

**OPEN AIRWAVES : CHALLENGES FOR SOUTH AFRICAN  
JOURNALISM**

**by**

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Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master in Media Studies in the Faculty  
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February 2005

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**ABSTRACT**

It is currently generally recognized that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right. In South Africa this recognition was realized with the advent of the new democratic dispensation in 1994. Freedom of the press in South Africa came as no coincidence - there had been long and concerted efforts to fight apartheid and its inward facing media legislation. These concerted efforts culminated in the "Jabulani: Open Airwaves: conference held in the Netherlands in 1993. This landmark conference undeniably laid a solid foundation for the media freedom South Africa enjoys today.

Many would argue that South Africa is now finally entrenched in the libertarian viewpoint of the press, while others feel that the media should be moving beyond libertarianism towards social responsibility. Based on these press theories, this study reveals that there is need to strike a balance between the two in South Africa in particular and in Africa in general. It is shown how libertarian theories are a far cry from the authoritarian and nee-communist media theories utilized by the former apartheid regime.

Repressive South African media laws are well documented, but a brief historical overview is given in the study to show the depth and the media engineered by the state. It also points out the gaps in journalism training, both in the past and at present this focus reveals that journalists are an important kingpin in press freedom. Their training and ideological orientation can either promote diversity or throttle it.

It is for this reason that this research study was undertaken to endeavour to elicit information about the state of journalism in selected newsrooms by developing a questionnaire that could be mailed or used in structured interviews.

The study has revealed that many newsrooms are now run by youthful journalists, of whom a large number have inadequate education and training. This has affected the quality of information both the public and private sectors are broadcasting. However, the study has shown that some of the reasons for this poor performance seems to lie in the recruitment structures of newsrooms. In addition, effective induction is not given on appointment. Many organisations rely on external training, otherwise it is sink or swim.

The study finally recommends a sound basic education for journalists in all possible languages. While it is important that journalism training at tertiary institutions in South Africa should include practical skills and standard training to enhance contextual knowledge in journalism programmes.



**DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of the North for the degree of Master in Media Studies in the Faculty of Arts has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any University, that it is my own work in design and in execution and that all material contained therein has been fully acknowledged .

**MALOKO SIMON TEBELE**

**February 2005**

**DEDICATION**

To my mother, my wife, my children Phogole and Malebogo, and my cousins, Dr's PJ Maelane and KP Ma e la ne , whose love, support, patience, and encouragement made this study possible. Thanks, you are wonderful people.

**MALOKO**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**I am grateful to :**

- My supervisors, Prof Sheila Mmusi and Prof BK Sibanda for their guidance throughout the research process.
- Prof Cloete for her editing the final draft.
- The university staff who have shown an interest in my work.
- Dr Mokgoatsane for his guidance.
- The editorial staff and journalists of both e-TV and the SABC, politicians, media owners, and civil society.
- Vivienne Peo, Joyce Rambau and Claycia Crawford, whose unselfishness in making their computer available facilitated the typing of this work.
- Franz Kruger and Barney Mthomboti, for taking an interest in my studies.
- My colleagues at work for sharing their knowledge with me : Lufu Madima , Willie Mosoma, Bheki Shongwe, and Manas Tshungu.
- The SABC and UNIN library staff for their assistance in locating the materials used in this report.

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ANC	African National Congress
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCCSA	Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa
DA	Democratic Alliance
e-TV	e-TV
FXI	Freedom of Expression Institute
BEMAWU	Broadcasting, Electronic Media and Allied Workers Union
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
IFJ	International Federation of Journalism
GNU	Government of National Unity
MISA	Media Institute of South Africa
PAC	Pan African Congress
MWASA Africa	Media Workers Association of South Africa
UDM	United Democratic Movement
NAFCOC	National African Federated Chambers of Commerce
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACOB	South African Chamber of Business
SANEF	South African National Editors Forum
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
COSAS	Congress of South African Students

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The demise of apartheid and the advent of the first free democratic elections in 1994 ushered in a new epoch making era in South African history. Since then, editors in South Africa have been concerned with the skills with which journalists have been equipped to cover the complex issues facing this country as it proceeds on the road to transformation. The importance of a skilled journalistic corps in any country, but especially in a country described as a "emerging democracy", such as South Africa cannot be stressed enough. A society in transformation needs well-trained and well-educated journalists. But it also needs a responsible media management that acknowledges the role it should play in order to ensure professional day to day journalism practices in the newsroom once these professionally trained and educated journalists become their responsibility in other words, synergistic relationship is needed between media trainers and educators and media management.

Most of current debates about the media are concern with the quality of journalism in the newsroom, including matters such as poor writing skills and poor general historical and contextual knowledge of journalists. These debates will assume even greater significance if they are followed by tangible actions to

translate them into practical and implementable proposals. Journalists and media owners therefore, have a duty to work to the highest professional standards and ethics and embrace a learning culture by committing themselves to ongoing education and training. A culture of real debate will emerge and attract good editors who will promote quality journalism to train journalism students on practical issues such as ethics.

Nowadays journalists appear to compete for celebrity status and apparently display a lack of professionalism, pride and overall commitment to journalism as a profession (Steyn & De Beer, 2002:52-54). Resultantly, commitment to news and the quality of news appears to be less important than the image of the journalist. As such, passion for one's work seems to have been replaced by the material gains associated with the job. News seems to have lost its inherent value and while the value in terms of accuracy, objectivity, veracity, and overall reliability has become a function of finance, monetary payment and material gain.

The broadcast media thus need to reclaim its identity and authority to avoid a repetition of the past while the radio and television should attract the best journalists, such as Max du

Preez who unflinchingly reported the truth during the TRC Special Report in 1997. The newsrooms in turn need well-trained, motivated, witty and well rewarded journalists who will pride themselves in quality and excellence. This process is a challenge to media owners to invest in training journalists to give editors the necessary resources to pay competitively rather than exploitative salaries.

There seem to be solutions to the media's problems facing journalism in South Africa but media owners need to implement basic principles, such as co-operating with journalism educators to ensure that there are places for journalism internships, stop employing graduates from institutions that produce poor quality journalists to force them to improve their standards, improve the quality of sub-editing; and encourage both journalists and editors to upgrade themselves by doing graduate diplomas, graduate certificates and short courses. Tertiary institutions should include prominent role players on their advisory boards to make a significant contribution towards improving the level of skills training to provide up-to-date practical experience.

This research project will consider the skills journalists need for their work to move beyond the mimicry of official sources about the events to a investigation of issues and their context. A key challenge for the media's role in today's democracy is to train and develop skilled and competent journalists who will be able to tell the African story from an African perspective.

### **1.1. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The role of the media in post-apartheid South Africa remains an issue that generates vociferous debate. Numerous questions are arising as to the quality of journalism in South Africa . However, the most serious challenges concern the perceived mistrust between government and the media, challenges of transformation in the media industry; problems arising due to shifts in newsroom dynamics, problems with journalism training, problems arising from contextual issues that are uniquely South African; news coverage and comment on major socio-economics challenges, staff and infrastructural management and continuous juniorisation of newsrooms. Mathata Tsedu (2002:15), the former chairman of SANEF, singled out juniorisation of the journalistic skills base as one of the biggest problems facing the media industry in South Africa. Makgoba (1997) articulated the same idea in mentioning that the media is overpopulated by young, inexperienced, poorly



paid, poorly trained and disdainfully treated journalists, who are prone to manipulation in their reporting. These young journalists are unable to gather, investigate and analyse news on their own but rely on press releases and news conferences that are reported without context analysis, importance or relevance to the society.

Another question still to be answered is whether the birth of post-apartheid South Africa in 1994 has contributed towards effective, enduring and meaningful participatory democratic practices. Critical issues examined in this research project thus include the lack of "practical knowledge and skills experience" amongst journalism teachers and journalists' limited awareness and knowledge of local political issues, local and international sports, local and international culture, entertainment and the media, local and international geography, international issues and science. The challenges include the changing face of journalism due to a lack of funding and technical knowledge, such as the internet.

Although this study is conscious of numerous factors which affect the dissemination of news, due to the time limit as well as economic and academic constraints, the researcher will mainly focus on newsroom dynamics and the important role of

journalism in South Africa. Broadcast journalism in the newsroom is more than news gathering and writing techniques. It is a way of viewing and writing about the social world for the public benefit and a means of fomenting conversations in the public domain about events and issues of immediate public interest.

## **1.2 THE CONTEXT PROBLEM**

In addition South African media managers are challenged by a highly complex mix of ethnic, racial, and lifestyle variables when defining their audiences. This complicates the task of editing, and managing newsroom production so that the running of a newsroom is an extremely complicated task. It is thus important that educators and managers work together to develop joint strategies for both upgrading the performance of journalists and ensuring that the next generation of journalists will be better qualified.

## **1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE MEDIA IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **HISTORY**

The history of the South African press prior to the 1990s has been one of struggle against repressive forces from the past (Sparks 2003:62]. This was during the dark days of apartheid

ensorship and harassment and the early days of the National Party regime. This period was characterized by a culture of detaining, arresting, imprisoning, firing or influencing the firing of left-wing journalists and banning of publications. These measures created a culture of fear that led to self censorship and the loss of credibility for the media under government control and ownership. Almost the entire Africa was known for the gagging of its media. According to Kupe 1999:54 the media's role was one of praising the development that was supposedly occurring under the wise leadership of so and so, even when wrong options for development were being chosen. In fact journalists became propaganda functionaries of the government, and the media sycophantic megaphones. The Afrikaans newspapers dominated the media as instruments in the ethnic immobilization and communication between the government and its followers. According to Sparks (2003:62) the English language media was regarded as the voice of the political enemy, seen as disloyal and prepared to damage the national interest for the sake of partisan political gain.

Black journalism, meanwhile, struggled to establish itself in this hostile environment, (Sparks 2003:64). The first black newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu (African Opinion)*, was founded in 1884 by *John Tengo Jabavu*, a pioneer figure in black South African politics. This newspaper was followed by *flanga Lase Natal (The Natal Sun)* which was started by John Dube, who later

became the first President of the South African Native National Congress, fore runner of the African National Congress. Other newspapers followed, such as *A Bantu-Bath:*, founded jointly by Dube and Solomon Thekiso Plaatjie and *Native Life in South Africa*. Black journalists had their own vigorous voice and tolerated writers reflecting township life, targeting black readers but their lean revenues and white ownership kept their voices restrained.

In the late fifties, change began because black resistance in South Africa was emerging. The government started a move against the press, to restrict its reporting of black resistance. The first measure was the enactment of the Communism Act of 1950 which prohibited newspapers from quoting any utterances past or present. Later this act became known as the Internal Security Act. In the late fifties there were about 120 pieces of legislation restricting what could be published on points of prosecution. This resulted in the main, in self-cens ors h i p by journalists. Banned organizations such as the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress, together with their leaders, could not be quoted. The list was endless because nineteen black consciousness organizations were banned in 1977, followed by the United Democratic Front and seventeen

other black organizations in 1987. Publishing any information, regarded by the state as subversive, was thus impossible.

These censorship laws were supplemented by even more stringent restrictions during various states of emergency that were declared during times of black political uprising (Sparks 2003:67). It was therefore extremely difficult for journalists to cover stories, especially in black townships. Some black editors, such as Percy Xoboza of *The World* and a black weekly *New Nation* editor, Zwelakhe Sisulu, were detained without trial on several occasions.

The closing down of *The Rand Daily Mail* was a terrible blow to both journalism and the country, for it resulted in the dispersal of the most talented staff that had ever been assembled in a South African newsroom (Sparks 2003:68). A number of these journalists left the country or left journalism to prosper elsewhere. The end of the publication of the *Rand Daily Mail* was followed by weekly publications like *Vrye Weekblad* and *Weekly Mail* which were exposing the apartheid regime's hit squads and third force violence especially in trains and black townships. Black journalists, working for black newspapers and the English press, were singled out for special harassment by police and detained or banned. Some were frequently

assaulted and tortured or suffered permanent injury. Even foreign journalists did not escape the intense pressure of the restrictive laws as they were threatened with deportation if they were found transgressing the censorship laws.

What was particularly galling in those years was that while some newspapers did their best to expose the injustices of apartheid under extremely difficult circumstances, the national public broadcaster, The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), became the most blatant propagandist of the regime and its odious ideology (Sparks 2003:69). No critical item ever made it on air and no other broadcaster was permitted to operate. The SABC thus enjoyed the monopoly of the airwaves, broadcasting on three television channels and twenty two radio stations. The banning of black newspapers and the closing down of others left a big vacuum in the media. The media are, however, now free and censorship laws have been lifted. South Africa currently has freedom of speech as one of the main principles of its democratic constitution. This right is entrenched in Section 16 and the Bill of Rights which reads as follows:

- **Everyone has the right to freedom of expression which includes:**
  - o freedom of the press and other media
  - o freedom to receive or impart information or ideas
  - o freedom of artistic creativity
  - o academic freedom and freedom of scientific research

It must be noted that

- **The right in subsection (1) does not extend to**
  - o propaganda for war
  - o incitement of imminent violence
  - o advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

Today we are witnessing changes in ownership, a new openness, in both the electronic media and the press (Sparks 2003:71). The SABC has changed too. It now has a multiracial Board of Directors and a black Chairman, a black Chief Executive as well as several black editors for both radio and television services. The SABC monopoly may not be experienced again after the creation of an independent licensing body called the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA). South Africa now has 22 public, 16 private commercial

and more than 100 community radio stations. In the case of television, the SABC is still dominating the airwaves with three TV channels and is currently seeking two additional regional television channels to fulfill its language mandate. In addition, there is now a private free-to-air commercial television channel called e-TV, together with an encrypted pay channel called MNet, and a huge satellite bouquet, consisting of 54 TV and radio channels, including BBC, CNN, FOX and a range of other foreign broadcasters, aired by MNet's associate company, Multichoice.

The first black Chief Executive of the SABC, Zwelakhe Sisulu, stated that transforming the SABC has been one of the most challenging and frustrating tasks in the new South Africa, (Sparks 2003:98) since this giant broadcasting monopoly has dominated the airwaves as an explicit and unashamed propaganda machine, controlled and directed by the Chairman of the Broederbond Secret Society, Piet Meyer. Every piece of information which went on air \Was controlled and censored including the type of music which was played on radio stations or television channels was controlled and censored. This powerful propaganda tool, was bound to change radically and fast. According to Sparks (2003:101), there were almost no journalists or media administrators in the country with



broadcasting experience other than those who had been trained by the seriously tainted SABC. The appointment of the new SABC Board in 1993 was laborious but, for the first time in the history of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, it was fully transparent.

Real changes were effected in the SABC under the new board. The newsroom was an un-wildly conglomerate of reporters serving different bulletin desks which had to cope with the requirement that SABC TV should broadcast the news in all 11 of the country's official languages over three channels (Sparks 2003:109). This was unheard of in the past and was a nightmare for reporters who had to translate and read the news. Today it is possible and the SABC has succeeded in broadcasting in all 11 official languages on TV and Radio. The nature of the SABC is that it is a public broadcaster with a strong mandate to serve the public interest. Although it is minimally subsidized by the government (by 2% of the total capital) the SABC is challenged with the task of raising the revenue to perform. It has to compete on the commercial marketplace. The two are incompatible as public service may sometimes conflict with commercial endeavours.

Sparks (2003:115) states that in the past the SABC operated in a much easier environment with no competition and a limited public broadcasting mandate. It had a string of profitable commercial radio stations effectively cross-subsidizing the public service arm of the corporation. The new SABC has been faced with a daunting task since 1993 when it had to apply for a broadcasting license to the newly established Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) now ICASA for the first time. Other aspirant broadcasters wanted the SABC to shed some stations to create space for competition. Government thus wanted the SABC to reflect the values of a new multicultural and democratic society and the IBA agreed to let the SABC retain three TV channels and sell six of its profitable commercial radio stations. De Beer (2002:162) calls this deregulation step by the IBA "the selling of the family silverware".

The transformation of the broadcasting arena in South Africa was accompanied by community broadcasting. Although community radio in South Africa lacks resources, it serves the socially and politically marginalized communities.

In August 1991, the Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves conference was the first occasion at which the recommendation to conceptualize the system of broadcasting along three levels,

public, commercial and community - was formerly stated, (Jabulani! 1991:17). Another milestone was reached in January 1992 with the Cape Town Conference, Media in Transition, which passed a resolution to establish an operating space for community radio with a broader system of broadcasting regulations {Ackman 1992:10}.

Community radio in South Africa is still fragile, in that there is no national coordination committee representing the major centers such as Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. ICASA requires that all community stations should "broadcast news to keep their listeners promptly informed of important political and social events, especially at local level". However, news and actuality programs are costly to produce and require skilled personnel which many community stations do not have access to De Beer (2002:166). It is, therefore, impossible for community radio stations to compete with national broadcasters such as the SABC. However, community stations have increasingly become a training ground from which the national public broadcasters recruit young promising journalists.

The vast majority of laws which restrict the media in one way or another are laws of general application (De Beer 2002:269). Formerly newspapers had to be registered in terms of the

Newspaper Registration Act (Act 63 of 1971) and this meant paying a substantial deposit. In the field of broadcasting there have been dramatic changes since 1993 when the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (Act 153 of 1993) was passed. This Act broke the near monopoly of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. ICASA is tasked with regulations of broadcasting for the public interest. These include the SABC community broadcasters and private broadcasters. According to De Beer (2002:269) it is, therefore, the duty of the IBA to :

- Promote the provision of a diverse range of sound and television broadcasting services at a national, regional and local level which cater for all languages and cultural groups and provide entertainment, education and information.
- Encourage ownership and control of broadcasting services by persons from historically disadvantaged groups.
- Ensure equitable treatment of political parties during election periods.
- Promote the most effective use of the broadcasting services frequency bands.
- Refrain from undue interference in the commercial activities of licenses.
- Ensure fair competition between broadcast licenses.

De Beer (2002:275) further indicates that ICASA is duty bound to ensure that broadcasting licenses adhere to a code of conduct acceptable to ICASA (Schedule 1 of the Act). Section 57(2) provides for a Broadcasting Monitoring and Complaints Commission to adjudicate complaints concerning alleged breaches of the code.

## **1.4 CENSORSHIP**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Under apartheid, black media workers in particular were cut off from the mainstream working of the industry. They had to struggle against apartheid laws and other obstacles to attain

parity, respect and dignity. These media workers have had to fight to oust racism from the industry and to get justice from their white management. Journalism in South Africa then was a black and white issue. The statements below outline the characteristic nature of the media industry during the old dispensation.

#### **1.4.1 CENSORSHIP (OLD DISPENSATION)**

If one were to draw a list, it could be like this:

- + Banning of the media
- + Restrictive laws
- + Imprisonment of journalists
- + Hostile relationship
- + Massive encroachment by government
- + Repression of the black press
- + SABC propaganda arm of the National Party
- + Operated through the secret Broederbond
- + Intimidation of media into self-censorship
  
- + Suppression of unfavorable information
- + Radio and TV controlled by government
- + Black/white journalists treated harshly
- + SABC dominated by Afrikaner elite
- + Television enjoyed monopoly
- + Government hostile to English press

#### 1.4.2 The New Dispensation

As has been noted, South Africa became a democracy in May 1994. This event changed not only the political system but also affected the media in fundamental ways.

However, as Oosthuizen (1997:115) has observed in the interregnum between official apartheid and formal democracy (1991 to 1994), it was clear that the old order and old sentiments would not change overnight. Even if sentiments did change, and while it was easy to lift emergency regulations, it was not so easy to change legislation, which requires time and long political debates in parliament. In the case of South Africa, it also required long hours of negotiations and the willingness and a bility to compromise.

During the final days of apartheid it was clear that press freedom had also become a victim of the struggle. While South

Africa had become used to government actions against the press Oosthuizen (1997:127), the freedom movements exerted tremendous pressures on black newspapers to support the cause uncritically and to ignore the mistakes and even atrocities committed in the name of the cause (South African Institute of Race Relations [S AIRR] 1991: 145). Journalists received death

threats and those who dared report independently and fairly were very often accused of propping up the apartheid regime - which was tantamount to receiving the death penalty, meaning being detained in prison for a long time without trial, sometime even subjected to solitary confinement.

After 1991 the continuing pressure on the press and individual journalists as well as the uncertainty on issues such as censorship after 1991 was captured in great detail by Karen Stander, National Organizer of the South African Union of Journalists (SAUJ), in her report, *Press freedom in South Africa 1991*.

Standar (1991) mentioned that in the eighteen months since 2 February 1990, when President F.W. de Klerk opened a new chapter on state-press relations by unbanning the liberation movements and announcing the freeing of Nelson Mandela, South Africa had undergone far-reaching changes. Legal

apartheid had been repealed with the scrapping of the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act and most political prisoners were released. She states :

*... South Africa and South African journalism have changed beyond recognition. It was not too long ago that former Cape*



*Times editor Tony Heard was celebrated for his courage in defying the State and risking the forced closure of his newspaper when he printed an interview with the ANC's Oliver Tambo. Now journalists complain when these previously silenced organizations drag their heels in commenting on the issues of the day.*

During the state of emergency reporters were accustomed to being harassed or arrested and forcibly removed from the area by the security forces. But disconcertingly, attacks on the press were now coming not only from the State, but also from its opponents.

While the stoning of press vehicles in the heat of political unrest was nothing new, the mood in the townships had changed. Where a journalist's status had previously afforded some protection, violence or the threat of violence was now being used against the press in attempts to censor it, in some instances by both sides.

A parallel trend was that, despite the apparent easing of formal censorship, there have been a disturbing and increasing number of incidents of informal pressure by the State media.

Noting that many Acts curtailing freedom of expression and the press were still in existence, Stander (1991: 162) listed a number of cases in which Section 205 of the Criminal Procedure Act had been used against journalists since the end of apartheid. Section 205 forces journalists to disclose information or confidential sources of information relating to any alleged offence - or to face a jail sentence of up to five years without the option of a fine. She remarked that although many countries have a similar provision, in South Africa it was used almost exclusively against journalists (Stander 1991:163).

Post-February 1990, as the South African media flexed some of its new found muscle, the State resorted to using some of the provisions from its arsenal of traditional weapons to curb and censor the press.

Since September 1990 these assaults have included seven subpoenas against journalists issued in terms of Section 205 of the Criminal Procedure Act to disclose information to the police

and one against the political party official. Two resulted in prison sentences.

Stander, then lists a number of incidents involving the arrest and even murder of South African Journalists, as well as police actions to confiscate journalists' notes in the twelve months between September 1990 and September 1991.

Meanwhile, a minor change was made to Section 205 of the Criminal Procedure Act, leaving it as effective a weapon as ever for harassing journalists. In 1996 the Supreme Court ruled that the provisions of section 205 were contrary to the human rights enshrined in South Africa's new Bill of Rights (chapter 3 of the Interim Constitution).

Stander (1991:175) mentions that it was not only the right wing which was guilty of attacks on the press. Censorship by left-wing activists through violence or the threat of violence had received attention in the media and was highlighted in a book published by the SA Institute of Race Relations. The book, called *Mau -Mauing the media: A new censorship for a new South Africa*, consists of transcripts of discussions by five senior black journalists and others at a seminar in August 1990.

According to the publication, black journalists were at risk if they wrote about sensitive issues - uncomfortable issues that many people believed should not be raised in public (Stander 1991). One speaker is quoted as saying "We have a situation in

which journalists are far less exposed to arrest, detention and incarceration by the government than they used to be, but are being threatened and manhandled by political activists in the townships, in the towns and everywhere, and are being told to toe the line or else." For instance, criticizing strategies such as class boycotts was considered taboo and a boycott of one newspaper had been announced after a journalist had been accused of writing a story that "sowed division".

In South Africa there are many reasons for political intolerance: apartheid, poverty, poor education and forty years of repression by the State. These are not conducive to developing respect for other points of view. On the other hand, liberation movements are unaccustomed to harsh criticism by the media, since they had for many years been treated gently by a sympathetic press.

When top leaders, such as the ANC president Nelson Mandela, publicly lash out at the media, it creates hostility towards the media at grassroots level. The young inexperienced journalists have therefore tended to turn to censor themselves out of fear.

Stander (1991:181) states as another reason the ambivalence towards press freedom felt by some activists - both left and right-wing - who believe press freedom to be a luxury or simply unnecessary. For the right, the loss of freedom of expression is

of no importance in their fight for the retention of white power and privilege while some left-wing activists appear to view calls for press freedom with suspicion, or at the very least rate it as of low priority compared with the need to rectify black/white media imbalances.

Stander (1991:182) conclude that it is important for South Africa to develop a culture of political tolerance and one way to do this is to ensure that freedom of expression and press freedom are accepted as desirable norms to be guaranteed in any future constitution. It is equally important to continue press freedom programs and to publicize the need for press freedom to the general public.

According to the SAUJ document (1989), another trend that had caused concern in journalistic circles was the granting of interdicts by the Supreme Court preventing newspapers from publishing stories which they deemed to be in the public interest (Stander 1991:183).

In view of the ANC's open commitment to democracy, it was expected that the Government of National Unity (GNU), which took control in May of 1994, would reject efforts at imposing censorship - especially since the ANC had for many years

suffered from National Party-imposed censorship. However, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, South Africa's Home Affairs Minister, took great pains in 1994 to stall the *Hustler* magazine's bid to prove that the Publications Act was in breach of the country's new Bill of Rights.

South Africa's embracing of democratic ideals has led to a renewed focus on the effects of media reporting and program content (Oosthuizen 1997:102). The mass media have become more willing to address issues previously forbidden. The electronic media, whether state-controlled (South African Broadcasting Corporation radio and television) or private (M-Net, Bop-TV, private radio stations and cinema), have responded to the more liberal climate created by governmental institutions, by providing a more diversified range of opinion, programs and films. The once infamous Publications Board of Control, which in the sixties had (unofficially) defined its role as official guarantor of public morals and political obedience, has become more tolerant. It seems to be slowly moving away from trying to regulate arbitrarily all public morals to a position in which the

criterion of really harmful consequences of the media messages is going to be the main ground on which materials will be declared undesirable in future.

A brief look at how the Publications Control Act was applied in 1992 confirms the more liberal trend in censorship in South Africa. Some 2500 publications (in the legal-technical sense, thus including video and audio materials) which had previously been banned in terms of this Act, were reinvestigated by the Directorate of Publications in this year. Most of these were political publications of previously banned political organizations. Of these, only nine were again found to be undesirable. Apart from the political publications, many classics, including books by Lenin, Marx, Engels, Trotsky, Che Guevara, Mao Zedong, Rosa Luxembourgh, and Antonio Gramsci were unbanned.

The new dispensation has also seen the demise of most of the samizdat publications which had struggled against apartheid. Publications which had served the cause of the anti-apartheid campaign, and which closed shortly prior to and immediately after South Africa became a democracy, included the feminist monthly *Speak, Work in Progress, Learn and Teach* and *Vrye Weekblad*. The Cape newspaper, *South*, also had to close

because of its inability to get advertising support, while *New Nation* a stalwart in the fight for freedom, experienced great financial difficulties before ultimately reaching an agreement with *Sowetan*, which publishes it on Fridays.

Concern by the mainstream media that media diversity may disappear completely as a result of democracy, has led to the creation of the Independent Media Diversity Trust, funded by the mainstream media and other concerned bodies. Funds from the trust are used to assist in the establishment of new newspapers and the sponsorship of others which are experiencing financial difficulties.

On the South Africa press scene, one of the most significant major developments in this century has been the takeover of the newspaper interests of South Africa's largest newspaper group, the Argus Group, by foreign interests.

In 1993 Tony O'Reilly's Independent Newspapers bought the Argus Group's newspaper interests and the newgroup has three shareholders, of which Abbey Communications (the Netherlands) (McGregor's 1995/ 1996:144) is the largest, owning 58.2% of the shares. SA mutual (12.1%) and Eighty One Main Street Nominees (8%) are the other large shareholders.

Independent enlisted assistance help of a top Australian business consultant, Chris Tippler, to spearhead the financial revamp of Independent's papers.



According to Natal Newspapers' managing director, Booth, O'Reilly wanted "to get a return on his investment - he wants a lean, mean ship". Unnamed sources quoted by the *Weekly Mail & Guardian* (1994) indicated that O'Reilly was looking for a 25% return, while the current figure was closer to 10%, and that Argus Newspapers were being set targets.

The shake-up led to the creation of three strong regions - KwaZulu-Natal, Cape Town and Gauteng - under a unified editorial and business leadership with managing editors being appointed for each of the regions.

Another extremely important development in the first years of the post apartheid era was the emergence of a genuinely independent black press.

The first development in this direction came when the black-owned New Africa Investments Limited (NAIL), in which Corporate Africa Ltd had a controlling 51% share, bought

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*Sowetan* from the Argus Group. *Sowetan* was, at the time of publication, not only a fully black-controlled newspaper but South Africa's highest circulation daily as well.

A second, and perhaps even more important development, was when the black National Empowerment Consortium (NEC), in which the Kagiso Trust, trade unions and black business interests were involved, bought a 48% share of Johnnies Industrial Corporation Ltd (Johnnie). Johnnie owned 43% of the Omni Media Corporation, owners of Times Media Ltd. Times Media publishes, the *Sunday Times*, *Business Day* and the *Financial Mail*, all three being market leaders and quality publications. With this transaction black interests now own a major share of the South African newspaper market for the first time in South Africa's history.

A third development was the negotiations between Nasionale Pers and the black business group Ukhozi Media. Nasionale Pers intended selling a 51% (controlling) share of the successful *City Press*, the largest black weekly newspaper, to the Ukhozi group as part of its black empowerment policy.

Despite these developments, which should one day make the South African press more representative of the language and

ethnic composition of society, the early post apartheid years have seen many criticisms directed towards the press. During 1994 and 1995 Deputy President Thabo Mbeki complained on a

number of occasions during 1994 and 1995 that the press was still being controlled by whites, that there were too few black journalists in senior positions and that women were discriminated against in the journalistic profession.

These and similar sentiments expressed by senior journalists led to the break-up of the informal and representative Conference of Editors in 1995 and the establishment of a Black Editors Forum (BEF). Under the chairmanship of Thami Mzwai of Enterprise magazine, the BEF has demanded that the government break the white press monopoly, restrict foreign investment in South African media to 20% of the shareholding, and implement a scheme whereby the government could indirectly subsidize black publications by advertising in them.

With the abolition of apartheid in the early 1990s, and having been under international pressure for many years, South Africa moved into a period of change and a **phase of uninformed optimism**. It was clear that for the majority of the population, as well as for those whites opposed to apartheid and tired of

South Africa's international isolation and internal hardships, things were going to improve.

Today South Africa finds itself in a second phase of change, and a new realism is taking root: we are moving into the difficult **phase of informed pessimism**. We are becoming aware that people are suffering, that more and more sacrifices will have to be made to achieve democracy, that we are going to get poorer before we become rich, that competition is going to become more intense - and that all political regimes want to have as much control and power as possible.

On the other hand, the debates about the role and repositioning of the media in post-apartheid South Africa have in recent years often centered on perceived threats to the media's independence and freedom. According to Fourie and Oosthuizen (2001:433-4), the relationships between the media and the South African government can be described as far from amicable. The cabinet has been accusing the media of being too critical. The current president, Thabo Mbeki, has on more than one occasion expressed concern about the poor level of especially political reporting in South Africa. A lack of pride and general profession are other gripes the president has with the media. In addition Mbeki criticized the media for not being part of the African Renaissance, while the media argued that government is not communicating adequately (F'ourie 2002:31).

Kosoma (1990:15) argues that to broadcast only what the authorities want to hear, regardless of whether such broadcasts serve the community's needs, goes against the dictates of African morality. He states that the decision whether news is in the public interest or not should be left to journalists, not to politicians. The diagram below gives a representation of the new scenario challenging journalists in the broadcasting environment.

### **CENSORSHIP (NEW DISPENSATION)**

#### **Freedom of Airwaves (New Dispensation)**

- A calling for SA Journalists to be courageous, brave, fortitudinous, enduring, hardworking, magnanimous and respectful.
- Make the truth known regardless of the consequences but serve public the interest.

#### **Civil Society**

Willing to release and expose malpractice

#### **New Challenge**

- What can be done by the media to provide a consistently balanced and accurate image of South Africa?
- The problem is within South Africa itself; Western reporting is portrayed as being neutral and balanced
- To ensure that access to information filters down to everyone in the country with multiple languages.
- Journalists and their editors are today challenged to be dedicated to integrity, which means truthfulness in reporting, fairness of treatment, factuality, avoidance of undue sensationalism and respect for privacy
- The South African story still has to be told.
- The standard of practical knowledge and experience among journalism teachers is insufficient.
- Juniorisation of news rooms creates a problem to editors who keep on training.

### **1.4.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH**

The researcher intends this study to provoke debate in the newsrooms about the quality of journalism in South Africa. The difficulty the broadcast journalists face is how to keep the audience / viewers fully informed about the matters of a highly complex and political nature and at the same time maintain the duty not to take sides. For many, however, the decision to cover an item (or not) is itself evidence of partiality.

One hopes that with this study some will influence newsroom editors to change their style of operation. These changes may also influence the tertiary institution curriculum. The changes may lead to publication of their own guidelines which are enshrined in office style books, newsroom guides and professional codes of conduct. The editors may be encouraged to establish ground rules for ethical behaviour and editorial standards. In any editorial code, the notion of fairness, rather than balance or neutrality, seems to be the most possible.

This study may encourage the tertiary institution to consider journalistic internship as "learner ship", to regard training as a continuous process that should occur throughout the career of a journalist and not be seen as only for junior journalists.

Newsrooms were autocratic institutions with dreadful working conditions, but reporters also complained about editors' personalities, training, competence, philosophies and policies. The researcher thus intends this study to curb the conflict in newsrooms by encouraging a closer and understandable relationship between journalists and editors.

The study may, therefore create a culture of real debate, attract editors and involve regions, promote good journalism through training, corrective actions, ethics and synergy in the newsroom in South African media houses.

Due to the limitations of traveling widely as well as financial constraints, it was impossible to visit all the newsrooms in South Africa. The researcher's work obligations, permitted only two weeks to visit some newsrooms.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Many questions are raised about the amount of freedom the media should have, that is, should they be able to broadcast whatever they wish to broadcast, at any time, or should there be control of limits on this. In particular, how should they treat the government of the country. Several theories have strongly influenced the way the media in Africa have responded to questions such as the above.

In this chapter, the researcher will look at the four theories that have dominated the media in Africa, namely, theories of authoritarianism, social responsibility and development, communism and the libertarian theory to determine how these have impacted on the other theories. The researcher will finally examine the advantages and problem of development journalism for the media.

Recent academic discussions have sought to redefine the paradigms for theorizing about the media's role in South Africa society, albeit by invoking older models or debates. Some writers such as Fourie, (2002) have pointed out similarities between current discourses on the media and older ones, such as the New World Information and Communication Order, or



between the current government's stance towards the media and the National Party government's. The necessity for rethinking concepts such as "freedom of speech" and a new approach to normative media ethics, Shepperson and Tomaselli (2002) have consequently been suggested as a way of obviating a repetition of clashes between government and the media as was the case in the past, (Fourie 2002:35) states :

"Press systems, as well as nations and individual persons, tend to be either authoritarian or libertarian. They are all somewhat schizophrenic, of course, but the basic inclination of each is toward either a well-structured, disciplined worldview with explicit patterns of behavior or toward an open, experimental, self-determined, autonomous, non-restrictive society with a minimum of rules and controls. Governments are designed on the philosophical foundation of one or the other of these two orientations.

## **2.1 THE AUTHORITARIAN THEORY**

The authoritarian theory of the media has always been popular in colonial government in Africa (Greer 1999:175). This was also true of South Africa and many people might say that the old Nationalist government did its best to put

the authoritarian theory into practice. According to Greer (1999:175) this theory maintains that the media are in the service of the state and therefore subordinate to the state. The media, according to this theory, should do nothing which could undermine established authority but should support the interest of the state at all cost. Kosoma (1990) observed that such enormous political pressures on African broadcast journalists have resulted in the journalists making an ethical decision in their professional practice, "journalists waiving editorial self-determination" at the expense of their profession.

Because the authoritarian view holds that the state is more important than the individual, it also states that the individual can only achieve his/her own goals under the state. In an authoritarian society, truth is limited and not all individuals have access to it. Most people have to accept the "truth" of the dominant person or group and conform to this "truth" in their thoughts and actions. A relevant example is, that when government started its clamp-down on the liberties of the media as part of the state of emergency during the mid-1980s, the Afrikaans press did not attack the state, but instead reserved its harshest blame for the liberal English press. Using some

loaded language, the Managing Director of National Press Ton Vosloo (1986:175) beseeched the media to follow government and support its approach to change and regard any opposition from the media as irresponsible for pulling the country into the "hellish dictatorship".

To stay in power, the leadership of the authoritarian state will use any means of persuading others that it considers necessary as has frequently been observed in Africa for instances in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya. In South Africa, President Thabo Mbeki and his cabinet have experienced difficulties in dealing with the media. The cabinet has on several occasions accused the media of being too critical of the government and not being part of African Renaissance. In Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe banned and closed all the media houses which were against the government activities, including the invasion of land.

The reality of this theory is that the ruling elite use the media as an educational and propaganda tool for controlling the people, as is currently happening in Zimbabwe where government tolerating no criticism from the media. It does not, according to Greer (2002:125), see

objectively and truth as the most important principles guiding the media. This theory asserts that the interests of the state should come first while the ruling elite, should decide what these interests are.

The authoritarian theory justifies censorship and the punishment of those who deviate to follow external guidelines which tend to apply mainly to political or ideological issues. The theory is reflected in the legislation, direct state control, enforceable codes of conduct, the use of taxation and other forms of economic sanctions, controlled import and export of foreign media material, as well as the right of government to appoint editorial staff.

The authoritarian theory is, therefore not merely of historical or descriptive importance, or simply an extraordinary deviation from established democratic norms; it continues to justify government suppression of the press. McQuail (1989:85-86) identifies the following basic assumptions of the authoritarian press theory:

- The press should do nothing to undermine vested power and interests.

- The press should be subordinate to vested power and authority.
- The press should avoid acting in contravention of prevailing moral and political values.
- Censorship is justified in the application of these principles.
- Editorial attacks on vested power and authority, deviations from official policy and the violation of moral codes should be criminal offences.

## **2.2 THE LIBERTARIAN THEORY**

The libertarian theory, which developed as a reaction against authoritarian control of the media, now dominates "media thinking" in Anglo-American and many other Western countries. Since 1990, the South African media industry has joined the first world countries who subscribe to the libertarian theory.

Greer (1999:155), states that libertarians proclaim that we are rational beings who are able to distinguish right from wrong. Furthermore, they believe that society should create a forum, a free market of ideas so that people could look at different ideas and they choose freely. The libertarians therefore believe that there should be no formal control at all or when that can be disseminated by the media. They feel that where all ideas have an equal chance, the truth will prevail. The spreading of these ideas led to the acceptance of basic human rights such as freedom of speech and of the media.

This theory emphasizes the freedom of the media, especially from government control, although some government regulation, restriction and operation may be permissible, such as laws against libel, sedition and treason. This theory has its roots in the philosophies of men such as John Milton with his "self-righting process", John Locke's "popular sovereignty", Erskine, Jefferson and Mill. These philosophers stressed individual liberties along with the basic trust in the people to take intelligent decisions (generally), if a climate of free expression existed. In a libertarian society, even in one which has compromised many of its freedoms, there is considerable

stress on divorcing government from journalism as far as possible. It must be admitted that, in libertarian press theory, there must be considered a kind of built-in paradox. The paradox arises from the basic philosophical assumption that a democratic people need information upon which to base their decisions as well as from the basic free press principles built-in to the constitutions of many countries. It is this paradox which currently is at the root of so much of the controversy prevailing about press freedom and responsibility.

Merrill (1974:124) following observation is significant:

*Quite naturally there are many citizens who look at the mass media, or certain of them, and see weaknesses in the way they are informing the public. So, the natural inclination is to evolve such a principle as this: if the press, or any unit of the press, fails to provide the kind of service the citizenry is entitled to in a democracy, it must forfeit its freedom. However worthy or unworthy such a rationale may be, it clearly points out the paradox. For quite simply, the press is free and autonomous or it is not; and, of course, if it is regulated, controlled or directed from without, it has ceased being free and autonomous.*

To summarize, the libertarian theory is designed to protect opinions and creeds but has little to say about the transmission of information. In reality, the theory protects the media owner, and its exponents cannot guarantee equal rights to editors, journalists, recipients of

information and victims of the idea of free expression. McQuail (1989:89) identifies the following basic assumptions of the libertarian press theory:

- The press should be free from any external censorship.
- Publication and distribution should be accessible to any individual or group without a permit or license.
- Editorial attacks on governments or political parties should not be punishable.
- There should be no coercion to publish anything.

False reporting is viewed in the same light as publication of the truth.

- No restrictions should be placed on the acquisition of information through legal channels.
- There should be no restriction on the export and import of messages across national borders.

### **2.3 THE COMMUNIST THEORY**

In the first quarter of the twentieth century the communist theory of the media arose, along with the assumption of state power. Karl Marx was its father, who



drew heavily on the ideas of his fellow German, George W.F. Hegel. According to Marx the mass media in a communist society, were to function basically to perpetuate and expand the socialist system of transmission of social policy, and searching for the truth was not to be the main rationale for the existence of a communist media system. It is a planned system in both its formal organization and communication content. Newspapers, radio transmitters, diffusion networks, and other forms of the media can be altered to fit the changing needs of the society by, for instance, expanding or contracting, or by focusing on a special segment of the audience.

The mass media according to this theory, are instruments of government and integral parts of the state. They are owned and operated by the state and directed by the communist party or its agencies. Communist theory, such as authoritarianism, is based on the premise that the masses are too fickle, ignorant and unconcerned with government to be entrusted with governmental responsibilities. The media thus have no real concern with giving the masses much information about governmental activities or their leaders but should

concern themselves with what is best for the state and the parties; and what is best is determined by the leadership of the state and the party. Communist press theory is, therefore, based on the assumption that whatever the media do to contribute to communism and the socialist state is moral; whatever is done to harm or hinder the growth of communism is immoral.

McQuail (1989:93) identifies the following basic assumptions of the Soviet communist theory of the media:

- The media should act in the interests of and be controlled by the working class.
- The media should not be under private control.

The media should perform positive functions for society such as socialization (to make people conform to desirable norms), education, to supply information, motivation and the mobilization of the masses.

- The media should respond to the desires and needs of their recipients.

- Society has the right to use censorship and other legal measures to prevent and punish antisocial publication.
- The media should reflect a complete and objective view of the world and of society in terms of Marxist-Leninist principles.
- The media should support progressivistic (communist) movements everywhere .

#### **2.4 THE SOCIAL-RESPONSIBILITYTHEORY**

This concept, a product of mid-twentieth century, represents a gradual shift away from pure libertarianism but has its roots in the libertarian theory. The theory is based on the following major premise: freedom carries concomitant obligations and the media which enjoy a privileged position in society are obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication. The libertarian system will satisfy the needs of the society to the extent that the media recognize their responsibility and make them the basis of operational policies. If the media do not assume their responsibilities some other agency must assure that the essential functions of mass communication are carried out. In this theory, objectivity is vitally important. Greer

(1999:177), after the Second World War, observed that social responsibility 'swept the world as a standard to seek'.

According to Greer (1999:181), most of English-language media in South Africa take social responsibility as their guideline theory. During the apartheid era, various editors started to reject the strongly authoritarian control which the National Party exerted over the media. These editors began to feel that the social responsibility theory could be a better guide for them.

The social responsibility theory is founded on the school of thought which has modified certain fundamental functions of the libertarian theory and which has largely rejected others, Siebert (1971:25). The concept of liberty which it represents is fundamentally different from that which the traditional theory represented.

The social responsibility theory emphasizes the responsibility that the media have toward the society, more than it emphasizes freedom. It proclaims that the media should work within certain moral and ethical limitations that are like responsibilities they should

accept. Greer (1999:177) states that "these responsibilities are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informed aliveness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance".

According to this theory the media should accept social responsibility and ensure that different altitude and directions of thought all fully and properly represented and heard. The media must see to it that the public has enough information to make the necessary informed decisions.

This theory states that the media should guard against possible interference by the state and by any other pressure groups which could threaten the media's freedom. Control of the media should not be the job of an elite group in government, but the journalists themselves must exercise this social responsibility, working for media that are mostly privately owned. What guides the journalists who should exercise social responsibility? Journalists working with this theory generally try to reflect the public opinion fully, but they may also sometimes try to form or guide the public opinion.

This theory rejects the way authoritarianism makes control actually lawful so that the media have no freedom of choice. This theory has however received severe criticism according to Altchull (1984:45) for instances he states:

*The painful reality is that the term social responsibility is a term devoid of meaning. Put another way, it is a term whose content is so vague that almost any meaning can be placed upon it.*

Although Altchull sees problems as faults in the idea of social responsibility, he still suggests that it has value for the working journalist. First, it gives journalists a positive feeling that they are working in the public interest and doing a public service. Second, it frees journalists from writing only material that will sell well. The social responsibility theory, on the contrary, rests on the concept of positive liberty, "freedom for", which calls for the presence of the necessary implements for the attainment of a desired goal.

Denis McQuail (1983:96) has added two more theories to these four by relating the development media theory specifically to Third World countries.

Altchull (1984:133) states that there are now so many different forms of the theory that there can be no single definition on which most people will agree. Because this, and because development seems to imply inferiority, Altchull prefers the form "advancing journalism".

In addition, the underdeveloped countries have depended on the developed world for technology, skills and cultural products. The primary aim these countries was development, with their politicians gradually becoming aware of their common situation. The essential normative element of an emerging development theory was that the media were used positively in national development for the autonomy and cultural identity of the particular national society. Preference was given to theories which emphasized grass roots involvement. The main principles postulated were:

The media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.

- Freedom of the media should be open to restriction according to the economic priorities and development needs of the society.

- The media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language. (In this context McQuail failed to see the problem of internal colonialism, namely the smashing of local and/ or regional cultures and languages.)
- The media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries which are close geographically, culturally or politically.
- Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedoms in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
- In the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in or restrict media operations and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified. (But such justification of censorship and direct control is inappropriate to a planned development process).

McQuail (1989:91) identifies the following basic principles of the social responsibility theory about the media:

- The media should accept certain responsibilities towards society.



- The media should fulfil their responsibilities mainly by setting professional standards with regard to the supply of information and the truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance of their reporting.

In order to be responsible, the media should apply self-regulation within the framework of the law and established institutions.

The media should avoid publicizing information that can lead to crime, violence or social disruption, as well as information that can offend ethnic or religious minorities.

The media collectively should represent all social groups and reflect the diversity of society by giving people access to a variety of viewpoints and the right to react to these viewpoints.

Society is entitled to expect high professional standards and intervention is justifiable if the media fail to meet these standards.

The most problematical part of the theory is the principle that the state can interfere with the media and use

methods such as censorship, state subsidies or direct control and restriction if it does so in order to advance development. In this way journalists can be severely curtailed from reporting fully, fairly and independently. While development may be restricted in such situation as well.

Zimbabwe is a good example of a government, seeking to use the media with some degree of compulsion to advance government policies, especially on economic and racial or ethnic issues. According to Greef (1999:115), editors who accept this approach must surrender some editorial autonomy to government officials and in doing so, they give up the constitutional right of freedom of the media. Journalists in South Africa have had a very unhappy experience with government authoritarianism in the past. They will therefore not easily trust any government uncritically or risk their autonomy in the way that the development approach requires. Their fears about doing so are based on what they have seen elsewhere. Thus, while the development system may offer benefits, journalists feel that it extracts too high a price.

As a sixth theory McQuail (1983:96) presents a democratic-participant theory which he states has come into being in developed liberal societies in "reaction against the commercialization and monopolization of privately owned media and against the centralism and bureaucratization of public broadcasting institutions, established according to the norm of social responsibility".

He sees the public broadcasting organizations in particular as too paternalistic, too elitist, too close to the establishment, too responsive to political and economic pressures, too monolithic and too professionalized. This theory also reflects disillusionment with established political parties and a system of parliamentary democracy which seems to have become detached from its grass roots origins. The central point of a democratic-participant theory lies with the needs, interests and aspirations of the receiver in a political society. The theory favours multiplicity, smallness of scale, locality, de-institutionalization, interchange of sender-receiver roles, and horizontality of communication links at all levels of society, interaction.

Journalists today have a very difficult role to play. They are in continuous role conflict. There are concurrent

incompatible expectations concerning their behaviour. The people affected by a certain development plan or social policy expect development journalists to represent their interests which government and its representatives expect the journalists to represent their respective points of view. The development journalist is really a "man (or woman) in the middle" (Kasoma 1990:49), a job under permanent cross-pressure of diverging interests.

Very such situations are frequently associated with poor job performance, low commitment and stress. But role stress will develop only when the obligations connected with it are felt to be a burden. Apart from all the external conditions, journalists have to cope with especially the material arrangement (economic and legal security) this is the point where professional values enter. How does the individual journalist perceive his or her roles and duties? This question reveals that journalism cannot be learned alone (the technical competence is no issue here). Journalists must be strong, self-confident personalities, able to cope with such situations as role conflict, one of the main characteristics of this job. Journalism can be a dangerous job as well. A journalist must be able and willing to take risks. In view of the high demands made it

can be assumed that the role of journalists is no "normal" occupation, but a vocation - one must feel called to it .

Once more: the realization of the subsidiary principle of socio-technological journalism is possible where and whenever the holders of political power accept the fact that free, uncensored flow of information benefits society.

Only then can there be effective system management.

The platform provided to the South African public for a debate and comments on issues such as the Hefer Commission of inquiry, shows a greater leaning towards a liberal approach. Program content and news broadcast would tend to protect what is believed to be national interest as opposed to individual interest. This responsibility is neglected on the part of the private media as their mandate is simply to serve the insatiable interest of the shareholders and not necessarily the public of South Africa.

Student centered training versus subject centered training has now become an important approach. Training of journalists must be considered to be one of the most valuable investments an organisation such as the SABC, can make. Every journalist must be well trained

and developed to become part of a broadcast scenario to create a dedicated and co-ordinated training and development programme for their journalist. Investment in training is one of the clearest signals to employees that management is committed to them and their future. It is an active demonstration that management cares about the employees and wants them to become skilled.

Journalists are the interface with the public, especially news reads, anchors, reporters, producers, directors, and photographers. These people should be trained and developed with dedication. They are the people who represent the organisation's product and pride. It stands to reason that motivating these great ideals cannot be realised without editors who are equally well-trained and dedicated. Training, therefore, should be built into the career development plan of every journalist.

### **Journalism as a profession**

Journalism is more than an ensemble of news gathering and writing techniques (Tomaselli 2002:52). It is, first, a way of viewing and writing about the social world for the public benefit. Similarly, journalism is a means of

fermenting conversations in the public domain about events and issues of immediate public interest.

There has been a longstanding tradition of journalists being unpopular with the South African governments. Both the apartheid and post-apartheid governments have been complaining about media coverage of their actions. According to Louw (2002:24), it is easy to dismiss such complaints and accuse politicians of picking on the media. However, journalists are not always blameless as was revealed by an extensive survey by SANEF, that all is not well in the journalistic environment in South Africa. Journalism is not in good shape.

Many people decide to become journalists because their high school teachers tell them that they are good at writing, Greer (1999:03). Others, however, choose journalism because they wish to make the world a better place to live in. Some believe that as journalists they will meet important, exciting people and travel to far-away, exotic places. There are also those who believe that their writing or broadcasting will make them famous.

Real journalists are usually very different from these "dream" journalists. They strive for accuracy and are

highly dedicated. Such journalists are ready to work long hours because journalism is not an eight to five job. News never stops.

Presently new form journalism is emerging. It focuses on a variety of news for a heterogeneous audience and more regular work routines for media news workers. Journalists have become the favorite term for an aspiring profession. This is a new breed of writers for the twenty first century, quite different from the gentleman publicist and literate of most of the 19th century. After centuries of censorship and enforced silence on domestic public affairs, the right to deviate from the views of governments is a sign of journalistic integrity in South Africa. But like elsewhere in the world, journalism in South Africa is at the cross roads (De Beer 2002:145). There is an apparent need for better trained people in the new South Africa. De Beer (2002:152) further stresses that journalism education at a number of universities and technicons is still not up to standard as far as acceptability of its present status and future role is concerned. In this regard it would seem that South Africa is not exception as was revealed at the symposium in America in 2001 where a number of journalism professions and communication professionals discussed the ethical, economic, and



enduring issues of journalism and mass communication education. *Journalism & Mass Communicator Educator* (vol.56/ 3, 2001).

Poor writing and poor reporting skills, a lack of concern with accuracy, slight knowledge of ethics, poor historical and contextual knowledge seem to be some of the major problems facing South African journalism profession today. These characteristics are in short contrast with those of the very best journalists who have such a strong curiosity and interest that they can write about virtually anything. Such journalists are active listeners and careful observers. They are able to see further than those things which are easily seen and understood, and can read between the lines .

### **Newsroom Dynamics**

The newsroom is the heart of the newsgathering process (Greer 1999:08 ). It is normally controlled by the news editor, who supervises the whole process. The news editor compiles a choice of jobs, briefs the journalists, mentors the day's or week's work, checks the finished stories, and liaises with the camera person. The news editor also keeps the editor and the executive producer informed on how the work is progressing.

The modern newsroom has changed completely from what it was long ago. Journalists now sit in front of highly sophisticated computers rather than at typewriters. Even the atmosphere in the newsroom has changed. In the past, the newsrooms was full of papers, talk and the endless clatter of typewriters. Computer technology has made the modern newsroom a much quieter place. A story can pass from the journalist to the news editor to the executive producer and back to the journalist without these three people having any personal contact and with little or no paper being used.

Now that laptop computers, modems and cellular telephones have come into use, the journalist does not have to be in the newsroom at all. Technology has, therefore, made dramatic changes to the way things are done in the newsroom. But although journalists have moved to on-screen writing, their basic work of news gathering and reporting has not changed.

As stated by Mathala Tsedu (2002:05), former Chairperson of SANEF, one of the biggest problems facing the (media) industry is the juniorisation (youthfulness) of the journalistic skill base. Journalists frequently lack appropriate skills and in-depth knowledge when reporting

issues of national interest. Rabe (2002:45) observes that if the newsroom were to be vibrant again, media management must create conducive environment to stimulate its employees. In such an environment beginners will be mentored, so that they can grow into the seniors who can, in turn, nurture the next generation of juniors.

### **Training of Journalists**

A good journalist must be able to think and write clearly and logically (Greer 1999:75). This statement agrees with Anthony Serafini (1997:57) suggestion that:

*...journalists should have more training in philosophy rather than other disciplines such as economics and history because philosophy is, in essence, concerned with the cultivation of critical reasoning skills, which are also, presumably, important requisites of journalistic competence. In particular, journalists could benefit from course work in logic, which directly teaches reasoning skills such as those involved in making sound inferences and in avoiding logical fallacies.*

It may be impossible for all journalists to get detailed training in philosophical logic, but as a journalist one should learn to develop and defend one's own ideas and views, and respond to the ideas and views of others, in a logical and systematic manner. One should thus learn to think logically.

Today journalism trainers and educators should presumably bear some responsibility for the generally poor quality of South African journalism. Many practicing journalists lack the ability to identify a story, follow-up on stories, conduct complement interviews, organise facts or write competently and accurately. The mushrooming of journalism courses around the country seems to produce low quality graduates with few technical skills and a low level of general knowledge. Media managers are partly to blame for the state of affairs because they continue employing these low quality journalists.

### **Current Research**

In 2002 the South African National Editor's Forum (SANEF) commissioned a national audit of journalism skills. The audit provides a comprehensive list of the problems facing the media industry - and revealed that many share the blame for the sad state of journalism, including media owners and managers, media educators and trainers, and journalists themselves. The audit identified three broad types of problems. The first two of these are not entirely unique to South Africa :

- Problems arising due to shifts in newsroom dynamics which have undermined the quality of journalism.
- Many of these shifts have been caused by management seeking to flatten organisational hierarchies, and reduce personnel budgets by cutting staff numbers and employing more junior people. This is part of a wider international pattern of media management associated with the economics of globalisation. The result is that news organisation has become skewed with a burgeoning number of unequipped junior staffers, a greatly reduced number of middle managers, and a growing number of people promoted to senior positions often before they are ready.
- Perceived mistrust between the government and the media,
- the challenges of transformation in the media industry,
- News, staff, and infrastructure management,

- the apparent lack of training and
- the continuous juniorisation of newsroom.

The SANEF audit, however, revealed five problems that are uniquely South African. Three of these relate to South African's complex ethnic-dynamics. Multi-lingualism entails that many journalists are not able to work in their home-language - which necessarily lowers language-competency. There are also ethnic tensions that can complicate newsroom management decisions, for example, when a white executive producer needs to improve a black journalist's copy. Furthermore, South African media managers are confronted by a highly complex mix of ethnic, racial and lifestyle variables when defining their audiences. This complicates the task of editing, and hence managing newsroom production. Added to this is the fact that South Africa is experiencing a skills crisis and it is clear that running a successful newsroom is far from easy. This is exacerbated by a generational shift in the newsroom - many older journalists were socially-committed journalists. But today's recruits frequently are not motivated by social conscience but by a desire for celebrity. This creates a form of inter-generational tension

between the older senior staffers and the younger staffers whom they often have to supervise. These factors have caused South African journalism to experience a number of quality problems associated with newsroom management. Special training might thus be required to deal with such issues.

Upgrading the performance of existing journalists will only occur if media managements create the incentives for this to happen. The SANEF audit has already identified the kinds of upgrading programmes and courses that are required, namely :

- Media management, human relations and mentoring
- Producing stories (including research and writing skills)
- Language and writing skills (for non-English speakers)
- Sub-editing
- Social studies (drawing on political studies, economics, sociology, and history)
- Media law and ethics

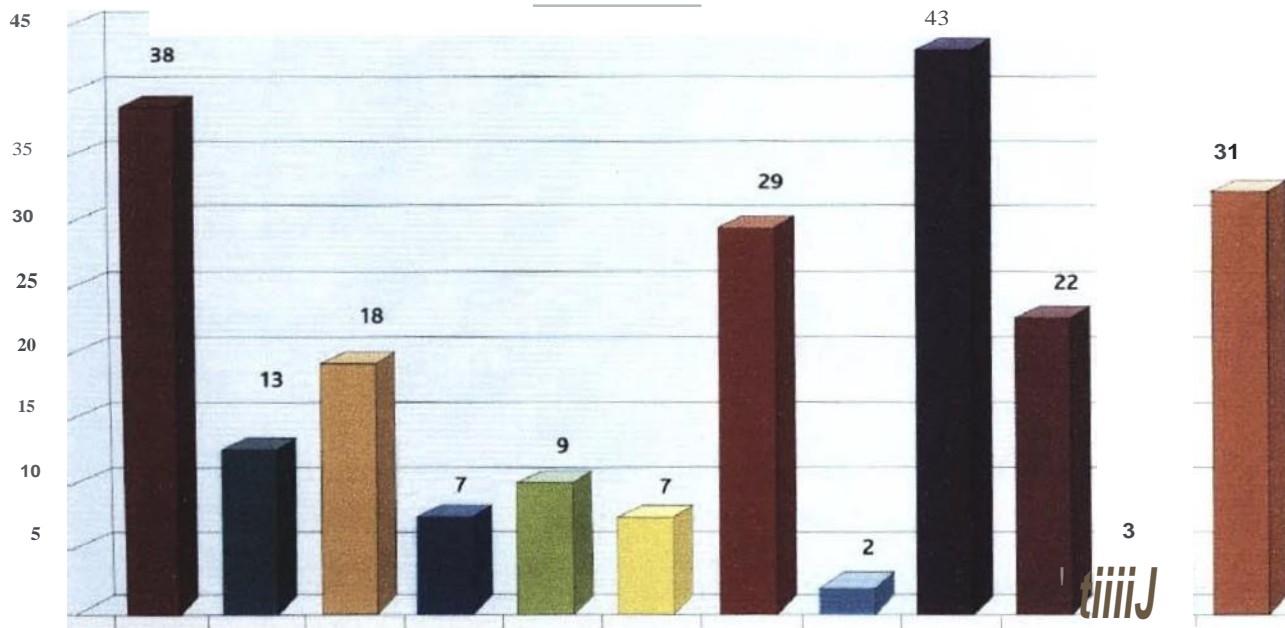
In addition, the SANEF audit has revealed that if such upgrading programmes are to be successful, it would seem desirable that the media industry and selected journalism educators/ institutions work together to

identify the most desirable and effective way to create and operate such programmes in terms of factors such as content, timing and location.

When it comes to ensuring that the next generation of journalists will be better qualified, it would be helpful if those lecturers at universities and technicians would start to conceptualise their job as being journalism educators and not journalism trainers. Producing good journalists requires that students be taught technical skills and an understanding of politics, economics, law, their society, and other societies. The following SANEF skill audit final report graph indicates of the challenges facing the media industry in South Africa.



# Not on top of the job



Categories of most important steps to take in improving reporting skills in South Africa



*This graph is taken from the 2002 Sane/ Skills Audit Final Report, written by Arrie de Beer and Elanie Steyn.*

Sanef's 2002 skills audit in journalism found a wide range of training needs, expressed by reporters and evaluated by news editors, as shown in this graph. Newsgathering **skills**, conceptual skills, writing skills and

practical skills topped the bill. Trainees themselves clearly did know they were not on top of the job.

### **South African Dimension**

South Africa seems to be the only country that has set a transparent and democratic regulatory framework for the communications industry (Kupe 1999:148). Only South Africa has an Independent Communication Authority that regulates the broadcasting sector and has made major strides in creating a public service broadcaster that enjoys editorial autonomy. Alongside the public broadcaster are the commercial and community broadcaster factors. The South African government does not own or control the media. These have been positive developments since the dawn of the new democracy because South Africa, of all the democratising countries, has independent institutions in place to achieve a dispensation where the citizens can enjoy civil and political rights without hindrance from the government of the day. In the country there is a relationship therefore between a democratic context and a media that enjoys independence from the state. Such a media can play a role in advancing and protecting democracy.

The recent (2003) invasion of Iraq by Britain and the USA again provided the opportunity to re-examine the role between the media and the governments in democratic

states. Following the SABC's decision to halt the CNN broadcast and rumors that it wanted to replace the USA network with broadcasts of Al-Jazeera. (Ferreira 2004:4) Mbeki called on the media to report "as Africans" and portray Africa to the world in a manner similar to the portrayal of the Arab world by the Al-Jazeera network (De Beer 2003). The so-called "embedding" of American journalists during the recent invasion of Iraq also spurred an debates amongst South African journalists. According to Fourie (2002:36) the parameters of both the media and the government should rather be set down clearly without reverting to platitudes based on "conceptualisations of freedom of expression", that were more appropriate in earlier democracies.

The real problem is South Africa for journalists now are the problems that are associated with the media which depend almost entirely on the market for their revenue. The market does not necessarily support a pluralistic and diverse media, which is a necessity for a democracy. Both the broadcast and press lack diversity of ownership, content and target audience (Kupe 1999:55). Non profit media, such as community broadcasting and private stations owned by previously marginalised groups, struggle to survive.

Finally, the task of the media remains to hold the government accountable to the public. (Berger 1997:66) mentions that the strength of the libertarian model, although it might observe other forms of dependence, is that it is intent on safeguarding political interference. The issue is whether this is optimally done in the libertarian "watchdog" mode partnership and subjection to government control. For freedom of expression to be an inclusive part in this sphere, it needs to be informed, implying access to government information (Ronning 2002:123). As Shepperson and Tomaselli (2002:278) suggest, the relationship between the media and the state in such a situation would be caricaturised by "vigorous dialogue" that would "protect democratic practices, enhance the public sphere and encourage public debate".

Another serious problem is that very little research has been done in South Africa on the issue of journalism education and training while even less has been published since the first course was established at Potchefstroom University in 1959. The very first publications on the issue of journalism education in South Africa possibly only appeared in the 1970s, followed by more conference papers and publications. The work of different journalism academics such as Gay

Berger of Rhodes University in this field, as well as organizations such as the JSJ in Maputo, the Media Institute for Southern Africa in Windhoek, as well as the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) in Johannesburg should be taken into account. In this connection it should be noted that the NSJ in collaboration with the media, the IAJ and the Zambia Mass Communication Institute (ZANCOM) did a broad survey and audit of media training in Southern Africa during 2001.

In the field of publication or journalism education the important contribution of the *Rhodes Journalism Review*, which deals in a number of ways with elements impacting on this issue, must be considered, as is the case with *Ecquid Novi*, which publishes research articles on this topic.

## **2.5 OPEN AIRWAVES AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

While moving out of the darkness of oppression and beginning to inaugurate a new consciousness, the process should of necessity involve a re-examination of the country history, an interrogation of cultural symbols, and reconfiguration of models of the intellectual. A most

question being debated in South Africa today is whether journalists should adhere to media principles and codes developed on Western concepts of freedom and democracy, or whether media ethics ought to be based on African culture. An unnamed media practitioner and former SABC journalist (personal comm 2002) representing no wider audience stated that:

*In the old South Africa the mandate was entirely political, especially when it came to the SABC.*

*In the new South Africa there are far fewer political pressures. But other journalistically unacceptable forces, like making money at all costs, have replaced the former political agenda.*

The increased competition for South Africa's national broadcaster may benefit consumers, as viewing and listening options are widened with the arrival of e-TV, a bouquet on the DSTV satellite platform, and the proliferation of commercial radio broadcasters. There has also been the advent of news on the Internet.

Previously the SABC mission statement interpreted its mandate as "ours is a mission-oriented business", but now it unofficially seems to say "ours is a profit-oriented business".

Many may take exception to the above, but it contains elements of the truth. Furthermore, the creation within the SABC of both public broadcasting and commercial services - especially the new PCBS (Public Commercial Broadcasting Services) - will underscore the role it is being pressured into: to make money and stand increasingly on its own financial feet. These days the organization resembles a financial house more than a broadcaster.

This leads one to deal with the statement that the media are unable or unwilling to tell stories of both the (traditional) struggle and the new struggle against poverty, ignorance and social problems such as HIV/ Aids.

Is the problem that the need to be profitable has conquered all else and that the media, not just the SABC, are bowing to commercial and marketing pressures? The media, not just the SABC, is definitely succumbing to commercial marketing pressure to optimise its profit. On the other hand, the problem might simply be one of poor journalism and inadequate training of journalists, both at tertiary educational level and in the work place.



The use of reality programming has brought a new (commercial) dimension to the SABC and M-Net. Newspapers have a vested interest in M-Net and have given *Big Brother* unprecedented coverage. Without wanting to dwell on the moral issues involved, or impose any particular set of values, it must be observed that many would regard the *Big Brother* series as classically highlighting the points made above. It has been stunningly successful for M-Net in financial terms. It is not African but it is typical of neither African values, nor the values of a group such as the Afrikaners. The only values it endorses are those of big business, which amount to the importation of the worst of Eurocentric values for the sake of making money. It also suggests to the youth that this is an acceptable way of life, whereas many reasonable people - not just religious fanatics - would dispute its guest's unimpeachable immoral values.

*Big Brother*, *Survivor*, and programs featuring daredevil feats may have a place for some, but they are a form of escapism that takes viewers away from good journalism. The reduction of current affairs programs on radio and TV because they do not make enough money typifies this dilemma. Poor journalism does nothing to counter this threat and the nation's people are less and less informed,

thereby increasingly becoming a nation of uninformed people.

When the news media, broadcasting and print, disseminate news stories the pressure is on the journalists not to be superficial but seek out more of the good news. Whereas good news, also known as sunshine news, certainly needs to be pursued more vigorously, the news media are too caught up in the "bang bang" of the day: the cash in transit heists, murder and mayhem. Uncontextualised news results, such as struggle stories are not likely to make the money the media bosses want, so that they too get downplayed as a result. Soap operas and sitcoms replace news programming for the sake of making money.

Every now and then, on an important public holiday such as 16 June, or around an event such as the opening of Johannesburg's Nelson Mandela Bridge, we see a temporary resurgence in relating the struggle once more. But this does not happen often enough. The result is that there are many young people who are ignorant of what was happening before 1994. This is an indictment of the media as a whole.

The control exercised by big money hungry players over the media remains the most important reason for the media's inability to get to grips with better journalistic coverage of what was referred to above as the two struggles: the old one for freedom, and the new one against modern socioeconomic problems such as corruption, poverty and unemployment. However, inadequate training also plays a big role in this regard, as the SABC assignment editor Tommy Makhode (2001:16) argues that:

*Apartheid era journalists did not do enough to be challenging. Now journalists with all freedoms in the world seem reluctant to use these liberties to be as inquiring as they should be.*

During apartheid the many constraints imposed on journalists and the lack of open journalism imprisoned the media. Journalists seldom challenged conventions but largely abided by what the rulebook said. This is partially understandable because no one wants to go to a real jail for up to five years. In those days journalists, like prison inmates, knew the rules. There were only a few grey areas. So the journalists tended to do as they were told.

In 1990, when the restrictions were lifted abruptly, journalists suddenly had seemingly limitless freedoms and most did not know where those freedoms ended. The bounds, if there were any, were unclear. Some journalists coped while some did not. Some disappeared and others went on to become better journalists.

The problem, however, is that in exercising this freedom today, many journalists have thrown the guide book away completely instead of occasionally referring to it and asking themselves whether in certain situations it could still be used. This is not a political argument but a statement that is applicable to the most basic issues. The most tangible example that comes to mind, partially exacerbated by the era of growing media competition, is the disregard for human life when dead and mutilated bodies are paraded on TV. The approach is we will show grotesque scenes because the competition is doing it. Displays of the corpses of Jonas Savimbi and Saddam Hussein's sons are classic examples (SABC TV News 2002-19-7-2002)).

This is one of the big gaps between the past and the present. As stated, old journalists, despite their restrictions, should have tested the edges more fully.

Now, in a far more normal society and with the Constitution entrenching freedom of expression, journalists are pandering to the needs of their bosses who frequently merely want to make money. Commercial interests and the invasion of marketers and their strategies mean that too much media space and time are spent on promoting sponsors and products, and not enough on innovating stories. With some exceptions there are too few real scoops and too little innovative journalism.

The irony is that this did not happen in the old days largely as a result of those very legal restrictions. Now, in better times, the extent to which it is still not happening may be ascribed to poor training and a lack of commitment by employers to better journalism, and to the never-ending pursuit of commercial goals.

A lesser important point is that modern technology, and the failure of many journalists to exploit technology to the hilt, by using too little computer-aided journalism - is another present day barrier.

According to the SANEF skill audit (2002), there is not enough in-house training of journalists, who often arrive

with inadequate skills because there is too much emphasis on sociology in schools of journalism. Language skills, even for people working in their home language, are often inadequate. This applies as much to the human products of expensive private schools as to those of other institutions of learning.

Many media institutions, especially for the print media, are employing former teachers or persons to do subbing, as people from these walks of life still seem to have some linguistic skills . However, they lack field journalism skills and often are often unsuitable in a wider context, as they frequently do not understand the principles, language, or style of journalism. This leads to further downgrading of the profession and its goals. All these contributes to widening the skills gaps between pre- and post-1994 journalists.

Having said all this, it must be recorded that despite the current shortcomings, journalists and the audience they serve are far better off in a democracy than they were with the severe restrictions that applied during the apartheid era.

## 2.6 THE ROLE OF JOURNALISM IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Kevoch and Rosentel (2001:117) state that the following elements of journalism should support the basic principle of:

- Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
- Its first loyalty is to the citizens.
- Its essence is a discipline of verification .
- Its practitioners must maintain independence from those they cover.
- It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
- It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
- It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.
- It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.
- Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.

Recent academic discussions have sought to redefine the paradigms for theorizing the media's role in South African society, albeit by invoking older models or debates. Some

such as Fourie (2002) have pointed out the similarities between current discourses on the media and older ones, such as the New World Information and Communication Order, or between the current government's stance towards the media and the National Party government. The necessity for rethinking concepts such as "freedom of speech" and a new approach to normative media ethics (Shepperson & Tomaselli 2002:136) have consequently been suggested as a way of obviating a repetition of clashes between government and the media as was the case in the past (Fourie 2002:35). Attention has also been called to the ways in which new ownership structures not only globalised the local media, but also replicated old class structures while becoming more racially inclusive (Tomaselli, 2000: **111**). The role of the media as a political actor is its own right even though it often claims to be neutral conduct for democratic processes, has also been noted (Jacobs, 2002:174).

Questions of political economy remain very important when assessing the role and position of the media within the South African *society*. But interests, power relations and inequalities also influence the terrain of discourse. Steenveld (2002:64) point out the fact that



'transformation' previously in the SA media was mostly framed in terms of racial or gender issues as opposed to class inequalities. The statements made by Mbeki and Mazwai (2002) alert us to how an emergent discourse of identity is also linked to those of transformation. If one wants to establish what role the media is under pressure to perform, it is necessary to analyse this discourse to find out what subjects and objects are being constructed and how they relate to the exercise of power. The questions should also be asked: by constructing certain identities through this discourse on the media, who are being excluded? Is it possible that certain important issues remain unaddressed because certain subject positions are not inscribed in this discourse? In other words, the key question should be wider than just about the relationship between the media and the state, but rather about the 'social and cultural context' (Steenveld, 2002:673) the media are positioned in.

The tropes of postcolonial identity discourses resonate in both Mbeki and Maswai's comments. They also illustrate Steenveld's comment regarding the salience of the concept of race in debates about transformation. Given South Africa's apartheid history and its legacy of racism, 'the

people' are clamoring to be heard and the most potent discourse of their embodiment is race (Steenveld, 2002:67). It follows, she points out, that the identity of the media is still interpreted in racial terms (2002:67).

In this regard, some common themes can be discerned in Mbeki and Mazwai's comments. At the Sanef Forum meeting on the Media, AU, Nepal and Democracy in April, 2003 (Mbeki, 2003:10), Mbeki broached the notion of "reporting Africa to the Africans". Journalists were "interpellated", in Althusser's terms, as Africans firstly, and journalists in the second place. Being a member of the media was even posed as a potential threat ("despite your profession") to Africanness (Mbeki, 2003:14):

*I am suggesting that the South African media has a responsibility to report Africa to the South Africans, carrying out this responsibility as Africans. I am, of course, proceeding from the assumption that you were African before you became journalists and that despite your profession, you are still Africans.*

Although this seems to be a valid claim for journalists to acquaint themselves with the continent, it does raise questions regarding the link between "truth" and identity. This would suggest that a journalist's identity hinges upon the correspondence between their representation

and the 'truth' about Africa. Does this mean that there is a fixed 'truth' for the media to reflect? Who decides upon this truth? Where is this archimedean point from where the 'truth about Africa' can be established?

Mbeki seems to suggest that truth is somehow linked to subject position - that truth can only be spoken by those subscribing to, or qualifying as, Africans. The debate about who qualifies as an African, has been raging for years. While Mbeki does not attempt to delink race and Africanness, his rebuke of a commercialist media hinges upon "the hegemony of the sensational" rather than engaging in education and upliftment, as well as the call for journalists to "become embedded among the African masses" does hint at class issues. Although far from an overt move from issues of race to those of socio-economic position, it does provide some corrective to the privileging of race and gender inequalities within the discourse of transformation, referred to by Steenveld (2002:64)

## **2.7 MEDIA AND AUDIENCE**

The continuing debate in both print and broadcasting news is whether news should provide the kind of information the people need, or the information they want

(White 1996:125). People want to be informed, but it is important to tailor the news to suit the audience. For instance, stories that appeal more to young people may not necessarily be appreciated by the older generation. The newscast, therefore, needs crack teams of good, all-purpose journalists who can be deployed anywhere in the country to cover major breaking stories across the spectrum such as in economics, politics, and labour matters.

News is what is new, and news is not the newsman (Block 1994:141). A challenge to broadcasting journalists is thus to write the way they talk: to think about their audiences and not about readers, because audiences get only one crack at what you write. They cannot read the journalist's script, and replay it or reflect on it. It is, therefore, imperative for a broadcasting journalist to make sure that every word can be understood. According to the English critic Connolly [1980:175], literature is the art of writing something that will be read over and over while journalism is what will be grasped at once. Broadcasting journalism must be grasped even faster - because it is fleeing and cannot be revised. Broadcasting journalists are challenged to write simply and not to try to impress

their audience with big difficult, fancy or foreign words.

The art is to use short words and short sentences. That is how people speak. Murrow [1985:13] once said, "You are supposed to describe things in terms that make sense to the truck driver without insulting the intelligence of the professor". Difficult words should perhaps rather be saved for Scrabble. What counts in broadcasting news is not how it looks but how it sounds. The journalist must provide something the audience wants - information. The audience wants it because it is new, important and relevant. But however much as they need this information, they will receive it only if it is presented in a way that is both interesting and entertaining. If it sounds like writing, rewrite it. The art of writing well lies in rewriting what you have already rewritten. The best broadcasting news writing does not sound like writing at all. The journalist Lincoln Steffens (1980:5) is credited with the saying, "The great struggle of a writer is to learn to write as he would talk". A good journalist always thinks of the audience.

There is a new generation of media owners who are beginning to understand what audiences and agencies require from their relationship, and it is not regular

lunches. What is needed is information. Information about the market, in which they operate, and also how brands and consumers interact with that specific medium. Although there is a great deal of information, there is so much more needed in the complicated and sophisticated marketplace, so it is the responsibility of a media owner to teach the audience more about their medium.

## **2.8 MEDIA ETHICS**

For the media to keep the confidence of the public, and for them to remain reputable institutions and therefore to have a central role in the democratic process, or in a democratic society, they have to operate in an ethical manner. Media have as their guiding principle to serve the society and this guidance emanates from the United Nation Charter on Human Rights of 1948 and also the African Charter on Human Rights. In the spirit of fairness and objectivity, it is important for journalists to consider the objective of their stories on reporting. According to Moyo (2003:73), "an effective journalist will not only be sensitive to disadvantaged groups but will also be aware of the human rights and ethical demands of his or her profession". Part of the demands on journalists is

that they must empathize with the plight of the underdog, the oppressed and disadvantaged of any society. In other words, an emancipators agenda underpins the whole profession of journalism.

Kupe (1999:125) states that news gathering and news processing involve ethical questions.

In gathering news, the fundamental issues are the protection of sources, quoting of interviews correctly and in context, balance and objectivity. Media journalists, as well as film makers and recorders, have to make individual or collective decisions daily. Ethical decisions in the media determine what the public may read, hear or see. They determine to some extent what people think of, feel, or talk about, and sometimes even what they do. These are the types of ethical questions referred to:

- Should a TV station include a particularly brutal scene, which is considered to be newsworthy with or without prior warning to the viewers?

- Should a radio station broadcast detail evidence given in a murder trial that infringes on the privacy of innocent people involved?
- Should a radio station omit what seems to have been a bona fide slip of the tongue by a prominent politician and thereby avoid stirring up anger and even violence?

The UNESCO Director General, Federico Mayor, recently mentioned that only journalists could determine a code of ethics for journalists.

"Journalists should leave it to no one to dictate their code of conduct." It is their responsibility to decide this, and to ensure that the profession respects it. The review and evolution of this code, as the need arises, as changes and innovations modify the frame within which they work, is also up to journalists, as is analysis of its impact.

One of the greatest difficulties in journalism is to be constantly criticized by the community, even when the journalist is trying his or her best. It is said that good journalists are both hated and loved.



Journalists have to have high standards, but according to Eugene Roberts (2001:126), executive Editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, they cannot get so finicky about ethics that they use this as an excuse for not doing their job. According to him, there is nothing ethical in being docile and the pawn of whoever wants to prevent one from getting the story.

Generally, journalists have some major difficulties in coming to grips with forming their own ethical code. One major problem concerns their finding it hard to deal with the contrasting and often conflicting demands of journalism the profession and journalism as a business. In most instances in Africa, journalism is not objective, because most of the media organizations on the continent pay service to cardinal virtues and ethical imperatives, such as freedom of speech and accuracy. Journalists who work in these organizations are forced by circumstances to regard professional ethical demands as of lower priority, but the super-principle according to Kasoma (1988:205) is that the public is entitled to the truth, and only correct information can form the basis for sound journalism and ensure the confidence of the people.

The guiding principles for journalists to regard an ethical code as a moral duty, are to:

- Have respect for the truth and broadcast only the truth, and to the best of their knowledge.
- Broadcast only facts; never to suppress facts that are in their possession and never to falsify facts to suit their own or any other purpose.
- Refuse any reward for broadcasting, or suppressing, news or comments, other than their salary and allowances legitimately earned in the discharge of their professional duties.

It is, therefore, important for journalists to consider the following ethics in their daily work:

**2.8.1 Social Responsibility:** The main premise of the social responsibility theory is that freedom carries concomitant obligations, and the media - which enjoy a privileged position under many governments - are obliged to be responsible to

society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society.

**2.8.2 Fairness:** Fairness in news writing means not embellishing the news story with additional, often fictional, details for the sake of making the story interesting. Neel (1998:284) mentioned that unfairness in news writing means that the journalist does not give a hearing to all the contending sides in a story. There has been a number of such incidents in South Africa where a good example of poor journalism was displayed in the reporting the findings of the Truth Commission in Bloemfontein.

**2.8.3 Situational Ethics:** Journalists generally tend to deal with their ethical problems case by case. They often answer questions about what they would do in particular ethical situations with "It depends". The issue of such situational ethics is bothersome because it suggests a lack of guiding principles.

Some advertisers seek preferential treatment in the news media in which they buy advertising space and time. Journalists need not become worried about advertisers attempting to position their ads in certain parts of a newspaper or magazine, or at certain times of the broadcasting day. What does disturb journalists and observers, though, is allowing advertising to dictate or influence what passes for untainted news. The news columns and newscasts are not supposed to be for sale. And, generally, they are not.

**2.8.4 Conflict of Interest:** Conflict of interest is a situation where you find that one of your jobs, interests, activities or duties could be advanced at the expense of another job, interest, activity or duty.

Many news executives are extensively concerned about conflict of interest because they fear that the public will question their news reports if they are produced by people whose independence is not obvious. If the public knows, or suspects, for example that a reporter is working on the side for a

political candidate or cause, it might not believe what the reporter writes about that candidate or cause. The credibility of the reporter, and perhaps the entire organisation, is thus threatened.

**2.8.5 The Taboo of Politics:** Of all activities of journalists, politics appears to be posing the greatest of ethical pitfalls. This is perhaps because of the attention journalists pay to politics.

**2.8.6 Conflict in Sport:** The sports departments of daily newspapers frequently encounter conflict of interest over whether to promote sports or cover them. A large number of sports pages seem to be more interested in promoting sports, being cheerleaders for the coaches and players, often to the detriment of the facts and the readers.

**2.8.7 Gifts:** Most written codes of journalism treat freebies as conflicts of interest. Journalists and their sponsors should conduct themselves in a manner that protects them from conflicts of

interest and their independence of judgment. If journalists or their sponsors accept gifts, free holidays and travel, for example, their objectivity may be compromised and the public's right to accurate information compromised (Moyo 2003:73).

Freebies are often symptoms of a conflict of interest and they can tempt a journalist to act unethically. It is important to understand, though, that conflicts of interest can exist without freebies and that freebies do not always result in a conflict of interest. A journalist may accept a small gift from a news source, if that gift does not result in the publication of a story favouring that source.

Many journalists these days prefer to pay for their own drinks and meals and some, especially those working for large organisations, actually buy meals and drinks for sources including politicians and sports officials, on their company's expense account.

**2.8.8 Friendship :** Reporters, who develop friendships with their news sources, meeting them socially as well as professionally, can easily fall into the trap of favouritism, sometimes unwittingly. A mutual back-scratching relationship with a source could develop.

**2.8.9 Adversaries of Sources:** A concept that has appealed to many journalists is that reporters are, or ought to be, adversaries of their sources, particularly political sources. They see such aggressive reporters as necessary in fulfilling journalism's watchdog role, and appropriately so because of the seriousness of the high-level corruption and other shortcomings that they try to expose, yet they treat them all as friends.

**2.8.10 Secret Sources:** Journalists have come to believe that certain kinds of information cannot be obtained unless some sources are kept secret. Some sources will not talk on the record, for various sound reasons such as the fear that they might lose their jobs, be physically harmed or even killed, or lose the trust of those from whom they

are getting the information they are passing on to the journalists.

Some of the greatest exposes of modern journalism would not have been possible without information that was obtained by journalists only because they agreed to extend confidentiality to and protect the identity of some of their sources.

**2.8.11 Editors being Wary of Confidentiality:** In recent years editors of responsible news organisations have grown increasingly wary of the use of secret sources. Their concern centres on:

- The possibility that the media are being used by sources who insist on secrecy, or by reporters who make up things and get them into stories by attributing them to so-called secret sources;
- the possibility of a loss of credibility when readers and viewers are not given specific sources of information;



- the difficulties in defending charges of libel when judges refuse to consider proof of the accuracy of disputed stories if they are based on sources the media refuse to identify.

**2.8.12 Deception and Misrepresentation:** During undercover reporting, journalists spend much time and money on investigating stories. The question thus arises how can newspapers fight for honesty and integrity when they themselves are less than honest in getting a story.

While not specifically prohibiting the use of deception or misrepresentation to get a story, Bradley (1980:90) states that it is the policy of the *Washington Post* "not to deceive people". He then qualifies this statement by adding, "We do not lie about our profession but we don't waste time telling everybody what our profession is."

Journalists are usually divided on whether they should report undercover, but hardly anyone endorses or condemns the method without some qualification. Those who favour it do not believe

that it should be done casually on every story that comes along. Those who disapprove of it believe there might be some special and rare circumstance in which the method might be used ethically.

**2.8.13 Misrepresentation:** Undercover reporting always involves some degree of misrepresentation by journalists to their sources. Even when journalists pose as members of the public, their motives are still to get a story that sets them apart from other members of the public and results in misrepresenting who they really are to the people they deal with while undercover.

**2.8.14 Fabricating News:** This refers to falsifying or making up stories. Everyone who gets into journalism is supposed to understand that lies and fakery are simply not allowed. Fiction has no place in journalism as journalists should not lie.

**2 . 8 . 15 Plag iaris m :** One of the cardinal sins of journalism is plagiarism the lifting of sections of articles written by other people and passing them off as their own work. Attribution of material from other newspapers and media must be total. Plagiarism is one of journalism's most unforgivable sins.

**2.8.16 Dubious Methods:** One of these is secret recording which most journalists regard secret recordings as unethical. However, there is also a general realization that there are times when reporters investigating illegal activities might find that secret recording is the only way to get evidence of wrongdoings since permission to tape the kind of cha racters they are dealing with would be futile.

Some sources object to having their remarks recorded because they feel that a tape recording could more easily be transferred and perhaps misused by persons other than the reporter who interviewed them. They do not see reporters' notes as being that easily transferable. Other

sources, including those in politics, object to being recorded because they want to be able to deny what they said and not have a reporter able to confront them with a taped record of what they actually said. For instance, a Zimbabwean politician surprised a newspaper editor by calling a tape of his own speech a lie.

**2.8.17 Old-fashioned Eavesdropping:** Although many journalists regard secret recordings as unethical, an even larger number condemn listening in on people by means of electronic devices or by tapping their telephones, old-fashioned eavesdropping with the naked ear is not seen as a serious ethical sin.

**2.8.18 Hidden Cameras:** A photographic form of eavesdropping is to take pictures of people without their knowledge.

**2.8.19 Chequebook Journalism:** This entails paying for information or exclusive rights to an interview. In addition to its costliness, this

method of newsgathering tempts informers to lie for cash to merchandise facts.

**2.8.20 The Ambush Interview:** This poses the question of whether it is fair for a reporter to surprise a news source with tough and sometimes embarrassing questions. "That depends", most journalists would reply.

It depends first on who the news source is. If it is a public official who is evading the news media, or someone involved in illegal or questionable practices, it is all right to use what is coming to be known as the ambush interview - surprising the source by catching the person on the street or away from his or her home or office, or surprising him or her by asking unexpected questions. However, it is generally not acceptable for television journalists to ambush news sources.

**2.8.2.1 In the Line of Duty:** Most journalists like to think they would not break the law to get a story, but as a matter of fact they often do. Usually, though, the laws they break are not serious ones: exceeding speed limits to get to a fire, or parking illegally to be near the scene of a story, trespassing on private property after a fire or some tragic event. But journalists have been known to go beyond minor infractions when the stakes were high.

**2.8.2.2 Posed Photographs:** Since the invention of the camera, news photographers have occasionally set up their photographs by getting their subjects to pose for them. There have also been times when photographers arriving late for events have persuaded their subjects to re-enact whatever it was they missed. Increasingly, such set-ups and re-enactment in news photography are seen as unethical when they result in photos that are untrue, or distort reality.

**2 . 8 .2 3 Breaking Embargoes:** Certain news sources, particularly in government, have for years given information to reporters on the understanding that it may not be published or broadcast until such and such a date and time. These restrictions are called embargoes, and most of the time they work just fine. They give reporters time to work on complicated news stories. However, when the news is hot, or the journalists suspect they are being used by sources imposing the embargoes, the whole system breaks down and embargoes are violated, and once one organization jumps the gun and breaks an embargo, others feel free to break it as well.

**2 .8 .2 4 Media Shocks:** Newspapers should not publish shocking pictures simply for their shock value. Many editors worry about whether the shock will get in the way of the message the picture is supposed to communicate. Many members of the public for instance, feel pictures of nudity are in poor taste and insulting to women and

men. Many newspapers will also not publish pictures of the dead, as this is viewed as disrespectful, not only of the dead, but of their families as well.

**2 .8 .25 Offensive Language:** One of the things young reporters learn quickly is that the people they cover sometimes use language their editors will not publish. To solve this problem some clean up such language as they write their stories; others retain it, arguing that it is dishonest to replace the word "shit" as used by a source with a less offensive word.

Some younger reporters feel their newspapers are too conservative about the kind of words they will allow in stories. However, whereas it is true that standards regarding offensive words have loosened up in society and the media, some editors still do not favour a wholesale lowering of barriers.



**2.8.26 Privacy:** The concept that citizens have a right to be left alone has increasingly been accepted. News organizations often have to defend themselves against allegations of both libel and the invasion of privacy, because those two legal theories overlap. For example, litigants may claim that they were labeled (defamed or suffered injury to their reputation) by the publication of private facts about them.

The defense against libel and invasion of privacy though differ, in libel action, the oldest major defense is truth. Another is qualified privilege, which refers protecting the news media from conviction on charges of libel for truthfully reporting government proceedings and records. A third major defence against libel is fair comment and criticism, designed to protect the news media's right to comment on the public performance of people who voluntarily put themselves in the limelight, such as politicians and athletes.

The best defence against a charge of libel or slander, on the other hand, is newsworthiness. If the defendant news organisation can show that the offensive item was news and it was accurate, it would usually win a lawsuit brought for publishing or broadcasting private facts.

The decision whether and when journalists invade someone's privacy is largely an ethical rather than a legal one. If the private facts published are legitimate news - and courts have been liberal in defending that the chances are slim that a lawsuit charging invasion of privacy would be successful.

Much of the information published by the media is regarded by at least some of the people involved as private. The question for journalists is thus not whether to invade privacy, but to what extent and for what purpose it should be done.

People find it reasonable that journalists often publish private facts in order to tell the public what they need to know in order to measure political candidates and to assess public officials. But would the public find it equally reasonable for journalists to invade the privacy of children and relatives of those candidates and public officials? The question where to draw the line is thus more of an ethical than a legal one as well.

**2.8.2.7 Privacy for VIPs:** Generally, the media tend to afford less privacy to public officials than they do to ordinary people. In the past, holders of public office have traditionally been scrutinized rather diligently by the press, which believes a major reason for its constitutionally guaranteed freedom is to serve as a watchdog of government.

Currently, the press seems to be paying more attention to the private lives of public officials, and reporting them to the public when they affect the jobs the public officials are responsible for.

**2.8.28 Privacy for Ordinary People:** When ordinary people somehow get caught up in the news journalists - for that moment at least - tend to treat them as public figures. It does not seem to matter whether the private persons are thrust into the news through no fault of their own, such as being the victims of a public accident. Many journalists do worry, though, about hurting people who fall prey to the news and are not seeking publicity.

Another most question is who will be hurt and who will be helped? Most ethical decisions in journalism involve some benefit . Often, harm to an individual or group has to be weighed up against benefit to the public or the community. Realising who is apt to be hurt, and whether the benefit can justify that hurt, can help a journalist to make an intelligent decision.

The question should also be asked whether there is other, better alternatives. The harm that results from what journalists decide could often

be softened, or even eliminated, if another way could be found to attain more or less the same goal. In any event, journalists should try to consider all the alternatives before deciding on a particular course of action.

A journalist should be led by the following question as well: "Can I look myself in the mirror?" One of the strongest determinants in any ethical decision is quite personal, since a journalist has to be able to live with him or herself afterwards.

He or she should be able to justify his or her decision to other people, the public as well. He or she thus needs to have good, understandable reasons for whatever he or she decides.

Another question concerns what principles or values he or she should apply. Certain values or principles - such as telling the truth, the public's right to know, compassion, social responsibility, the golden rule, justice, fairness and journalistic independence - might emerge as more important

than others in a specific ethical decision. The important thing is to use pertinent principles or values in the decision making.

Whatever a journalist decides about a particular ethical question should his or her general philosophy of how journalism ought to be practised, and how people in a civilized society ought to behave.

The role of advertising needs security too. The heavy dependence on advertising as the financial base of the media system can also effect the quality of journalism in a country. This does not entail that advertisers are allowed to dictate what goes into the news columns or newscasts although this does unfortunately happen sometimes, particularly in smaller or competitively inferior newspapers or broadcasting stations.

## 2.9 MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Public interest is probably the most important defense open to journalists when exposing people's private lives. In this case, disclosure would be in the public interest where the matter concerns a public figure. The public has a valid interest in being informed about issues. Moemeka (1999:168) argue that journalists belong to society first and are journalists second. Civil society expects African journalists to practice all the good moral virtues that make African society tick. They should be courageous, intrepid, enduring, hardworking, hospitable, generous, magnanimous and respectful. This assertion is debatable because the public is entitled to the truth, and only the correct information can form the basis for journalism and ensure the confidence of the people. To broadcast only what the authorities want to hear, regardless of whether such broadcasts serve the community's needs, goes against the dictates of African morality.

Unlike newspapers, whose ethical lines are frequently based on the political sympathies of their owners, national broadcasters, such as the SABC, should be impartial in their coverage of news, and to refrain from

expressing opinions. The difficulty facing the journalists is how to keep the audiences fully informed about matters of a highly complex and political nature, and at the same time meet the obligation to remain objective and not to take sides.

For many, however, the decision to cover an item (or not) is itself evidence of partiality, as a BBC Senior Editor has stated: There is no comfort in knowing that bias is in the eye of the beholder or that history has made a habit of blaming the messenger for the message. The question is how to square the circle.

Journalists, professional bodies and employees in broadcasting have for many years published their own guidelines, which are enshrined in office-style books, newsroom guides and professional codes of conduct. These are often intended to serve the dual purpose of ensuring stylistic consistency and establishing ground rules for ethical behaviour and editorial standards.

In addition, fairness has the merit of flexibility. The BBC has published the following fairness guidelines:



- + Tell potential interviewees why you want them.
- + Protect your sources.
- + Stick to the facts.
- + Choose adjectives with care.
- + Keep your opinions to yourself.
  
- + Avoid partiality.
- + Do not over compensate.
- + Observe and report.
- + Treat others as you would want to be treated yourself.

There is, however, also a moral dilemma for journalists in a society where there is conflict and violence, namely how to report responsibly without appearing to encourage the perpetrators of violence through publicity. In a country in transition, an editorial code or policy is the only way of guiding the journalists and of providing a useful instrument for the ombudsman, should the need arise. Whether or not the news is in the national interest, such power should belong to journalists, not politicians. When journalists surrender this right, the media is not free. When journalists operate in an atmosphere of coercion, ethical journalism is non-existent. The public has the

right to know of events of public importance, while public interest is the overriding mission of the mass media. The purpose of distributing news and enlightened opinion is to serve the general welfare. Journalists who use their professional status as representatives of the public for selfish or other unworthy motives merely violate trust.

Freedom of the media is to be guarded as an inalienable right of people in a free society as Seepe (*City Press* 2001:17) sums aptly remarks, "without the exercise of this right, it is not possible to hold the ruling class accountable". This is why freedom of expression usually becomes the first casualty among those with dictatorial inclinations. Freedom of the media carries with it the freedom and the responsibility to discuss, question and challenge actions and utterances of our government, and of our public and private institutions. Journalists should thus uphold the right to expose unpopular opinions, and the privilege to agree with the majority.

## **2.10 MEDIA CHANGES**

The South African broadcasting scene is currently on the threshold of dramatic and historic change. As a result of the new, deregulated broadcasting environment, the

traditionally developed profile of the broadcasting industry will change dramatically.

For decades inhibiting legislations shackled the South African media. This severely curtailed the journalists' right to broadcast and the public's right to know. Successive states of emergency brought with them draconian media regulations. At present the future looks substantially brighter for journalists and the public they serve. South Africa seems to be the only country that has set a clear, transparent and democratic regulatory framework for the communications industry. It is only South Africa that has an independent communications authority that regulates the broadcasting sector. It is also South Africa that has made great strides in creating a public service broadcaster that enjoys editorial autonomy. Alongside the public broadcaster are the commercial and community broadcasting sectors. The South African government does not own or control the media. These positive developments have been possible because of among all the democratising countries, South Africa alone has independent institutions in place to achieve a dispensation where citizens can enjoy civil and political rights without hindrance from the government of the day.

There is a relationship, therefore, between a democratic context and media that enjoy editorial independence from the State. The media in South Africa can therefore play a part in advancing and protecting democracy.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research was undertaken from a qualitative research design approach, with certain aspects quantified. As such, it was not the purpose of the researcher to execute a quantitative research project from which the results could be generalized, neither were typical quantitative research measures followed, such as random sample. The primary objective was to learn more about the research object, and to come to an understanding of what is happening in real-time situations in newsrooms in South African media regarding reporters' skills. The purpose was thus not to test in a quantitative fashion a set of hypotheses and measure the outcome. As such the research project could perhaps best be described as 'a pilot study with a focus on certain media and a certain group of reporters within a authentic real-time situation. Consequently, the researcher could aver that the results give a comprehensive and realistic snap shot view of the research issue'. Or, as Steenveld (2002:154) states, the findings are used as an indication of significant issues regarding the current state of South African journalism. In many ways, the findings are therefore better read as qualitative indicators, "rather than as quantitative

ones". The research thus consisted of one questionnaire (see appendix 8).

## **32 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The population for this study was drawn from the print and electronic media in five South African provinces (Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Eastern Cape). Editors, news editors and reporters with two and five years experience in journalism were interviewed. The average age for the reporters were between 18 and 25 years of age whereas the editors average age was between 31 and 45 years.

In the Eastern Cape and the Limpopo province, the newsrooms had a smaller number of journalists and as such, five reporters in each two provinces were interviewed. Some of the targeted reporters were not available due to external obligations. Editors and news editors in such cases were engaged. An assurance of confidentiality was given to every journalist and editor participating in the interview. The interview also considered gender although the numbers were quite small. Although race was not a factor, consideration was also given to make the interviews inclusive. The availability and the willingness of the reporters were very important to make this study a success.

In Cape Town, the majority of the reporters were still coloreds and whites, while there were only a few black reporters although the regional editor was black (perhaps due to the past apartheid laws of separate development). KwaZulu-Natal had a bigger mix of black and Indian reporters with only a few whites. Gauteng, because of its cosmopolitan nature, had all races represented nearly equitably. All the newsrooms visited were male dominated.

The researcher could have done more, had it not been the question of financial constraints and the unavailability of a bigger number of reporters. The study targeted a total of 80 journalists working at the SABC and more than 40 working in other organizations.

Although not all the reporters could be found in the newsrooms, positive response and co-operation were received from about 50% of the editors, news editors and reporters (Journalists) with whom appointments had been made before hand. Both the editors and news editors expressed genuine interest to participate in the study in order to contribute to the process of improving education and training.

### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

The researcher gathered the data personally because nearly all the interviewees were accessible and cooperative to answer the set question (see Appendix D). The questionnaire was first sent to five newsrooms in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the Limpopo Province, Eastern Cape, and Western Cape. As indicated above, not all the reporters were available in the newsrooms. The interviews were also recorded on tape to gain access to correct information on the questions.

The young reporters with two to five years experience, were not willing to participate, so the emphasis shifted to the editors who were willing to assist in the investigation. In the SABC, the number of reporters interviewed, totaled 50 from all the provinces where newsrooms were visited. The other organizations accounted for 150.

The questionnaire was self administered (see Appendix D) to obtain information relating to the following:

- Language
- News dissemination
- News selection
- News writing
- News reception



- Professional profile

Although one is looking for the truth, one is aware that it is difficult to get to the truth itself to the pure, undisguised, naked truth. According to Leedy (1989:115) data collections are merely representatives, intermediate, exclusive surrogates of the truth.

### **3.4 STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

This data gathering technique is widely used in the Humanities and Social Sciences. It was preferred because of the qualitative nature of the study and the fact that it does not demand experimental work. Researchers rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing as a field-research technique which can be described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Marshall & Rossman 1989:82). In-depth interviews do provide detailed background about the reasons why participants give specific answers, allow for observation of the participants' non verbal behavior and can provide extensive data concerning the participants' opinions, recollections, values, motivation, and feelings.

During the study, arrangements were made with the participants to be interviewed in different locations. Well drafted questions (see Appendix D) were used to obtain valid and reliable information. The interviewees were made to feel at ease when answering the formal and informal questions, and at times discussed issues. The techniques allowed for follow-up questions and clarification in order to gain a thorough understanding of what the respondents wanted to convey.

The in-depth interview is not a rambling chat but focuses on the questions only - that means such an interview is purposeful. The informant must understand why the interview is being conducted. The interviewees were given an indication of how long the interview would take while confidentiality was always assured.

In-depth interviews were also conducted with 20 opinion leaders in the news area in South Africa, concerning their views regarding the role the media are playing in the social transformation process. A representative sample was used to collect data from the respondents which included media executives, media practitioners, media monitors, academics, government officials, and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The research questions covered key themes such

as journalists "qualifications" in-house training, inductions, policy on ethics, coverage of the news in the 11 official languages, target market/ audience, how democratic order was affecting news coverage, current regulatory authority, and the kind of relationship between the present government and journalists (see Appendix D).

Every interview arranged was designed and timed to last for an hour, and since the researcher was also a fulltime employee, two months were set aside to finish the interviewing process. The researcher made appointments with interviewees at the workplace, for ease of accessibility. The participants were chosen from both sexes and the interviews were mostly conducted during the lunch hour so as to avoid any disruption of their work flow.

During the in-depth interviews, if the participant did not understand a question, such a question was rephrased. The participants were expected to give sufficient detailed information and probing questions were also used where there was a lack of understanding of the question. No leading questions were used, and complex questions were avoided. When asking such questions, the golden rule is that the interviewer should neither approve nor disagree with the participants' answer. What was

important was to gain the trust of the participants. Good listening skills were regarded as being very important during the interviews.

### 3.5 DIRECT OBSERVATION

Visits to the various newsrooms were made as part of direct observation to see what the journalists were doing and how they were preparing stories. The researcher also learnt about the forms of behaviour and the meaning attached to them. More comprehensive and detailed data were obtained than would otherwise have been the case. The researcher was able to see the processing of news until it was presented in the studios.

#### Media Sample

<b>Who</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Lang .</b>	<b>Centre</b>	<b>Stations</b>
News Editors	(9)	English	JHB/CTN	SABC/ e-tv/702
Journalists	(12)	English	JHB	Jacaranda, Highveld Khaya FM, Safm, LesediFM
Media Owners	(8)	English	JHB	Primedia, SABC,

				BOP TV
Politicians	(7)	English	JHB, CTN, Polokwane, DBN	ANC, DA, UDM , PAC, IF P, ACDP, Government
Business Leaders	(7)	English	JHB	SABCOB  NAFCOC
Academics	(6)	English	Gauteng, Eastern Cape	Wits, Rhodes, Vista, TNG
FXI	(2)	English	JHB	FXI
Civil Society	(5)	English	Gauteng, Limpopo	NGO, SACC, Chiefs
ICASA	(3)	English	Gauteng	ICASA
MWASA	(2)	English	Gauteng	MWASA
BEMAWU	(3)	English	Gauteng	BEMAWU

The white editors in the six newsrooms (bulletin editors and assignment editors) visited around the country were over 45 years of age, whereas the news editors were under 45. The majority of journalists were under 30 years of age.

### **3.6 SAMPLE SITE AND SIZE**

The study sites consisted of 17 areas that the researcher visited during a period of two months. The sample consisted of nine editors, twelve journalists, eight media owners, seven politicians, seven business leaders, six academics, and two members of pressure groups, five members of civil societies, three regulatory members, two **MWASA** members, and three **BEMAWU** members. It must be clarified that some of the newsrooms were very big, and the researcher could interview only the journalists who were available at the time of the visit because arrangements had been made with them beforehand. The sample was deemed adequate for the purpose of this research. All the participants had knowledge of, and were directly familiar with, the newsroom environment or place of operation in comparison with other participants.

The newsrooms in almost all the regions had young inexperienced journalists who needed thorough guidelines from both the assignment and production editors. The equipment was state of the art, but how to use it was still a problem.

### 3.7 7 SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION

Secondary data collection in the form of editorial codes was gathered for analysis. The codes included editorial policies and ethical codes from other media organizations locally and internationally, and most of the attention was given to the following available guides:

- *SABC ethical code for editorial staff* a document to guide the editorial staff in how to behave during the execution of their duties.
- *Freedom of Expression*: A commitment to the principle of editorial independence.
- *Ethics in the Media*: The fundamental principles of good journalism.
- *The Nigerian Guild of Editor's (1972) Code of Conduct* - a document that guides journalists to respect the truth.

- *The society of professional journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, code of ethics* - the duty of journalists is to serve the truth.
- *Code of Broadcast News Ethics: Radio and Television News Directors Association* - to gather and report information of importance and interest to the public accurately, honesty and impartially.
- *Code of Conduct: Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa* - the freedom of the electronic media is indivisible from, and subject to, the same constraints as those of the individual and rests on the individual's fundamental right to be informed.
- *General Practical Guidelines for the Journalist* (see the SABC ethical code, page 17).
- *Public Service Broadcasting: The Challenge of the Twenty-first Century*, 1997.
- *Media Training: African Editors Conference*.
- *The End of State Censorship for Broadcasters*.



The vast amount of literature on the dilemma of the media, especially broadcasting, was used as part of the information source. The researcher used papers presented on various scenarios relating to the quality of present journalists as well. All the documentation used falls into the categories stated and were highly relevant to the case study topic.

### **3.8 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The research did not cover every broadcasting station in the country. The findings may therefore not be completely generalized, as there are more newsrooms in the country with senior and experienced journalists that were not included. Only about 70% of the newsrooms were visited to evaluate the situation. While the researcher was engaged in this study, SANEF was still conducting a skills audit among the media houses to assess the juniorisation of the newsrooms in the country. Although a number of electronic media are concentrated in Gauteng, it was difficult for the researcher to travel to areas such as North West, Western Cape and Eastern Cape. More time was, of course, required to travel in order to complete this kind of study. The researcher managed to visit four major broadcasting centers in the provinces. Financial constraints restricted the size of the sample, and the number of broadcasting stations and other participants visited. Some of

the participants, despite being assured about the intention of the study, were not willing to be interviewed despite the fact that the researcher had guaranteed anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of the answers. The views expressed by the participants may thus not be fully representative of the entire community of journalists and editorial staff in South Africa.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

*Journalist of our day, if they hope to become complete, must have the working knowledge of the "tools of trade" plus the training and wisdom to use them skillfully. Arthur Wimmer 1977*

#### **The Currents state of the Newsrooms (Findings)**

The above quotation seems to have been underpinning light to the researcher's findings. A combination of research strategies was used in order to present these results. Media as a social science uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. The respondents were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire also served as a discussion instrument where face-to-face interviews were possible.

In this study, biographical data was vital. As such, question 1(a) attempted to establish the number of journalists, their ages and their gender.

There were a total of 28 respondents, out of these, 5 (26%) came from small newsrooms that had between 5 - 10 journalists. Medium sized newsrooms had between 11 - 20 journalists; 16 (42%) of the respondents came from these while 7 (25%) of the respondents were working at the SABC.

The small numbers of journalists are normal in media organizations, but this places severe pressure on them. In order to be effective, and survive this pressure, it is vital that these journalists should be highly trained. This is why 1(b) asked the respondents about their qualifications.

The qualifications of the journalists were as follows:

No formal Qualification (5)

Matric plus Journalism Certificate (6)

Matric plus Media Diploma (3)

General Degree (2)

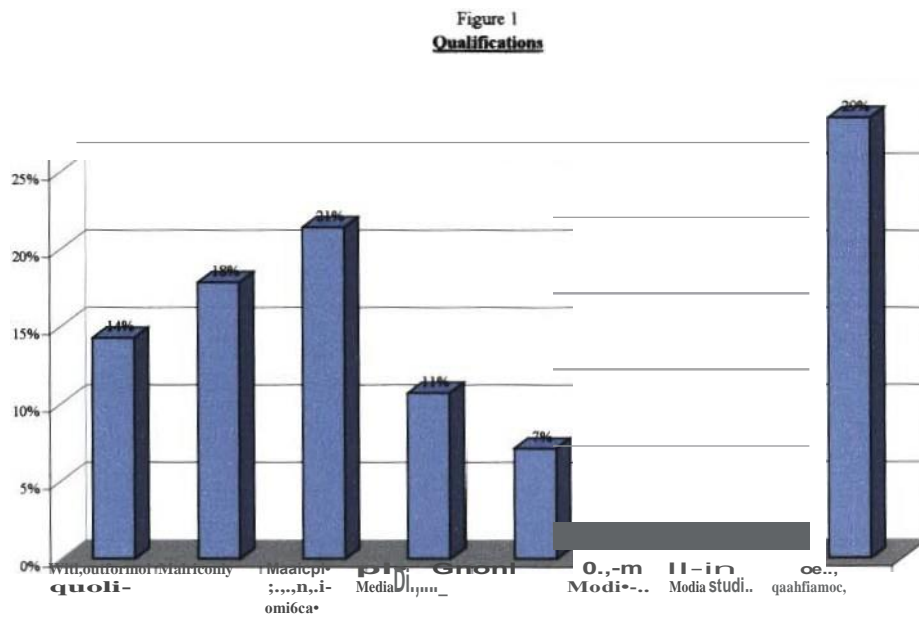
Degree without formal qualifications (4)

Matric Media Studies (0)

Honours in Media Studies (0)

Other qualifications (8)

See graph below for a graphical representation.



Because of the existence of historical discrepancies in the South African education system, it was vital to establish where practicing journalists had graduated/qualified from.

This may be attributed to the stated historical facts of apartheid. In the past many black journalists were self taught. There are, therefore, very few with relevant degrees in Media Studies.

The work of journalists is varied. Some work in the field, or as copy writers, or even as editors. The training required for the specialist sections in journalism is also diverse. As such question 1(d) attempted determine the specific jobs of the respondents.

As expected, almost all of the journalists (70%) was working in several roles. The majority were engaged in fieldwork (65%), while 80% are required to do newsroom work. There was even a case of a journalist who worked as a presenter as well.

Question e(i) sought to find out if any internal training was taking place. Traditionally, journalism relied on "sitting with Nellie" (training through experience). But times are changing and there is a need to change that perception about training journalists. All the senior respondents (news editors) claimed to be conducting their own training as well as sending journalists for further development. See question e(ii).

These claims of internal training need further investigation as this impact on the quality of initial training and education as well as the level of training.

An important factor in any successful career is the way one is received one's employer, in other words induction. For journalists induction is critical because of ethics, house style, and deadlines. Question 2(i) directed itself to this issue. The respondents were asked how they induct or were inducted into their organizations. It was frightening to find out that none of the journalists were formally inducted. All of them had to find their way around. They were perceived as experienced and, therefore, expected to find their way around.

The findings on question 2(ii) were also very revealing as no newsroom had an induction policy at that stage. An example was given by a Newsroom Manager from a large public organization who commented : "I often meet new journalists in the corridor. Sometimes they come to me when they have nothing to work with, even after a fortnight of their arrival".

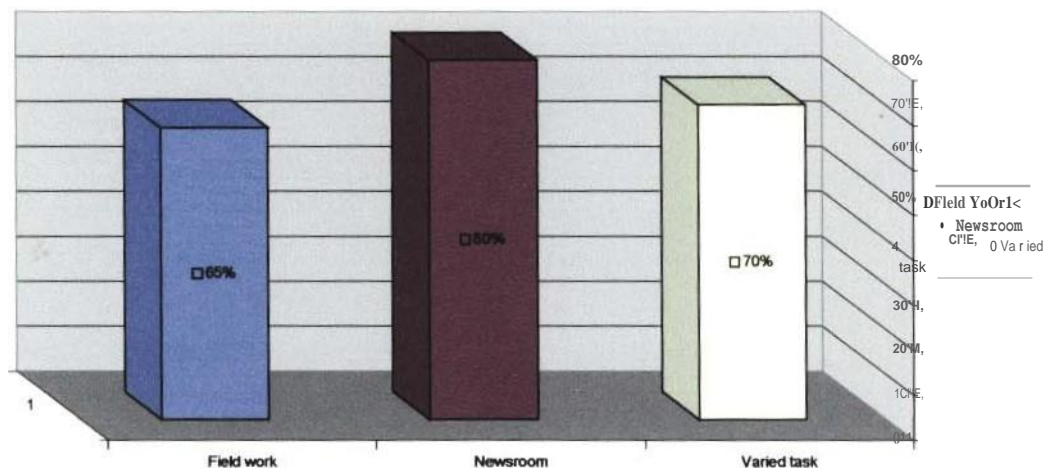
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One area which has caused so much turmoil in journalism in South Africa, is the question of ethics. Chapter two in this work outlined in detail guidelines on Media Ethics, many of which are internationally accepted. But the profession seems to offer only lip service.

Figure 2  
Classification of work type





Historically, the journalism profession relied on in-house training, individual curiosity and interest. But since times have changed, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of some of these traditional methods.

Asked whether the respondents found in-house training relevant, 4(i), it was no surprise that all of them (100%) regarded that this type of training as relevant. The key question after that was to find out that if most of the training was conducted in-house, who were conducting such training.

Question 4(ii) sought clarification on the type and level of training. All the respondents once more indicated that all their training was offered by service providers. This was found to be a critical point, as there are advantages and disadvantages in using Service providers.

Some news editors indicated that formal training is not the ultimate solution to a lack of skills in newsrooms. They emphasized that formal training is a good foundation and is definitely needed, but the success thereof ultimately depended on the journalists to be willing to continue with in-house training.

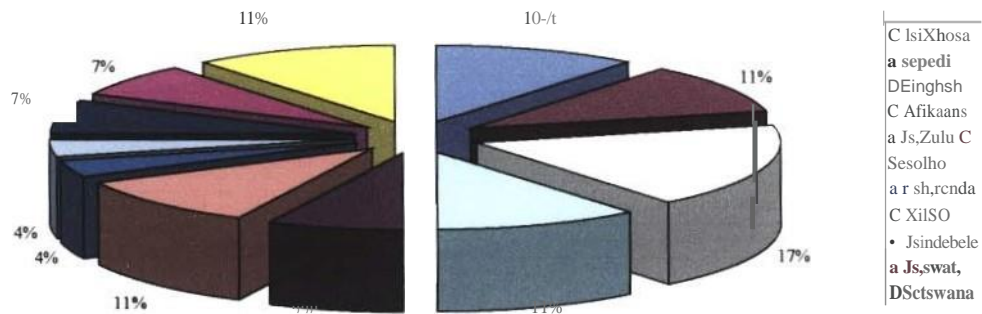
Amongst the advantages the most obvious are: objectivity; new knowledge and expertise. The disadvantages are that, service providers just offer standard textbook information, because they frequently lack knowledge of the company, as well as other vital information. **But** most important is that because of competition, organizations may be reluctant to reveal all their internal problems to external trainers thus affecting the impact of training.

Language and communication are central to news and information. It was crucial, therefore, to establish not only what language the respondents considered to be their mother tongue but also the preferred language of their work. Another important factor is the fact that South Africa has eleven official languages. This has made Question 5 even more central to this study.

Question 5(i) aimed at establishing the respondents' mother tongue as shown in figure three.

**Mother tongue**

Figure3  
..!!&llm



It was found that all the eleven languages were represented: Sotho (3%); (11%); Sepedi (3); ISindebele (2 (7%); Zulu (2); Xitsonga (1(4%); Tshivenda (1); Xhosa (3); Isiswathi (2) Twsana (3) English (5 (18°/o) Afrikaans (3%)

The dominance of English and Afrikaans can be ascribed to South Africa's past. Further, English now dominates as a business

It was interesting to note that most of the black journalists could understand Zulu in addition to their mother tongue.

Most of the respondents expressed the opinion that prior to the 1994 election one heard only the voices of white reporters in English and Afrikaans on the electronic media (especially the SABC). The respondents claimed that these reporters were very professional in the manner in which they were presenting news bullets and current affairs programs on the English and Afrikaans electronic media.

In addition, it was noted that all the English and Afrikaans respondents mentioned this change spontaneously, and appeared to have mixed feelings about this issue. Some respondents agreed that this change was an attempt by the electronic media to restructure the industry and news reports in order to be politically correct in the new South Africa.

One respondent remarked that the biggest gripe is the pronunciation of the words. On the old English station, there was always people speaking correct English and now you have people who actually do not know how to pronounce the words.

Five of the respondents were of the opinion that black journalists lack training and have presenting skills compared to those of their white counterparts. Others blame the system of education in the townships which seemingly does not prepare the learners to obtain a good standard of language usage.

These respondents felt that although multicultural news reporters enhanced the democratic image of the electronic media, there was no need to lower the standard of writing skills in English and Afrikaans.

All the respondents were careful to make the politically incorrect responses when addressing the issue of language. The white respondents seem to feel that some black presenters are not able to pronounce and not read English news reports in a professional manner, that is, in such a way that one is able to understand what is being said. The white respondents stressed that they are not bothered at all by having black presenters on SAFM radio as long as they are efficient and professional in their presentation of the news to the listeners. Black respondents seem to agree with their white counterparts that some black presenters may have problems with the pronunciation of English words but said that they experience no difficulty in understanding the news reports read by black presenter.

The information above, evinces that the question of language raised emotional debate from all the respondents. This might be assembled to opening the old scars of racial discrimination but the common factor is that every one of the respondents wanted to protect the quality of his or her own language. It is, therefore, a challenge to reporters to learn the basics of language usage in news reporting.

The question of target market is closely linked to the issues of the languages spoken by the people in the reception footprint. Because of the complexities of language distribution and the power game, most news did not target rural people unless they were the objects of the news. This raises very critical issues about what is news and for whom.

As was indicated in Chapter Two, the libertarian theory of the press dictates that there is freedom of speech. In this case it would appear that both the public and community media miss their target market in terms of language usage.

If the target clientele are not being reached in their language, many questions arise. But since it is impossible in this limited study to cover all these issues, suffice to say that if people do not get information, democracy may be questioned.

To be able to use English and other languages apart from the mother tongue, may require formal education for journalists.

The quality of broadcasting is also affected by legislation. Current broadcasting legislation is through ICASA. It would appear that journalists in general do not feel affected by legislation in South Africa. It seems that the most important factors were privatization and competition. These issues place severe pressure on journalists. However, this competition has also exposed poor journalism and created a sensationalist (paparazzi) culture in the newsrooms.

Most of the respondents were of the view that SABC news does make a contribution to the promotion of cultural diversity, mainly because news bulletins are offered in eleven (11) official languages on TV and eleven (11) official languages plus Xhosa and Zulu on radio. Two (2) respondents said that these languages were treated equally and English and Afrikaans are enjoying much more air time than other languages. Two (2) respondents are of the opinion that reporters still have difficulties in determining or selecting what is a top story of the day. On the other hand, such a top story, if selected from the morning diary meeting, is expected to be covered in all eleven languages and for all the bulletins and current affairs. This means a team of reporters has to be assigned to the job. Bulletin material must be filed at regular intervals.

Several angles should be filed and that include voices and sound bites. Current affairs must be serviced, preferably by way of a news package.

Two respondents felt that there are problems in the quality of writing, technical quality and the main story being missed. However, it is the responsibility of the duty editor to verify that there is a proper balance in news reporting. The respondents were also of the opinion that currently there is less interference from the government in prescribing news content, although there are still subtle attempts in this regard.

Most of the respondents mentioned that news reports had become more relevant to them than in the past because it appeared currently that news reports contained more local and national news compared to the period before the 1994 election. The respondents indicated that not only has transformation brought objectivity to news coverage, but the changes have brought more local news. The news reports are more relevant to the South African audiences.

Three (3) of the respondents were of the view that although news coverage was not biased, there was still a fair amount of incompetence among the young journalists. In the SABC, for example, many experienced journalists left the newsroom to join the government ore-News. News reporters don't ask really investigative probing questions while news stories tend to concentrate on events or news conferences



in the cities but ignore the rural stories. Sensationalism is the order of the day to most of the reporters. South Africa, according to the respondents, does not have enough investigative journalists and training might be the answer. This competition also raises questions on the relationship between the media houses and the government. Most of the journalist felt that the present South African government was indirectly influencing the media, especially the SABC.

Eight of the respondents were of the opinion that SABC News played a significant role in healing the wounds of the past victims and perpetrators by broadcasting the truth on reconciliation at the TRC in the past. However one respondent felt that news was often distorted in order to bring social healing and that social healing as such was not part of the role of news media. Four respondents were of the opinion that issues such as racism should be addressed by investigative journalists.

Six respondents felt that there was a proper balance in news reporting since fair, factual and accurate news stories that are critical of the government are covered. They were also of the opinion that currently there is less interference from the government in prescribing news content, although there are still subtle attempts in this regard. However, two respondents felt that the SABC reports too much on the governing party and not on the opposition parties, while e-News tends to focus too much on the views of the opposition party.

As the SABC, is a public broadcaster, is managed in accordance with the developmental press theory, it can expected to have a sense of cultural responsibility and social accountability to inform its

audiences and assist in nation building while government expects it to provide adequate information to shape the values, attitudes and judgments of all citizens in order to enable them to participate in a meaningful way in social governance. However many subtle forms of distortions are often used to present the government in a positive way. Van Zyl (1996) supplies the following examples of where distortions may occur:

- When prominence is given to events of no importance or when the news is silent on an event of significant public interest.
- When partial truth of facts are presented as the whole story.
- When exaggerated fears are created in the hope to condition a particular view or response.
- When the news contains implicit conclusions which pre-dispose audiences to entertain interpretations or interests.

- For instance, in South Africa the government usually plays the most important role in development therefore development issues are generally presented from a state perspective and can become a *very* powerful form of social intervention.

The SABC has a close relationship with the government because it is a public broadcaster while e-TV is a commercial broadcaster and is thus not motivated to facilitate development of a democratic society like SABC does. The print media are therefore frequently accused by the government as being unpatriotic while in the case of the public broadcaster, the accusation is leveled against the poor standard of journalism, caused by the juniorisation of newsrooms.

The interviewees in government mainly expressed the view that current media practitioners were unpatriotic. This view was, however, negated by the news, current affairs and information policy of the SABC editorial staff. They described the SABC as the most intensive, all-inclusive, all-embracing and diverse news organisation in South Africa. According to the Head of Regulatory Affairs at the SABC, Dr. Ihron Rensburg (2003), the SABC sees itself as a catalyst in nation building, extending democracy, developing society and the economy, and in telling the South African *story*. It is expected of the SABC editorial staff to present stories in a fair and balanced manner.

Again, as indicated above, the target of accusation seems to be targeted mostly at the print media. The government's major mistrust seems to be centered in the journalists' lack of experience and skill to report news accurately.

All the respondents, especially journalists, stressed that the traditional top-down management styles are no longer acceptable within organisations including news media. The challenge is now to find new non-hierarchical and non-bureaucratic management styles that will instill loyalty, motivation, and commitment. This does not mean, however, that news media should sacrifice devoted work ethic in the process.

Finally, the study has established that the knowledge and experience of young journalism teachers at media institutions are generally insufficient. Newly qualified students from such institutions enter the newsrooms with little general knowledge of changing and challenging the media work environment. The situation might be saved by the inclusion of experienced media experts in the advisory board of training institutions to redesign teaching curriculum for journalism.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 51 1 Introduction

There is a general view that changes have been made to news and current affairs programs, but the changes have created news problems for journalists. Apartheid was easy to report on. It was a question of the good guys and the bad guys. Now the issues are no longer that simple and clear. They are more complex and need journalists with better analytic skills, which are often lacking. The fact that the industry does not pay that well either, means that media owners cannot attract the best skills into the profession. There has been a massive exodus of good journalists from the industry to government and the private sector because the salaries cannot compete. The solution would be for media management and owners to invest in training black journalists and give editors the resources to pay competitive rather than exploitative salaries.

#### 5.1.1 Multiculturalism

A common feature for the media when dealing with the public is the fact that journalists today are more and more forced in cultural environments where their own cultural framework of reference lack certain absolute necessities to be able to report on news. One of these lacunae for white journalists in South

Africa has always been their general inability to speak an indigenous African language. Such journalists are finding it difficult to report stories from the black township especially when they are forced to record an interview from someone who does not speak either English or Afrikaans.

In the interest of balance and fairness, journalists should ensure that the widest possible range of views is expressed, but proper account must also be taken of the weight of opinion that holds those views, and its significance. Journalists need to put their stories into context. A professional journalist, therefore, must have a multitude of skills. He or she must be good at reporting, interviewing, writing, editing, using equipment, broadcasting live, and have a basic knowledge of news presentation. An added advantage will be the knowledge of more than one indigenous language. It is therefore important that training must be offered in all official languages or at least in two indigenous languages.

### **5.1.2 Freedom of Speech**

Currently, there appears to be less government control over content, a greater variety of views expressed, and a more objective, neutral stance taken in news reporting than in the apartheid days. Journalists however should keep on defending

vigorously the constitutional right to free speech especially since the government criticism of the media largely stems from a sense that so many of the present journalist crop, were not actively involved in the liberation struggle. There is a fundamentally different view of the role of the media in ANC tradition, because the media were among the many instruments of the freedom struggle. Now that the ANC is the government, it is finding it hard to accept that the media will not be instrumental in the new struggle for transformation, and as defined by the government. Addressing a SANEF conference, Ferial Haffajee (2002) summed it up well: "While government's commitment to media freedom cannot be seriously challenged, there is a sharp difference of opinion on what the correct orientation is." What it seems government would like is a more Malaysian style of responsible media, which views itself as a nation builder. In other words, the press should be more of a guide dog than watch dog. The Malaysian media commits itself to "contributing to the process of nation building" and "recognises its duty to contribute fully to the promotion of racial harmony and national unity" (Berger 1999:26). In South Africa the situation is different. The recent storm of protest against the proposal made in the Broadcasting Amendment Bill bears testimony to the protection of the freedom of speech in South Africa, as the media fought back vigorously to resist the law and government tactics that fought to stifle freedom of expression.

### 5.1.3 Language Standards

A change, a South Africanisation of the type of language used in news bulletins and current affairs programs, has been noticed. Although a number of people are worried about the standard of the language as presented by the non-mother-tongue journalists, news and current affairs programs are targeted at all South Africans.

The former Chairman of the SABC Board, Dr Vincent Maphai, in the SABC corporate publication *Intercom* (2002) said that language forms a key deliverable in the SABC's mandate to entertain, inform and educate all South Africans through top quality broadcasting. South Africans, it would seem, generally prefer to watch programs in their own language and this preference is particularly true for religious programs, local entertainment, sports, news, talk shows, and developmental programs. Since listeners do not take kindly to change, gradual and almost surreptitious change is the most effective and least disruptive in terms of the ratings. The editors must, therefore, listen to their station output themselves and apply what they know about audience wishes by applying the adage: "Think listeners, not readers". They should make sure that every word can be understood, no word misunderstood, is conversational and does not sound as though the presenter is reading from a



printed page. They should write in clear, simple, and direct language because speaking simply ensures that all the listeners will understand. Finally, they should not write to impress, but use short words which have power and can be easily understood.

Journalists are therefore, challenged, to maintain high standards of professionalism and tell the story clearly and accurately.

#### **5.1.4 Live Inserts**

There is an increase in direct reporting and live interviews in both news and current affairs programs. This calls for a hit team of good, all-purpose journalists who can be deployed anywhere in the country to cover major breaking stories. The SABC already has a few such reporters who could be ideal for the hit team. Live inserts improve the authenticity of news because the newsmakers are made to express themselves live on air. Live inserts enhance the credibility of reports, as the listeners tend to believe live features.

#### **5.1.5 Frequency of News**

There is a perceived increase in the frequency of news bulletins, especially on radio stations. The respondents seemed to be

unhappy about this practice, as the journalists fail to update and re-angle the stories to make them sound fresh. The news is presented half-hourly, and if there is repetition, the listener is likely to switch to a rival station.

#### **5.1.6 More Relevant News Content**

The respondents felt that there had been an increase in local content of the news bulletins. There is more news readily available. News is more accessible and the opening of the airwaves has had a positive effect. News is now available in more languages on stations serving more communities. However, there is a degree of quality loss through translations.

Most of the respondents mentioned that newsrooms reported a dire shortage of experienced reporters. This lack of expertise does show itself in news programs and needs to be addressed. Journalists are keenly aware that their approach needs to address the context the listener and viewer needs. They are also aware that immediacy and competition are putting pressure on newsrooms to deliver more up to the minute news.

The role of journalists in a democratic society is to be the voice of the marginalised, the least powerful and represent the interest of the poor at all times. More confirmed, relevant news

It is therefore very important to inform the public of the things that are happening around them.

### **5.1.7 Relations between Government and the Media**

The relationship between the government and the media in democracies will always be a very difficult and uneasy one for the simple reason that the two institutions perform different functions for, or have different responsibilities to, society. A government in a democracy is voted into power on the basis of certain policies that it has put forward, and by voting it into power the citizens endorse those policies. Once in power, the government has to live up to its promises and deliver on those policies. It is, therefore, up to other institutions of civil society, including the media, to hold government to account on behalf of the voters. These in turn are the listeners and viewers of the electronic media, and readers of the print media. It is also important to realise that the media are not only watching the government but should keep a watchful eye on all those who wield power.

Whether the power mongers are in government, in business or, in fact, in any walk of life where there is the likelihood of abuse of power, the media should be there to report and explore it. The media and the government in South Africa are on the right track, even if the politicians do not like it. It is a relationship

that is not unique to South Africa. It obtains throughout the democratic world. Nevertheless, while the media monitors the activities of those who wield power, it should be careful not to abuse power itself.

#### **5.1.8 Opening up of Airwaves**

The opening up of the airwaves has been had mixed results. Increasing competition is excellent as hearing more voices and serving a wider community is necessary. So, too, is the introduction of localised and community radio. The element of competition has benefits. On the debit side there is still the opportunity to express him or her on the sport to hear from other media houses.

#### **5.1.9 Fairness and Objectivity**

The new multiculturalism, the use of journalists from different cultural groups, hearing people from other language groups and a greater variety of views shared all strengthen the perception of fairness and objectivity of news reports, and their democratic feel. In addition, journalists believe that the SABC is trying to give equal attention to all eleven official languages of the country. Fulfillments of this responsibility calls for identifying and exploring fairly and thoroughly, comprehensively and accurately the issues confronting South Africans; for reflecting

differing views on these issues, fully and fairly and in a balanced manner, taking into account the right of opinion that holds those views .

#### **5.1.10 Quality of Language**

The public does not like to hear their home language spoken badly. SAsfm listeners were particularly aggrieved about the poor English spoken by journalists and felt that this was owing to a lack of training. Since South Africa is a multilingual country, it is essential for every single reporter, producer and presenter to be able to at least understand a second language, but preferably be able to speak it on air. However, it is of the utmost importance for anyone who speaks on air to be able to use the language correctly - not only grammatically, but also as regards pronunciation. The practice of requiring people who do not speak their second language well enough to do so on air must be stopped immediately. Such people have to be identified and sent on language and speech training courses. It should not be a matter of choice.

#### **5.1.11 A South African Feel**

The perceived increase in local content of news bulletins made listeners feel strongly that these had become more relevant to them over the past few years. This, together with the

multicultural flavour, gives radio stations and TV channels a much more New South African feel. The South African story is being told in a South African way by the African journalists in their mother tongue.

#### **5.1.12 Journalist of the Future**

The journalist of the future will be able to do a number of jobs, that is, he or she will be multi skilled. Such journalist will be able to take pictures, interviewees for broadcast and print, and be able to do features as well as hard news. The journalist of the future will also freelance for a number of media organisations and will to a greater extent specialize in a specific area of news like crime or agriculture. The basic approach of the journalist may not change much because journalistic ethics, such as reporting truthfully and accurately will still apply. Although the internet has brought some new sources of information to the journalist, Greer (1999: 229) stated that news is still news and information alone is not news. The internet cannot think for the journalist because she or she will still need to know how to analyse agreements and construct own agreements when writing a story. The journalist of the future will have to embrace change and continually seek further education and training in their area of specialty. The journalists will have to keep up-to-date with the latest

technology and will use computers for more than they do now - both in researching stories and reporting them.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

It has been established that while the debate rages on between the government and the media about the quality of journalists in the broadcasting industry, the media owners and editorial staff are endeavouring to find means of investing in training for journalists, and giving editors the resources to pay competitive rather than exploitative salaries. Prof Makgoba (2002), in his address at a recent conference on *The Quality of the Media in our Transforming African Society*, mentioned that media whose agenda is suspect and whose journalistic quality is poor, do not deserve the respect of the public. Instead of being watchdogs they will be Chihuahuas. The only way for the media to realise their potential to nurture democratization in a civil society is to be staffed by professionally trained and well educated journalists. This would be likely to raise the standard of journalism to match that of international broadcasters such as the BBC, CNN, ABC, and CBC. The following recommendations are suggested:

- **Staff retention** - The media industry should formulate strategic staff retention to attract and retain critical skill in journalism.
- **Internships** - A relationship between tertiary institutions and the media houses will help to improve skills training.
- **Training the trainers** - Experienced journalists should be trained to be trainers of junior journalists. Such trainers must be incentivised to motivate them to stay for some time in the company.
- **Writing and reporting skills** - These are very important and need urgent attention in the newsroom. The quality of writing is generally very poor while the reporting skills are often lacking. Writing styles must be crisp, direct, hard-hitting and in tune with broadcasting - not stale or overwordy in getting to the crux of the matter.
- **Exchange programs** - Young journalists must be exposed to other newsroom experiences locally and internationally.
- **Tertiary programs** - The media industry should influence the syllabus at the tertiary institutions to prepare the future journalists for their actual work as journalists.



- **Mid-career training** - Short training courses should be arranged to in the form of refresher courses to retain journalists.
- **Gate -keepers** - There is a need to develop a new corps of sub-editors to improve the quality of news.
- **Culture change** - The newsroom environment culture needs to change to encourage a participative environment.
- **News and Current Affairs programs** - News bulleting must be timely and relevant. News items must be turned over or re-written at a faster pace to avoid too much repetition, while reporters should try to submit more than one version of important stories. New angles must be pursued and own programs as well as the competition should be monitored.
- **Specialist news desks** - Coverage from these desks should display insight and intelligence. They must cover the top stories in all available languages for bulletins and current affairs shows. Such journalists must be completely on top of developments in their area, and show evidence of expert knowledge in their reporting. Stories

from these desks must be well written, display high levels of technical quality, and angles must be correctly identified. There must be balance, accuracy and originality. Jargon must be avoided and the necessary background information included.

- **Newsroom benchmarks** - Newsrooms must cover the news in their regions (for instance Gauteng, the Limpopo province and North West) comprehensively for all services, as in the SABC. This must include locally news as well as that in the rest of the country. A newsroom must seek to use as much sound in their reporting as possible. The sound, voices and concerns of ordinary people should be sought out and reflected in the day to day news.
  
- **Benchmarks for bulletin desks** - Bulletin desks must supply listeners or viewers with fast, accurate, and comprehensive coverage of the news as it unfolds during the day. They should include the top stories, including the top international news (such as the war in Iraq, the plight of the Sudanese and the Olympic coverage). The writing of stories should be lively, vivid and conventional, while the presentation of news bulleting should be authoritative, engaging, lively, and interesting. It should be clear and the language should be used well.

Media management needs to address the following issues to provide the platform for good journalism :

- Create news room environment where beginners will be mentored, where they can grow into the senior who can, in their turn, future the next generation of juniors.
- Make avail budgets that would keep experienced journalists in the newsrooms and that would provide for training courses.
- Acknowledge the conditions and circumstances under which media practitioners work and which they have to cope with such as supply trauma counselin g on a re gu la r basis.
- Assess certain management values: If people are the biggest resources a company can have, the need to be treated that way.
- Become more involved in tertiary programmes to ensure industry - specific, well- tra ined beginners financially invol ved as well as in term of curricu la planning. The synergy between Stellenbosch University and Media 24 is

a good example of what can be achieved and University of the North is following this example.

- That senior journalists, as part of their job description, each gets a junior journalist assigned whom they can mentor. This should not be ad hoc, but something the senior must be assessed on in terms of performance evaluation.

### **5.2.1 Training of Journalists**

Training must be considered to be one of the most valuable investments that broadcasters such as the SABC and e-TV could make. In order to broadcast, two factors are crucial: people and equipment good people and good equipment. Although good equipment can be bought off the shelf people do not come in boxes. Every employee must be trained and developed to become a valuable asset. Training should be built into the career development plan of every single employee, in whatever discipline. The following principles are suggested:

- No reporter should ever appear on camera unless he or she has not only been trained in the various aspects of radio and television, but also in presentation.

- Senior editorial staff in the broadcasting industry such as the SABC should accept that there is natural progression in the careers of staff starting from radio, then to television news, and then on to current affairs programs.
- Not a single new appointee should do one day's work before being given an intensive spell of training.
- No producer of current affairs programs should be appointed from the street, however experienced he or she might be in journalism, with the exception of someone who has had extensive experience of TV elsewhere in the world, or in the private sector.
- No presenter should ever be appointed before very thorough consideration, as presenters are the most visible people and convey the image of the SABC or e-TV.
- The lack of basic practical skills can be improved through in-house and online training courses. But journalists would need time to devote to them. Managers must be willing to invest in their staff, and

actually encourage people to attend courses. If any media is to become exciting places to work it must foster the development of intellectual capital among the staff.

- The lack of language skills can be helped by encouraging people to read widely and often from an early age. Lock away television. Give children rewards to spend at least an hour reading. With time they will find their own rewards in reading. People cannot write unless they have read.
- The lack of conceptual skills is usually the result of an education system that focuses too much on skills and training, and not enough on education. Things people learn at University by studying philosophy, economics, poetry, history and the like become important years later.

### **5.2.2 2 Media Reform**

The public must be educated to participate in extensive debate on the part the media are supposed to play in building democratic structures and institutions, especially for the training of journalists.

### **5.2.3 Legal Reform**

The media should operate only within the restrictions that are justifiable in a democratic society. Media ethics and law are best learned experientially - on the job combined with the chance to reflect - rather than at tertiary institutions where students can only relate to these subjects as theory. Media organisations need to invest in training courses for their staff. Short and often are probably better than one long session.

### **5.2.4 Media Diversity Trust**

Government should relinquish ownership of the public broadcaster to the public, which would bring about new investment and new technology.

### **5.2.5 Professional Associates**

Since editors occupy important positions in media organizations, they need to form an association, across the spectrum.

### **5.2.6 Democratizing the Media**

The media need to be democratised and made accountable - not to the government, but to the public.

The public must be educated to participate in an extensive debate on the role of media and the kind of media system that the media and the kind of media system that countries in the SADC region need to build democratic structures and institutions.

### **5.2.7 General Conclusion**

The media exist in specific political, economic and cultural context. These contexts will shape the media and the media will also shape these contexts. While a lot could be done in the way of reorganizing the media to play its role more effectively, it will not succeed if other institutions those impacts on the media are not restructured or reformed or democratized. Journalists of the future will therefore need to be able to welcome change and continually seek further education and training in their area of specialty. They will ever be challenged to keep up-to-date with the latest technology in researching stories and in reporting them. These journalists, despite the change, will still use the same basic approach to the news and be guided by the same ethics. For these suggestions and advances to work there must not only be rules, but an independent judiciary to arbitrate and enforce. There must be a string of



democratically elected national legislature that also protects the media in the interest of the public and itself.

The society is in a complete transition, and journalists must be educated (conceptual skills) and trained (practical skills) to understand these changes to enable them to report in an accurate, fair, informed and responsible way. Education and training institutions will have to revise curricula to ensure that beginner journalists are equipped with the conceptual and practical skills needed to deliver productive juniors. Curricula must be "tested" in the newsrooms. The language issue must be addressed immediately because it was discovered that many journalists lack of language skills, multiculturalism seem to be the answer.

Media management must acknowledge its responsibility in providing the platform for good journalism. They must create newsroom environment where beginners (Journalists) will be mentored, where they can grow into seniors who can, in their turn, nurture the next generation of juniors. Senior journalists, as part of their job description, each gets a journalist assigned whom they can mentor. This should not be ad hoc, but something

the senior must also be assessed on in terms of performance evaluation.

Editors are challenged to encourage younger generation of reporters to read as widely and in depth as their older and more experienced peers and their counterparts would have done two or three generations ago. Junior reporters, therefore, need more guidance in organizing facts and writing good quality stories.

Every citizen or groups of citizen, must always have available to them the communication means to put their views and opinions, and read or hear opposing opinions.

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**APPENDIX A**

## Milestones in the history of the broadcasting media in South Africa

1923	The first South African radio broadcasts are made from 18 December in Johannesburg the SA Railways
1924	Regular radio broadcasts start on 1 July with station JB, run from a Johannesburg department store.
1936	The SABC is established by act of Parliament. It takes over the African Broadcasting Company.
1940	The SABC starts radio services for blacks.
1950	Springbok Radio, the SABC's first commercial radio station starts on 1 May.
1960	The SABC launches four black language stations - Sesotho, Lebowa, Zulu and Xhosa in June.
1961	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SABC makes the first FM radio broadcast.</li> <li>• By 1965 South Africa has a national radio service broadcasting on FM in seven languages.</li> </ul>
1964	Regional radio commences with the launch of Radio Highveld on FM.
1965	Radio Good Hope, the second regional radio station, starts broadcasting on 1 July.

1967	Radio Port Natal starts broadcasting on 1 May from Durban.
1975	The SABC buys LM Radio and relauches it as Radio 5, a national youth station.
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SABC TV1 goes commercial.</li> <li>• Bop Radio comes on air, an independent (from the SABC) station aimed at upmarket urban blacks in the PWV area and Bophuthatswana.</li> </ul>
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital Radio Commences broadcasting from the Transkei, initially targeting the PWV but settles for the Eastern Cape and Natal coasts.</li> <li>• Radio Thohoyandou, the Northern Transvaal's Radio Bop, starts broadcasting from Venda.</li> </ul>
1980	Radio 702 begins beaming its MW signal to the PWV from Bophuthatswana.
1982	TV2 and 3 are launched by the SABC for South Africa's black population.
1983	Radio Ciskei is launched. Radio Lotus, an English language station, is set up for Indian listeners in Natal and the Transvaal.
1984	Bophuthatswana launches BopTV.
1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SABC's Teledata is launched to TV viewers</li> </ul>

	<p>in the PWV area .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SABC introduces TV4 by using the broadcast signals of its black TV2 and TV3 services.</li> </ul>
1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MNet is pre-launched to apartment blocks, townhouses and other multi-dwellings in Johannesburg on 28 September.</li> <li>• Breakfast TV, the SABC's TV%, first goes out on October.</li> <li>• The SABC introduces Radio Metro, a township English station targeted at Radio Bop's audience.</li> </ul>
1988	MNet launches its business broadcast facility.
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Hope splits into Good Hope Metro and Radio Kontrei.</li> </ul>
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SABC introduces CNN, in its daytime TV news broadcast services.</li> <li>• MNet reaches 500 000 subscribers and launches KTV for children.</li> </ul> <p>The SABC merges TV2, TV3 and TV4 into a single channel - Contemporary Community Values (CCV)</p>
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A democratically selected board takes over the SABC.</li> <li>• Parliament passes the Independent Broadcasting Bill, initiated at multiparty talks.</li> </ul>

	The Bill wrests control of the airwaves away from the Ministry of Home Affairs and clears the way for the Independent Broadcasting Projects.
1994	The IBA is launched in March.
1995	The IBA issues its first community radio licenses. By 1997, over 80 licenses are to be issued.
1996	Black and white editors unite to form the South African National Editors Forum.
Since 1996	To date there are a number of private/commercial radio stations which have been launched, including e-TV.

**APPENDIX B**

- |     |                    |   |
|-----|--------------------|---|
| 1.  | Aggrey Klaaste     | Editor-in-Chief of Sowetan                              |
| 2.  | Barney Mthomboti   | Executive Editor of SABC News                           |
| 3.  | Connie Molusi      | Primedia  |
| 4.  | Dan Moyane         | Station Manager : Jakaranda FM                          |
| 5.  | Derick Badenhorst  | Provincial Chairman of SACOB                            |
| 6.  | Dumisani Hlophe    | Media Analyst   |
| 7.  | Frank Kruger       | Media Consultant at Wits and IAJ                        |
| 8.  | Guy Burger         | Media Director, Rhodes University                       |
| 9.  | Joe Tlholoe        | Editor-in-Chief of e-TV News                            |
| 10. | Joel Netshitenzhe  | Government Communication                                |
| 11. | Jovial Rantao      | Political Editor, <i>The Star</i>                       |
| 12. | Malegapuru Makgoba | Chairman of the Medical Research Council; Media Analyst |
| 13. | Mathata Tsedu      | Chairman of SANEF                                       |
| 14. | Mohamed Shaik      | Station Manager : Jakaranda FM                          |
| 15. | Peter Matlare      | Group Chief Executive: SABC                             |

16. Siphon Seepe Rector of Vista University -  
Sebokeng
17. Thami Mazwai Member of SABC Board responsible  
for News Portfolio
18. Tom Boya Provincial Chairman of NAFCOG
19. Journalists from various media: Radio and TV
20. . Representatives of the ANC, UDM, DA, ACDP, IFP, FXI and  
civil society

**APPENDIX C****Open Airwaves: A challenge for South African journalists today***Please complete this questionnaire as fully as possible.***1(a) Number of journalists in your company**

Small (1-5)		01
Medium (6 - 10 )		02
Large (11-50)		03
Very Large (above 50)		04

**1 (b) Categories of journalists**

Field reporters		01
Bulletin reporters		02
Editors		03
Stringers		04
Announcers		05

**1(c) Qualifications of your journalists**

No formal qualifications		01
Ma t ric		02
Ma t ric + Certificate		03
Matric + Diploma		04

Degree		05
Honours		06

**l(d) Please indicate the following:**

**Average age of your journalists**

18-25		01
26-30		02
31-45		03
Above 45		04

**Gender of your journalists**

Male		01
Female		02

**Race of your journalists**

Indians		01
Black		02

**l(e) Please state where your news reporters qualified**

Correspondence College		01
College		02
University		03
Other		04



**1(f) Do you conduct in-house training**

Yes		01
No		02

**If no, what training do you provide**

Self		01
Reporters expected to develop the		02
Company has training		03

**2(a) If you conduct in-house training, do you find it**

Relevant		01
Not useful		02

**2(b) Who conducts your in-house media training**

Service providers		01
Yourselves		02
Combination of above		

**3(a) How do you induct new journalists**

i) Qualified staff show them the ropes		01
ii) Company has policy on induction		02

**3(b) If (ii) was indicated above**


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How long is the induction period.

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**4(a) Does your organization have a policy on ethics**

Yes		01
No		02

**4(b) If "yes", how is your journalists trained in this**


**5 South Africa uses 11 official languages, tick the languages you use in your news productions.**

Sesotho sa Leboa		01
Sesotho		02
Setswana		03
Siswati		04
Tshivenda		05
Xitsonga		06
Afrikaans		07
English		08
IsiNdebele		09
IsiXhosa		10
IsiZulu		11
Other		12

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**6 Which is your target market/audience**

Local		01
Regional		02
National		03
International		04
Other		05
If other, please indicate:		
<b>7 How has the advent of the democratic order in SA affect your news coverage</b>		
Language		
Selection		
News Dissemination		
Reception		

**8 How have you been affected by the current regulatory authority**


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**9 What kind of relationship do you have with the present  
government**

Friendly		01
Hostile		02
Other (state)		

**END**