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**De-colonizing Journalism Curricula:
A Research & 'Development'
Perspective***

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Abstract

This paper argues that there is a need to decolonise journalism curricula and practices from the prevailing western models. Putting journalism curricula in the wider context of higher education in developing and non western countries is an important step towards this direction. The paper looks at journalism education from a society/region's specific knowledge and information needs, placing attention on external factors such as the importance placed on western values, education and journalism practices. It questions the western dominance in journalism curricula and practices and discusses how journalism curricula in non-western and developing countries require a different approach to content and delivery and places emphasis on the value of research as a pedagogical and epistemological tool.

** Work in progress, please consult with the author before quoting*

De-colonizing Journalism Curricula: A Research & 'Development' Perspective

1. Introduction

This paper argues that there is a need to decolonise journalism curricula and practices from the prevailing western models and putting journalism curricula in the wider context of higher education in developing and non western countries is an important step towards this direction. In this paper thus, the argument about decolonizing journalism education and practices is examined within the wider context of de-colonizing/de-westernizing educational approaches and curricula.

The West's dominance in the production, organization, and dissemination of the world's knowledge and information contributes to the heavy reliance of developing countries on this knowledge and information (Teferra, 2001). This dominance has had an enormous impact on higher education systems in non-western societies, particularly so in formerly colonised and developing countries, resulting often in the exclusion of local knowledge from the higher education curricula (Papoutsaki, 2006).

Along with the increasing dissemination of western education, knowledge and information through globalization and the internationalization of higher education, there is also an increasing awareness that western approaches, including western journalism/media/communication curricula models, have their limitations. Journalism research outside the predominant Anglo-American orbit has just started to challenge the established paradigms (Joseph, 2005:576).

Attempts to offer ready made prescriptive models for journalism curricula are still persistent though (see UNESCO, 2005), despite evidence that they do not always work. There is a need to move away from generic models and allow new approaches to be explored within local contexts and older ones such development journalism to be re-examined and given space to grow afresh.

This paper looks at journalism education from a society/region's specific knowledge and information needs, placing attention on external factors such as the importance placed on western journalism values, education and practices. It questions the western dominance in journalism curricula and practices and discusses how journalism curricula in non-western and developing countries require a different approach to content and delivery and places emphasis on the value of research as a pedagogical and epistemological tool. The paper also looks at how higher education institutions can promote journalism research as part of their curricula.

2. Concepts & Issues

There is a number of concepts and issues involved in this paper that need to be clarified within the context of higher education in non-western developing countries. Some of them are highly contested terms and their use will be further elaborated in the discussion section of this paper.

2.1 Main Concepts

The western or western based educational system is seen as the predominant model of education around the world today (see Kawagley & Barnhardt, 2006; Ma Rhea, 2004; Thaman, 2003; Tuhiwai Smith, 2003). The term '*local*' is used here interchangeably with those of '*indigenous*', '*traditional*', '*regional*', to indicate other than Western (referring to societies or educational systems and knowledge). Although this is a very broad and arbitrary way of putting together all these different terms that may have distinctive meaning to different people and disciplines, in this case they are used as a comparing means to the predominant, mainstream Western ways of thinking and doing (see above cited for different definitions of some of these terms; also Crewe & Harrison, 2003:30).

Similarly, the term '*de-colonize*' is used along with those of '*de-westernize*' '*alternative*' and '*de-hegemonize*' signifying a trend in exploring new approaches to doing, researching and teaching journalism/media/communication in non-western contexts. There is an evident trend in relevant literature that links these terms (See Curran & Park, 2000 for the debate on de-westernizing media studies; for an extensive debate on '*decolonizing*' research see Tuhiwai-Smith, 2003). What the world is experiencing in terms of knowledge and information production and dissemination via education and media is what Thiong'o (1986) calls a '*colonization of the mind*' and disengaging from this pattern would require an active process of decolonizing it. '*De-hegemonization*' is part of this process that requires breaking away from the unquestioned acceptance/imitation of western ideas, values, patterns (Nyerere *et al* quoted in Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001:81).

Development and *developing* countries is another set of terms that are linked to those mentioned above. There are inherent problems with defining developing countries, so here the term will be used to broadly describe those of the poorer and less technologically advanced countries as opposed to richer, industrialized states. But it is also used to refer to the disparities in information and knowledge flow (see Chan & Costa, 2005:143).

There is no agreed definition of *journalism studies*. For this paper, the author will agree with Burgh's (2003: 1) arbitrarily chosen term that refers to "the study of journalism as an academic discipline, to distinguish it from the study of journalism, which might refer only to the study of professional skills such as news-gathering and writing to genre".

References to journalism studies are often linked to media and communication studies because, although they are distinctively different in terms of curricula needs, they are also overlapping and research in each of these areas informs and enriches the understanding of the others (see Lee, 2005).

2.2 Main Issues

As most developing countries have experienced colonization and the imposition of western educational systems, the continuation of local ways of knowing was undermined (see Kawagley & Barhardt, 2006; Thaman, 2003). Globalization has enhanced Western hegemonic practices in this field. It is considered thus important in finding ways to de-colonize, de-westernize, de-hegemonize knowledge producing systems by looking at alternative, local options.

The main issues as identified within this context are: a) dominance of Western values and knowledge on non-western educational systems; b) Western influence on journalism/media/communication studies, curricula and practices in non-western and developing countries; c) insufficient locally produced research on

journalism/media/communication curricula and practices and lack of confidence in abilities to deviate from the dominant paradigm.

These issues seem to be at work both from within and outside these societies and institutions, operating at different but interrelated levels (Papoutsaki, 2006):

- **Internal:**

- ◇ **societal level:** internalization of westernization as a synonym to modernization which is still seen as the way to development; internalization of western ideas, values and practices as they are expressed in educational systems and media content; overexposure to information produced in the West through media consumption and educational texts; lack of confidence and respect in local knowledge systems and learning processes;
- ◇ **institutional level:** low research quality due to low research capacity caused by the absence of incentives to do research; lack of collaboration between schools and institutions; lack of data dissemination through local data basis; dependence on external/foreign aid/trainers for training, preferred mode of training in Western universities through a system of government and foreign scholarships; preference for staff with Western degrees;
- ◇ **curriculum level:** emphasis on transferring imported knowledge rather than generating knowledge; courses ill adopted to local needs, predominantly western in approach and content; blind adherence to western news values; limited local material and access to it; low priority for journalism research and practices in journalism curricula and poor link with courses on local knowledge and societal needs;
- ◇ **individual level:** lack of confidence of local researchers in conducting research linked to issues of resources, training, funding, feelings of inferiority relating to the perceived superiority of western knowledge and research.

- **External:**

- ◇ **societal level:** impact of western hegemonic practices reinforced by globalisation on local knowledge and learning through transmission of ideas, knowledge, information, cultural and social values; 'universalism' of western values and implications on defining journalism practices across the world; impact of donor agencies in defining what is right for local needs in terms of development, education and journalism practices; lack of distinction between community based societies and to individual based societies;
- ◇ **institutional level:** impact of the internationalisation of higher education that forces local HE institutes to follow a prescribed western formula of curricula in order to remain 'relevant' and 'competitive'; impact of donor agencies in defining journalism educational/research priorities; impact of Westerners' recruitment as academic staff, journalism trainers and curriculum/program consultants;
- ◇ **curriculum level:** the wider impact of western journalism education models; impact of western journalism/media theories and textbooks on local curricula;
- ◇ **individual level:** Lack of understanding/respect/ recognition by Western academics/consultants of local values and knowledge systems;

These issues generate questions such as: what theories inform journalism practice in developing countries and who defines them; can we re-define what

journalism is about in non-western and developing countries; are there alternatives; is there a role for research in journalism curricula?

3. Context & Discussion: the Western Dominant Paradigm

Education, is argued, should involve use of societal knowledge that is expected to contribute to curriculum content (Ma Rhea, 2004:5). The teaching and learning of how to inform and communicate with citizens in a local context should thus be based on and reflect that societal knowledge. However, the West's dominance in the production, organization, and dissemination of the world's knowledge and information has had an enormous impact on higher education systems in non-western societies, particularly so in formerly colonised and developing countries (Papoutsaki, 2006). This is resulting often in the exclusion of local knowledge systems from the higher education curricula and discouraging the emergence of local or regional models for clusters of Asian, African and Latin American countries.

In the field of journalism/media/communication studies, the Anglo-American model is dominating and this is evident not only at the conceptual/theoretical level, but also at curricula level, shaping the argument around vocational vs academic and at practice level, defining the role and values of the journalism profession as seen fit in western societies.

The high concentration of academic and textbook publishers in the journalism/media studies field in GB and the US has contributed to the dominance of the Anglo-American model. This is partly due to the fact that it was Western, particularly American, higher education systems that first incorporated journalism and communication into their curricula and had thus more time to develop. The American communication training and research model has set an example for many countries to follow as Lee (2005) argues in the case of Asian countries and suggests that:

.... it is perhaps time Asian scholars look for a better model after that many years of dependence. As of today, Asian communication schools, with perhaps the exception of Japan, still rely heavily on the U.S. model in their program and course design, teaching materials and research findings (2005:4).

Scholarships, fellowships and other similar programs that aim to bring academics from these countries to western institutions abound. Most Aid programs facilitate this learning mode. However, there are limitations as often the topics of study are insufficiently relevant to the local institutions and/or the formal position of the training recipient (Boeren, 2005; Papoutsaki, 2006).

The effect of globalization on Higher Education is increased competition for communication/journalism programs in non-western countries from Western universities, mainly British, north-American, also Australian in the Asian region, which market their programs overseas through extension courses or joint programs with local institutions. This competition will only increase as western institutions seek new opportunities to finance their growth. Boyd-Barrett observes that 'the western initiative in attracting tuition revenue from around the world courts the danger of reinforcing dominance-dependency relationship in educational structure' (quoted in Lee, 2005:9). And as Lee argues, from an Asia perspective, 'the U.S. dominance in communication education may take a more direct form and become hegemonic' (ibid). It could be argued that it has already become hegemonic.

As Langton & Ma Rhea (2003) indicated in their research, many governments in Asia and the Middle East attach high status to western knowledge because they perceived it to be important for capacity building in national education systems. Western knowledge is given higher status which makes it more difficult to incorporate local knowledge in local curricula.

According to Lee, this dependency is partly caused by lack of attention and funding on research in the field locally:

If a country's communication training wants to be independent of the U.S. influence, it must have its own model. The development of one's own model depends on enough knowledge, experiences, conceptual thinking, and teaching materials in the field. All this relies on research and accumulation of findings and experiences in one's own social contexts. The lack of a critical mass of communication researchers in most Asian countries is a most important constraint on Asian communication programs to develop their own model of education (5).

This can be argued to be the case not only for Asian scholars and institutions but indeed for the majority of the non-western and developing world. Josephi's (2005) critique of the dominant Anglo-American discourse as it is manifested in journalism and media literature so aptly demonstrates the lack of serious examination of alternative models. Starting with the 'old order', influential books such as the *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert et al (1956), and even Merrill's *Global Journalism* (de Beer and Merrill, 2004), as Josephi accurately argues, leave no space for journalism and media's role outside the binary libertarianism-authoritarianism and little or no interpretation of journalism practices outside the West. The *Four theories of the Press* remains an influential book and has even experienced a revival with its translation into Russian after the collapse of communism, spreading further established western views.

This dominant western discourse in the field is seen in another recent publication, *Canonic Texts in Media Research: Are There Any? Should There Be? How About These?* by Katz et al. (2003). Based on the assumption that certain writings in the field are and should be accepted as foundational points of reference, the book is disappointing the non-western reader by only alluding to developments in other parts of the world. The editors instead of exploring the issues raised by the book's provocative subtitle, are presenting us with a *de facto* selection of canonic texts in media research that represent major Western "schools" of communication research, namely Columbia, Frankfurt, Chicago, Toronto and British Cultural Studies (Buxton 2007: 132).

The western domination is further reinforced by the ever increasing flow of western media products that dominate the world's media market. Despite the emergence of new media production from the periphery such as India and Latin America, the dominant flows are becoming stronger (see Thyssou, 2006: 10). The dominant western news values are constantly thrown at audiences around the world shaping perceptions as to what is the acceptable way to practice journalism.

3.1 Journalism as a Western Tradition

Journalism's prominent role in western societies has had a long tradition. Windschuttle (1999) argues that in fact journalism is much older than we would have thought of, extending back to the origins of western civilization, taking the Greek historians as the first examples of detached reporting of reality. According to Windschuttle:

The idea of being able to detach yourself from your own culture, to look down as it were, upon yourself and to be a critic of your own practice, is a characteristically western notion and as he puts it one of the great strengths of western culture.

Hartley on the other side links journalism to modernity, seeing them both as products of European and euro sourced societies over the last three centuries. He associates both with colonialism through the development of exploration and imperial expansion, both promoting notions of freedom, progress and universal enlightenment and associated with the breakdown of traditional knowledge and their replacement with abstract bonds of virtual communities which are linked by their media (1996, quoted in Windschuttle, 1999).

Western values rooted in the Enlightenment's 'universalism' have influenced journalism training and professional practices as it is seen through the normative role of journalists in promoting democracy, the latter being a concept that is not shared and understood in the same way by all (see Josephi, 2005; Tihiwai-Smith, 2003; Jacobson, 1993). Even international organizations are promoting this normative approach, like UNESCO through its recent efforts to create model journalism curricula in which the 'relationship between democracy and journalism' is re-asserted (UNESCO, 2005:24).

Doody's essay on the concept of a free press illustrates the link between the western ideal of freedom and journalism's accepted normative functions in western democratic societies:

The western ideal of freedom is premised on the notion that the individual has control over society and societal structures and journalism's accepted function as Burke's 'fourth estate' is to contribute to the freedom of action of the individual... (Doody, 2004).

Journalism's strong association to democracy has made journalism the prerogative of western nations, as many countries don't seem to provide the democratic basis seen necessary for journalism (Josephi, 2005: 575). However, this ideal of an adversary press contributing to human freedom through its commitment to keeping watch over the political sphere can be problematic as Doody argues (op cit). While the concept of a free press presupposes a universal standard of freedom which applies equally to all, the understanding of the conditions that constitute freedom is contingent upon our own ideological framework. He quotes Burnhama in arguing that:

... it is important to observe that no major ideology is content to profess openly that it speaks only for the group whose interests it in fact expresses. Each group insists that its ideologies are universal in validity and express the interests of humanity as a whole; and each group tries to win universal acceptance for its ideologies (ibid).

When the Soviet block collapsed, the response of western countries to the region's need to build independent news media was immediate. Inspired by the opportunities for democracy building, western journalists have ventured over the past two decades in the newly independent countries to provide training, advice and material (Hamilton 1999; Papoutsaki, 2004). A string of media assistance projects, often part of foreign aid programs, have brought to the region a number of experts and initiated numerous trainings with various aims but mainly one goal to assist democratic development through Western based journalism practices. 'Missionary expeditions', as noticed by Sparks, often from US schools of journalism, pass through the region with great frequency (1998: 175).

The result was imitation of western journalism and media practices. The type of imitation though, as Splichal argues, that was adopted was uncritical, negative and passive as it was unilateral (from West to East) (2001: 52). The tendency to promote and imitate western news values as universal ones has been accepted by several of these countries on the basis that they represent democratic values. Imitating without adopting or appropriating has caused confusion. Take for instance the traditional watchdog role of western media. Applied by journalists in many of these countries, it became often a sterile adversarial role where the media became the opposition and the enemy of the government, not realizing that the media in countries in transition can also be supportive (Hamilton, 1999:100).

The dominant western 'universalistic' liberal model of journalism and democracy does not allow much space for other interpretations. This normative role of journalism in a democratic society does not either allow space to be measured against what it actually is in practice and not what ought to be (Joseph, 2005:576).

Practice indicates that one model does not fit all situations. Murray's experience as a western journalism trainer in non-western countries suggests that issues of journalistic freedom should be seen within the context of local societies and it should thus be avoided to emulate a strict model of Western journalism practices:

In countries like the UK, journalists believe that they aren't doing their job if they are not abrasively confrontational. This does not work in Asia. The Asian press may support a government in the interest of national development while still retaining credibility by speaking for the people (Murray, 1996).

After two decades of US failing media and journalism training initiatives in the post-communist countries, it is finally recognised that there is no one-size fits all approach to media development. Hume's report, *The Media Missionaries American Support for International Journalism*, argues just that and urges for new approaches to be:

... designed according to the region, to each country within a region, and sometimes to each region in a country... It doesn't work simply to arrive and try to establish something based on Western models. If all politics is local, so is all good media development ((2002: 5, 7).

Whether journalism is an old phenomenon of the western civilization or a product of enlightenment and modernity, the main argument remains the same, that journalism as it is practiced today world wide is a product of the western world. The need to allow for different interpretations of journalism practices is becoming more evident and there have been recent attempts to de-westernise media/journalism studies as the work of Curran & Park (2000) and Hallin & Mancini (2004) indicate. The latter develop three distinctive models of media systems, which although they are based on the media systems of European countries, are built on the argument that the Anglo-American model does not fit all societies.

3.2 Western News Values & Alternative Approaches

The impact of this dominant paradigm in Journalism education in most non-western and developing countries institutions is enormous. Education in the field is largely based on the 'western world view with its focus on individualism, cause and effect and measurable and observable evidence' (Fourie quoted in Botha & de Beer, 2006:3).

In developing countries, the importation of Western professionalism since the 1970s, promoted mainly by development agencies as way to modernization, had led journalists to adopt the conventional western news values of newsworthiness (i.e. timeliness, prominence, proximity, conflict and bizarre). This has resulted in media that tend to serve the ruling elite by concentrating almost exclusively on speeches and statements of the prominent, controversies of politicians in major cities and rituals of public life (Traber, 1985).

Journalists in developing countries, following these news criteria tend to exclude the majority of ordinary people unless they are subjects of accidents, violence and catastrophes. The blind adherence to Western styles of reporting reflects the western-influenced journalism training that journalists and journalism students at university level receive in the most of these countries (Rooney, Papoutsaki & Pamba 2004).

Loo (1994:7) criticises the fact that journalism students are still introduced to the 'strategic rituals of journalistic objectivity with its focus on mainstream sources as the pinnacle of professional journalism'. In teaching students the 'inverted pyramid', he argues, and 'moulding in them an event-oriented reporting mindset based on conventional news values', journalism curricula risk to become irrelevant to the needs of their countries, and this is not only for developing countries but Western too. Loo calls for a redefinition of the concept of news away from the dominant news paradigm, reframing conventional news values and news judgment on the premise that journalists have a social development role to play. Participation, controlled subjectivity and emphasis on subtexts and context are some new ways of teaching journalism students reporting (ibid).

We might have to accept that Western models of journalism education are more developed and could provide in some cases a basic education platform for developing journalism locally. We might even go further in considering that since media flow is globalized, the more globally educated journalists are, the less they could regularly misread and misunderstand foreign contexts. That can of course have a merit in itself but the majority of the underprivileged societies have very local issues to address and those might need a different approach to reporting. Journalism students in Papua New Guinea for instance admitted that the western confrontation reporting style as it was taught to them in class was not culturally appropriate and that there was a need developing a more collaborative model (Sharp & Papoutsaki, 2006). Their country's development issues are not sufficiently covered by the media which follow the western news values that promote urban based elites needs.

The need for alternative models of journalism is rooted in the dissatisfaction that western news values have not served the cause of national or local development. Development journalism was the first attempt towards this direction. The model was based on the broader concept of development communication which stressed participation by and interaction of communicators with the local people and was tailored to guide people towards self-reliance and respects traditional, indigenous and local knowledge. Advocacy was a strong component of this model (Loo, 1994:2)

The model though was not well received by Western media, journalists and academics, dismissing it as subjective, 'government say-so journalism' out of fear that freedom of expression and other civic liberties would lose their significance in the name of development. From a development journalism perspective, media belongs to people whose right to know and have their opinion expressed is delegated to the journalists as social change agents, who are morally bounded to

their audience. This, as Loo puts it, is in 'direct contrast to conventional western journalism which sees readers as a free consumers to be targeted and sold news and imagery as a fast moving product' (1994:3).

While the essence of investigative journalism is to expose, development journalism takes a less adversarial approach but a more in depth one by following the process of what, why and how an event happened, study and report the process of the changes taking place in the country. In that sense, development journalism is the reporting of development processes rather than just events (op cit). Social and cultural cohesion takes priority over news commercialism.

Despite the model's weakness in terms of its possible use by governments to control media, its potential for alternative journalism practices is great if the model is revisited and re-developed along the new realities of the developing world today. Development journalists are not prophesying to be neutral observers. Their strength is that they have to learn how to identify with the needs of the people. Alternative journalism practices, with development journalism one of them, are seen closer to notions of social responsibility, replacing an ideology of 'objectivity' and with an overt advocacy component.

The missing element, as Atton (2003:176) argues, in promoting alternative journalism practices is journalism education. In general, journalism educators tend to ignore alternative approaches to journalism, and when they do they present them as 'extreme' case studies. Atton suggests such alternatives be deployed within journalism education as practices.

According to Skinner *et al.* (2001: 345), the rote learning of news values by students has led to a recognition of news that is craft-based and 'denies any relation to epistemology'. Instead they propose methods of journalism education that foreground questions of epistemology, emphasize the social construction of 'facts' and knowledge and develop critical thinking and reflexivity. Accordingly, the purpose for studying alternative journalism can be:

(1) to function as a critique through praxis of institutionalized and routinized forms of journalism; (2) to suggest 'other' ways of doing journalism; By embedding the concepts and practices of alternative ways of doing newswork into the curriculum we might invigorate ourselves, our students and the profession, in whatever forms it might take.

How do we allow then new understandings of journalistic principles that move away from the dominant principles contained in normative media theory, ethics and practice? Fourie (op cit) suggests that there are a number of issues that need to be addressed first, such as how concepts of freedom of expression, objectivity, news values, newsworthiness can be reinterpreted locally; and how these interpretations can be implemented to form the foundation of locally-conceptualised media and journalistic practices. The 'decolonising of the mind' would entail an intellectual exercise through which both educators and students would need to reconsider their own world and life view (ibid).

Journalism curricula need to embrace local perspectives and this entails an academic shift towards local achievements, needs, ways of acquiring knowledge as well as a 'decolonizing of the mind' and the questioning of the existing Western journalistic world view (see Botha & de Beer, 2006:3). There is a need for more research in alternative journalism practices, including re-defining old approaches such as development journalism.

4. Journalism Research: a Curriculum Approach for Developing Countries

Research is the process by which new knowledge is created and as such it influences the direction in which a society moves (Conti, 1997). It is through enhancing the production of knowledge that research becomes an engine of endogenous and sustainable development (Traore, 2004). The teaching and learning of how to conduct research in a local context should thus be based on and reflect that societal knowledge (Papoutsaki, 2006:1).

The dependency on the western journalism education model is not desirable given that non-western and developing countries would like to have journalism/communication training which meets local needs and aspirations better. But a shift from the dominant model to a local one will take time. Local institutions need to first design courses with local contents. To do so, knowledge about communication and information sharing and dissemination in local contexts must be generated through research. As Lee suggests:

... local scholars need to put more efforts in conducting research with local relevance, rather than pursuing topics of interests to the West and aiming at publication in Western venues only (2005:10).

If local schools want to develop local models, there must be an investment in local research. More emphasis should thus be placed at incorporating research training at an undergraduate level where students can be trained for undertaking research not only in formal academic circles but in their work environment such as media and NGOs (see Neave, 2002). It is also the best way and time to do/invest in capacity building for future researchers. The biggest part of population in developing countries are young people where lies the greatest reserve of talent (Neave, 2002:15).

There is a need to create journalism/communication curricula that promote awareness of the social and cultural significance of local knowledge that has been taken either for granted or dismissed as irrelevant in a modern and increasingly globalized world. There seems to be a paradigm shift towards integration of local knowledge into educational systems, albeit slow, that calls for a need to adapt research priorities and practices to better reflect local points of view (see Kawagley & Barnhardt, 2006; Ma Rhea, 2004; Huffer & Qalo, 2004; Smith, 2003; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999).

Journalism/communication curricula in developing countries should put more emphasis on research skills that would equip future journalists, media and communication professionals and academics with the important skills of sourcing solutions to communication problems locally and learning how to identify development issues by researching and reporting them in depth from local perspectives.

Learning how to do and understand research in such settings can also help journalists in developing countries in their profession as they are constantly confronted with proposals and policies purportedly based upon the researches of social scientists. They cannot evaluate them or even know what questions to ask without a general understanding of methods and how to interrogate them (see Burgh, 2000).

To anchor journalism education in the development needs of communities, a robust methodology is required to tackle a thoroughgoing needs analysis. This includes the questions of reach, relevance and impact of the different media

forms already at play. Information gaps and their spatial distribution must be met with realistic models of media development. Such an analysis will not only help moving from a strictly craft model of journalism education to a more academic one, but also one grounded in the local context (Sharp & Papoutsaki, 2006). As Wickham suggests from a South Pacific context:

The key is a fully-fledged communication programme to facilitate high levels of study and research. The programme would need to be firmly grounded in a philosophy that recognises the uniqueness of our people (Wickham 1996:3).

Research should be reflective of local communities and their values and knowledge and it should involve perspectives and paradigms that are not always mainstream research. Teaching research to journalism students can empower them in terms of producing an original in depth research project that can generate understanding of local conditions from a local perspective but also teach them how to hear people's voices and learning how to better understand local knowledge.

Alternative research approaches, like alternative journalism practices, focus on subjectivity, closeness to subject, uniqueness, qualitative methods, local self determination and solidarity and action (Maguire, 1987) and provide space for accepting that other realities exist in people's perception of themselves and the world. They also provide space for the local researcher and journalist to conduct 'valid' research because of his/her closeness to the communities she/he researches and knows thus better than an outsider. They also allow the local communities to be participants in the research process. As Tanton puts it, 'although people have historically generated their own practical knowledge, modern technology and science have developed the myth that this function is reserved for trained experts' (in Conti, 1997). New forms of doing research, such as participatory research, are based on the belief that people are capable of creating their own knowledge and that the researcher is a collaborative learner in this process (Conti, 1997).

The practice of development journalism can benefit from the practice of participatory research, as Loo (1994:7) explains by using Jacobson's description of the characteristics of 'participatory research:

1) an assumption that people's ways of seeing their lives and formulating their own interests are of central importance; 2) an educational process in which both researchers (*journalists*) and local people learn about one another as well as about local conditions and 3) the aim of satisfactory action towards a better life, rather than the search for objective scientific laws (*objective facts and truth*).

The intellectual undernourishment of journalism education and research is tied to wider problems in the academic culture of developing countries. The methodology of teaching that will be most effective is one where educators use data on the demand-side, that is, allowing information needs, once identified, to become the catalyst for creative production, harnessing the inherent capacities and collective wisdom of communities, rather than simply transferring the received wisdom of foreign donor agencies and consultants, reinforced by media technocrats (Sharp & Papoutsaki, 2006).

In education the tendency is to look for immediate solutions to problems that are often the product of long-term generational shifts, for which the solutions, too, must be understood at a multi-generational level. Western education tends to be too specialized (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 2006). This is particularly the case with

journalism curricula which tend to focus mostly on vocational training and understanding of the profession with less emphasis on education that can allow the future journalist to understand in depth societal issues. There is therefore a need to develop curricula with a more holistic approach to learning.

Any research methods course should emphasize usefulness/utilization of research in local contexts and participation of local community members in the research process. Introducing research methods as a course and research projects as a method of learning at an undergraduate level, attention is needed to be put in creating a supporting curriculum, carefully planned to lead gradually up to the research project, assisted with courses both theoretical and practical such as theories in the chosen field and courses on development issues but most importantly, courses on local knowledge systems from a contemporary point of view in order to change the perception that traditional knowledge is static and as such good to study as something that belongs to the past (Papoutsaki, 2006).

The results of an experiment that introduced research at an journalism undergraduate curriculum in Papua New Guinea indicated that despite the lack of resources and students' limitations in terms of insufficient secondary and higher education, students were capable of producing original research and succeeded in getting employment in areas that have the potential to impact positively their society:

I think being taught Research Methods at an undergraduate level in PNG is really exciting. It is beneficial for a developing country like ours because we need to find solutions to a lot of problems that hold us back. What better way to do that, than through research? Research Methods has provided us with a sense of direction, in that we see now where our country should be heading, in terms of development and what is holding us back. Only through research can we really know our struggles and what should be done to solve some of these problems. (C.Ove, 4th year CA students, DWU, PNG, Oct 2006)

Being a local researcher going back into the community was something special. It felt like I was giving something back to my country by helping the rural people. I, as a local researcher, understand better why they do what they do and try to make recommendations to ignite development. That, I think, is the difference between a local researcher and an expatriate researcher who would want to apply western ideas that do not suit the environment. What I liked most was that I was a black skin, like them and we talked the same language. (C.Hawigen, 4th year student, CA dept, DWU, PNG, oct 2006)¹

The results show also that an increasing number of these students are now employed to do research in the NGO sector or on specific research projects linked to development. This sector cannot always afford to hire people with higher degrees and in most cases there is lack of trained people with MA and PhDs. We cannot afford to wait to produce research at that level because of lack of funding.

The other advantage of encouraging research at that level is that students learn how to do research in their communities, trained to work with limited resources and develop a sense of pride and confidence in themselves. Even if they go abroad to undertake further studies, they will be less inclined to copy without a critical eye western methods of enquiry.

¹ This is part of a survey that the author conducted on the impact of introducing research methods and research projects in undergraduate curricula.

5. Conclusions & Recommendations

Without addressing the bigger issue of western dominance in knowledge and information production and dissemination, it will not be possible either to address the need for developing alternative curricula and professional practices in journalism. There is a growing awareness that western models are irrelevant to conditions of non western societies. There is also a growing awareness that alternative perspectives and models exist and they are evident, as Reddi argues, in the recognition that it is necessary to study social structures and cultural contexts prior to proceeding with any research in the field of communication (1993:77).

Efforts towards de-westernization of non-western social and behavioral research have been relatively recently organized. Such efforts as Chu argues (1993:136), however, by no means presume a disregard for the contribution of western theories and research. What is being advocated in this paper is a refocus of present journalism research conceptualization and educational practices in order to give greater consideration to the *chineseness* or *Indianness* or *arabicness/islamicness* or *pacifcness* etc of social phenomena and human behaviour as expressed in modern communication practices.

As Kawagley and Barnhardt (2006) argue in the case of native people, you cannot deny the need to understand western ways of learning, but not at the expense of what these people already know. We also need to recognize that local journalism institutions need to let go of old and persisting perceptions and attitudes that see western ways as superior and concentrate on what can be achieved locally. Non-western educators/researchers, too, need to recognize the existence of multiple worldviews and knowledge systems, and find ways to understand and relate to the world in its multiple dimensions and varied perspectives.

Journalism curricula need to embrace local perspectives and this, as Botha & de Beer (2006) suggest, entails an academic shift towards local achievements, needs, ways of acquiring knowledge as well as a 'decolonizing of the mind' and the questioning of the existing Western journalistic world view.

There is a need to move away from generic models. New approaches need to be devised or explored within local contexts and older ones such development journalism need to be re-examined and given space to grow afresh. Journalism practices, education and research methodologies should be informed of the alternative options, base their foundations on local knowledge systems, needs and values. We need to urge young people to learn and practice journalism in such ways that borrows knowledge from their communities and benefits them directly by sharing their findings with them.

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