

METHODOLOGY

Study participants

The research design adopted was that of an information-rich case study, since the idea was to solicit views from journalists, journalism educators and students. By deploying these empirical efforts, this article approaches the question from a more realistic perspective, since few prior studies were based on empirical data. Interviewees included news personnel (n=3) from etv, Cape Talk and the *People's Post*, as well as educators (n=4) from departments of journalism and media studies at CPUT, the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of Stellenbosch (US). Questionnaire respondents included two batches of senior students from CPUT, comprising those who had completed their national diploma and were entry-level journalists (n=37) at the time, and those who were in their last semester of their third year and had just returned from in-service training (n=61). Most of the students who had completed their diplomas were already working in various news organisations and in other communication-related industries across Cape Town. The information from the students was collected in two successive years, namely 2009 and 2010.

The researcher made use of convenience sampling, since all participants were based in Cape Town. Information-oriented sampling, which is renowned for yielding a richer and deeper level of understanding of the phenomenon, was deemed more appropriate for this article than random sampling, which emphasises representativity. In this case, the sample chosen was the one most likely to yield information that would clarify the deeper causes of the problem. Similarly, the choice of CPUT as a critical case was based on convenience, since the researcher worked at the institution (and, as already mentioned, the idea for this article came when this researcher was assessing the performance of CPUT students placed in the industry).

Research instruments

Questionnaires

The first category of data was collected through open-ended questionnaires. The first section of the questionnaire requested basic information on the respondents regarding their organisation, the organisation's main area of work, and their occupation and level of seniority in that organisation. These facts were regarded as important in that they influence the responses given and the views expressed. For instance, it was assumed that the views expressed by television journalists might be different from those expressed by radio journalists, in as much as views expressed by student journalists can be different from those expressed by senior journalists. The second part of the questionnaire solicited views on African vs. Western pedagogies. Here respondents had to state their opinion regarding the view that journalism schools across South Africa were producing replicas of American journalists. The third part solicited respondents' views on the notion of Africanisation of the curriculum. Further views were solicited on the current curriculum content, where respondents were asked, among others, if there was any course or module they would like to see taught in journalism schools. The fourth part probed perceptions of the industry. Participants were asked if they saw the industry as playing any specific role in helping educational institutions prepare students, given time pressures and limited resources. A further sub-question solicited views about the ideal journalism student.

Interviews

In order to gain more insight into the questions raised in the questionnaire, interviews undertaken with journalism educators and industry professionals were used. Interviewees were from CPUT, UCT, US and media organisations such as etv, Cape Talk and the *People's Post.* Some of the interviews were conducted telephonically or via email. The interview guide included the following major questions aimed at shedding light on current thinking regarding journalism education and practice in South Africa:

1) What is your view regarding the viability of Africanising the journalism education/curriculum?
2) In your view, what exactly could this sort of curriculum entail?
3) Any shortcomings and/or strengths of such a curriculum?
4) Africanisation may require a change in journalistic values; to what extent do you think the industry will be open to this kind of change?
5) Journalism schools across Africa are often criticised for producing what some perceive as 'copy cats of American journalists'. What is your view regarding this perception?

RESULTS

Profile of study participants

The respondents in the study represented professionals with experience in various media organisations, as clearly outlined above. Others worked in teaching institutions and communications or public relations divisions of various companies and government. In total, 105 individuals participated in the study: 98 questionnaire respondents and seven interviewees. Table 1 details the profile of all the respondents in terms of the industry they were attached to.

Table 1: Profile of participants

Industry	No. of participants
Newspaper	31
Radio	18
Magazine	19
Television	11
Online	9
Education	4
Others	13
Total	**105**

Questionnaire responses: General views mainly from students

Perceptions that African journalists imitate their Anglo-American counterparts

As regards the perception that journalism schools across the African continent were producing replicas of American journalists, a large number (75) of the 98 questionnaire respondents felt there was some indication that journalists in South Africa resembled their American counterparts. Thirteen disagreed with the foregoing, while ten were more cautious with their answers. One respondent commented: 'We take what is good from them and leave the bad things.' Below are some of statements that the question elicited:

- We tend to look at western journalism as paragon of excellence.
- America is seen as be all and end all; there is at the moment little or no emphasis on African culture, norms and tradition.
- World-over most trends are adopted from America; they are the best, why not learn from them?
- I think the problem is that the media is more powerful in America than in African countries, but we can take what is good from them.
- Western education is often regarded as a yardstick of excellence, and as such there is nothing wrong in imitating best practice.

One respondent stated that applying Western values and ways leads to bias in reporting on Africa, but did not elaborate. Various respondents emphasised the need for an 'African approach':

- I think journalists in Africa should adopt their own approach of reporting.
- I feel that we must stop imitating others. For instance, if you are a young journalist you ought to respect elders, you should say 'Tata' Mbeki, not just Mbeki.

One student saw nothing wrong with copying the Americans, since 'they are the best, so why not learn from them?' Overall, the above views are insightful with regard to the way in which the students themselves think about journalism. Generally, it appears the belief that South African journalists resemble their Anglo-American counterparts is valid. As is evident, some students argued that imitating these countries was the right thing to do, because those models were regarded as 'the best'. Others, however, argued that Western values and approaches are not appropriate for South African journalism.

Anxiety about Africanisation

The question regarding Africanisation drew two different sets of responses. The first was that Western education is often regarded as a yardstick for excellence, and as such there is nothing wrong with imitating best practice. The second response was that such intimation was bound to happen because people in industry and education sometimes receive training abroad. All respondents seemingly felt that African journalism education curricula should ideally embrace African values and ways of knowing, to be distinctively African. The reasons for this suggestion can be found in participants' responses regarding some of the courses or modules they thought should be taught in journalism schools (see below) as part of the ideal curriculum. When asked about subjects or modules they wanted to see taught in journalism schools, 88 of the respondents indicated that more courses should be introduced, including courses on economics, financial journalism, African history, South African English literature ('to stimulate the mind' as one respondent put it), Internet and magazine journalism. One respondent suggested 'a course in transformation' – an interesting finding which can be viewed against the transformation processes taking place in South Africa since the 1994 democratic elections which ended apartheid.

Importance of in-service training

The media industry is widely regarded as an important player in preparing journalism students. In fact, the industry lists in-service training as one of the important indicators of excellence for quality journalism training (see Berger & Matras 2007). In-service training is where industry and academy meet, and such training also shapes the content of journalism curricula. It was, therefore, crucial to determine how students view the significance of in-service training. When asked to rate their in-service training, a large number of students (B-Tech) who participated in the study indicated that overall they had received good in-service training, although they differed in terms of the intensity of their responses. Nineteen students said they received excellent in-service training; the majority

(62) indicated that it was good while ten said it was fair, and seven rated it as poor. Overall, it can be concluded that the quality of the in-service training students receive is good.

When asked if they saw the industry as playing a significant role (given that educational institutions often have limited resources to prepare students thoroughly for the workplace), all the respondents noted that the industry can play an important role. Suggestions relating to the specific roles industry can play ranged from providing students with the skills they did not learn in class, to simply making the industry more accessible to students. The following are some of the students' responses relating to their industry experience:

- I was told to forget everything I had learnt at tech, and taught from scratch, how to use the operating system and how to write a good news story.
- In the industry the students have more time to learn in a real newsroom environment.
- I was exposed to all aspects of news reporting more realistically as well as the mechanics of a news department.
- I was given an opportunity to put into practice what I had learned at school.
- I got exposure to different fields of communication such as PR and advertising.

INTERVIEWS: THE VIEWS OF EDUCATORS AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

It seems practitioners and academics at various levels are divided regarding how (and whether) to align journalism to the discourse of the African Renaissance. Some educators are vehemently opposed to any such attempts:

> 'Africanisation' of journalism has often been punted, but I have no idea what this implies. And I really do not believe that South African journalism can be 'fixed' by replacing one dogma/doctrine (Western) with some or other concept. In a sense it is like redressing the apartheid inequalities through the use of racial categories.

Another educator put in this way:

> This sounds very Mbeki-era to me. Who is still talking of the African Renaissance? Surely the concern should be with the re-naissance of Afrikaner nationalism media controls in ANC clothing.

The preceding comments clearly demonstrate that these educators are opposed to Africanisation. The latter comment can also be related to the debate on the media tribunal being proposed by the ANC at the time of the study. Five respondents thought it was appropriate to revisit the curricula. One respondent, an educator, stated: 'We need to go back to the drawing board and critically examine what we teach so that the knowledge produced is relevant.' Another respondent stressed the importance of introducing at least one African language as part of the journalism curriculum:

> *As a starting point, an African language should be part of journalism education/curriculum. However, the introduction of an African language(s) should start after an African language(s) had been introduced to all primary and high schools. This would give students a firm language base as is the case with English and so on.*

According to one interviewee: 'An obvious strength of the Africanised curriculum would be that South Africans would be able to relate to their world of experience. Nation building; the reportage of positive stories would immensely help the psyche/mindset of citizens instead we have negative copy filled with, at times, hatred.'

Educators and practitioners at various media organisations were aware of the criticism levelled at journalism education and practice in South Africa, for being too American. Five respondents concurred that this is a valid concern, but cautioned that there should be a further critical examination of what is relevant, as opposed to following a narrow approach of simply glorifying African values, while being defiant of anything considered foreign, irrespective of its virtues:

- I think it shouldn't be a case of just being in an anti-American mindset and just say that we should not follow these principles because they are American … We should ask ourselves … are they valid and if they are valid, why they are valid for what purposes and how can maybe change them to be more valid for purposes of the African continent to tell the African stories in a way that won't be a stigmatisation of Africa or stereotyping of Africa.
- The South African media are copycats of the western media which doesn't bode well for South Africa readers/public/nation as ours is a young democracy with different dynamics. There is no point in saying the public have a choice in buying the newspapers or watching television or listening to the radio when headlines/posters scream murder and mayhem, corruption and crime, transformation and tyranny. Readers then leave the country because of the irresponsibility of the news media and horrifying pictures they paint.

What is reflected above is the need for journalists and educators not to blindly reject or follow certain trends without sober consideration. Journalists need to move away from such rigidity, to begin to rethink and reorient their approaches, assessing their validity or relevance to the local context. However, there are some who do not take this criticism seriously, accepting that journalism as a practice will always have its positives and negatives. As one respondent put it: 'I don't take such criticism seriously, there will always be good and bad journalism.'

A fact that became clear is that educators differ on their conviction regarding the need to Africanise the journalism curriculum. Even for those who expressed enthusiasm about the concept, one thing was immediately clear: not everybody was quite sure of what an Africanised curriculum would look like, i.e. what this type of curriculum would exactly entail. Nonetheless, some views ranged from the inclusion of subjects such as history, to teaching from the perspective of the *ubuntu* philosophy – a highly contested notion in journalism education. In this respect, *ubuntu* was the single philosophy most frequently referred to. *Ubuntu* as an African philosophy is well documented, however most authors tend to approach it from the communitarian perspective rooted in primitive societies and times, as if cultures are static and do not evolve. As Bongmba (2004: 31) points out, 'while Africans need to nurture a strong sense of community, it would be a mistake during this emphasis on a Renaissance to focus exclusively on community at the expense of individuality'. What this implies, as Bongmba (ibid.) has observed, is a careful reading of the relationship between

individuals and others without suffocating the individual in society. One interviewee proposed a module on African journalists:

> *An important aspect of the curriculum would be to have a syllabus/subject/module on contemporary and historical African journalists, writers and artists on the continent and elsewhere. Students ought to be able to identify with African journalists since it is better to learn, as a starting point, from one's world of experience.*

This interviewee also proposed a course in media ethics, with a strong focus on African culture:

> *Here details such as understanding different cultures are essential. This is especially important when the media report about sections of the population as if those people are representative of all the people in their community.*

On the other hand, there is still disagreement on how best to prepare a journalist for his or her future career. Responses to the first question revealed that both practitioners and academics were divided as to how students should be prepared and what kind of curriculum was appropriate in terms of a balance between theory and practice. However, all those interviewed felt that there should be a mixture of theory and practice. This was illustrated as follows:

- I think if it is a programme in which beginner journalist must be educated, the programme must consist of both practical component and analytical component.
- I think that one needs a mix of broad academic background and skills.
- Conceptual frameworks need to be examined and taught for intellectual depth.

One interviewee felt that practical skills were more important, while another was adamant that the theoretical aspect was more important, and that it should form the bulk of the curriculum. The former was expressed by a media representative while the latter view was expressed by a journalism educator. Overall, the interviewees seemed receptive to interrogating journalism and to determine if any change is indeed necessary.

DISCUSSION

By looking at the perceptions of industry representatives, students and educators, the present study presents a unique contribution to past research on the Africanisation of journalism curricula, and the perceived agility required for journalism practice. The findings indicated that study participants view the question of Africanisation differently, with some pointing to the need to revisit the curriculum, while others did not see Africanisation as important. Views about the type of courses that can be introduced into the journalism curriculum were equally interesting and seemed to suggest the need to find a unique, unambiguous approach for African journalism that does not necessarily emphasise the Western ethos at the expense of African values. When educators were asked about the role industry could play, they typically referred to the limited resources at their disposal in terms of keeping up to speed with the latest and industry-standard technology. In spite

of some of these limitations, they all felt the industry could play an important role: this view was evident from both sides, namely industry representatives and educators. When asked about the type of support the industry could provide, most replied that industry could make available more spaces for students, for example, in the form of internships, job shadowing or cadet programmes, and by industry experts availing themselves as guest lecturers, when needed.

Juxtaposed with students' perceptions, it seems the industry plays a pivotal role in preparing students. Thus, one can say that a healthy relationship between industry and educational institutions leads to a win-win situation, because the more industry becomes involved, the more likely it is that the media will win 'suitable' graduates for their purpose, although one must acknowledge that the industry is also often overstretched in terms of resources. Overall, the findings suggest that journalism practitioners may be receptive to changes in journalistic values as long as these improve the quality of journalism. Similarly, some journalism educators are interested in re-examining what they teach and the way they teach, as stated by one of the educators this researcher interviewed:

> *I think African institutions should revisit the curricula in terms of content. Are we just following blindly a Western type of journalism or can we re-imagine journalism? I don't mean that we should promote sunshine journalism in terms of the African continent, but should we just follow Western paradigms of journalism practice or can we re-invent journalism for our purposes? Instead of restating western news values we could incorporate ubuntu in news values and I think it must be part of the current discourse on journalism education.*

As indicated by previous studies, the question of the perceived 'Westernisation' of journalism is not unique to South Africa. Similar concerns are being raised elsewhere (see Salawu 2009; Sharp and Papoutsak 2006).

CONCLUSION

This research is not inclined to make strong claims about the application of its findings to curriculum reviews, especially due to the fact that it was limited to the Western Cape in terms of its sample. Nonetheless, it reveals divergent views on journalism education and practice in South Africa, which all point to the need to rethink the teaching and the practise of journalism. The findings demonstrate that Africanisation is still a highly contested notion in journalism education. In addition, the findings indicate that tension still exists in terms of what is perceived as the best ways to prepare students, i.e., industries and institutions have different views in this regard. For instance, some feel students need more practical work, some feel they need more theory, while others take the middle ground and advocate a balance between theory and practice.

There is also an indication that the type of curricula that some refer to as 'Africanised' seem problematic, as such curricula could, in some instances, be seen to erode fundamental journalistic values. Nonetheless, the majority of the study participants felt that the curricula need to incorporate fundamental African values such as *ubuntu*. This begs the question: What is *ubuntu* likely to

bring to journalism, and what would be required for teaching *ubuntu* in journalism? It would be disingenuous to suggest that *ubuntu* will axiomatically provide the solution to the overall ills of journalism. However, drawing from the research literature, *ubuntu* could potentially introduce to journalism practice humility, compassion and empathetic understanding, resulting in deeper investigations, rich description and contextualisation. These could substitute elite reporting, sensationalism, the problem of exaggeration and fabrication, and much of the perceived arrogance currently underlying journalism practice. It could also offer an alternative frame to consider the individual in relation to the community and to society at large, and a shift in the way we view the world. Again, *ubuntu* could help to ensure that the way the news is reported always represents the spirit of the event being reported. The opposite is often evident in the media's celebratory tenor when reporting on negative issues, such as corruption and fraud, where the media attach greater significance to the individual's status than to the implications of his wrongdoing (see Thloloe 2008).

It is not immediately clear how *ubuntu* could be taught in the journalism curriculum, but a possible approach could include a reconceptualisation of news that will see journalists as social players who contribute beyond merely laying bare the facts, to bring about an understanding or a conscientisation. Thus, instead of news being 'seen through western values and interpretation' as Mogekwu (2004) points out, news will be seen more as an empowering tool that should benefit the poor and contribute to the development agenda of African countries. This implies that the newsworthiness of the story will then be decided, for example, through the question: *What do I contribute to society by this story?*, rather than through the symptomatic question: *Is the story newsworthy?* A good story is supposed to teach people something about the world, and in this instance the moral of the story reported should be explicit in the story. Modules dealing with *ubuntu* will need to be developed. This would have to be supported by relevant textbooks that frame journalism from an *ubuntu* perspective, which could be achieved by making available relevant texts and domesticating some of the current texts which in any case need updating. To academics, *ubuntu* can offer an alternative lens to consider the normative questions of ethics and regimes of truths. Fourie (2010) has highlighted the need for the kind of research that critiques the quality of journalism. Perhaps *ubuntu* can form one of the lenses through which questions of depth, *embeddedness*, sensational and 'elite-oriented' reporting could be examined.

ENDNOTE

1 The 2005 Colloquium on Journalism Training in South Africa since 1994 was convened by the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, and the papers presented were published in a special edition titled *Teaching South African journalists 1994–2014*. Other papers were subsequently published in *Ecquid Novi* 26(2)2005.