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An Analysis of the Exposure of Media Students in Middle Level Colleges In Relation to the careers in the Media Industry

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Abstract: *The best indicator of good learning process is dominance of experience in education otherwise known as experiential education. The level of exposure of students in relation to their careers has an influence on their professionalism later on in the job market. This paper sought to explore the extent which the training received in the middle level colleges prepare students for careers in the media industry. The study was carried out in middle level colleges offering journalism courses, in Eldoret Municipality. The target population were 72 respondents who comprised of 18 head of departments and 54 class representatives. The respondents who participated in the study were 63 respondents. The study collected data from sampled respondents by using Questionnaires and interview schedules. The findings of the study showed that the graduates from these colleges were not exposed, hence making it difficult for these colleges to achieve their ideal role as training institutions. From the study finding, it was recommended that Journalism training programs in middle level colleges should be tailored in such a way that trainees are fully exposed to contemporary media issues in order to cope up with the changing needs in the field of journalism and media industry in general.*

Keywords: *Exposure, Journalism, Students, Media Industry, Middle Level College, Careers*

I. Introduction

A good professional media is a core pillar of responsible governance and strong democracy. However the media students need to be efficiently trained to ensure that they meet the job demands. Nguri et al. (2009, p. 4) posit that there is a deterioration of standards in basic practice of journalism in Kenya. Minogue (2008) argues that, to raise the quality of journalism, studies should adopt a more fundamental approach to the understanding of journalism and the journalist's work instead of focusing predominantly on professional skills, there is need for journalism studies, also in terms of raising its own status as an academic discipline, to focus more on intellectual skills such as reasoning, argumentations, and persuasion, contextualization, the skills of historical thinking, description, interpretation and evaluation. Apart from this, Minoque (ibid) further argues that African journalism studies should also focus on the development with a close link to the media industry.

Within the framework of UNESCO's programme in communication and information and particularly in view of the commitment to building professional and institutional capacity for media training, there is recommendations that document media training processes which require media training institutions and schools in the world focus their analysis on the quality of journalistic training. Working closely, Rhodes University's School of Journalism and Media Studies, E. S. J. and UNESCO jointly agreed that journalism training should be equipped and be given a professional treatment. Under this context, UNESCO cited various forms of pedagogical bodies and institutions to be incorporated into a special structure known as school of journalism to be included in higher education institutions such as universities as well as private colleges and NGOs.

Mugo (2011) reports that there is a huge disconnect between courses on offer at these institutions and what is required of graduates on the job market. Mugo (ibid) regretted that it is employers who are then forced to spend more money on training to boost the skills of such graduates. Mugo (2011) argues that the many colleges being set up in these towns, some without capacity to effectively offer the courses they teach together with poor quality curriculum means that their graduates cannot match the demands of a competitive work place.

Information shapes our world and how we think about issues. However, those trading in it must follow particular tenets. For instance as quoted in the UNESCO (2007) Journal, "We can't have good information without good journalism. Despite rapid changes in media technology, the fundamentals of journalism have not changed. The journalist needs to research a topic, weigh the evidence and conflicting views, and present affair and balanced story to an audience. The journalist needs to be aware of the power of media and maintain high ethical standards. Good journalism is vital to understanding the complex issues of our world from government policies to sustainable development, gender, climate change and biodiversity."

The European policy manual on training (2000) observes that colleges have a vital role to play in making anti-discrimination legislation understood and enforced on the ground. They are essential in speaking on behalf of and defending those they represent as well as raising awareness, of both victims and potential victims of discrimination, who are all too often unaware of their rights, and also of the general public. The manual

identifies three training approaches outside formal learning. These approaches are identified as needs analysis, training of trainers and national seminars. The journal further points out that, there are many ways for media to communicate knowledge and information on equality of issues to the social partners and the wider national community. The journal shows that social participation by the community can fairly achieve these objectives of the media. Just like observation of other scholars like Nguri et al. (2009) this informal and participative approach to media studies is not given central positions in formal media trainers.

Hennessey (1997) like Nguri et al. (2009) observes in a similar tempo that the basic consideration of journalism training need to be addressed to a whole range of different audience. The content of the training will obviously depend on the target groups; enforcement authorities, journalists, schools built up, its own profile and acquired the necessary training expertise it will be in a position to offer training to promote equality. The organization should consider running well publicized seminars and workshops, particularly for lawyers, judges, officials in local authorities, private sector employers and services providers through their associations. It may wish to target a particular group e.g. prosecutors in relation to encouraging prosecutions for criminal offences such as incitement to racial. Part of the professionals skill of providing training is designing and providing training materials and information packs as a supplementary way of disseminating information. Obviously the type of training courses will depend on the profile, the objectives and skills of the journalism trainers.

II. Materials And Methods

The study was carried out within journalism training colleges in Eldoret town, found in the Uasin Gishu County of Kenya. Eldoret was picked upon because it is among the very fast growing towns in Kenya with many tertiary media colleges, however, document analysis from the documents posted on the Media Council of Kenya website, on best media or journalism colleges in Kenya, only one college from Eldoret was among the very many colleges in this town.

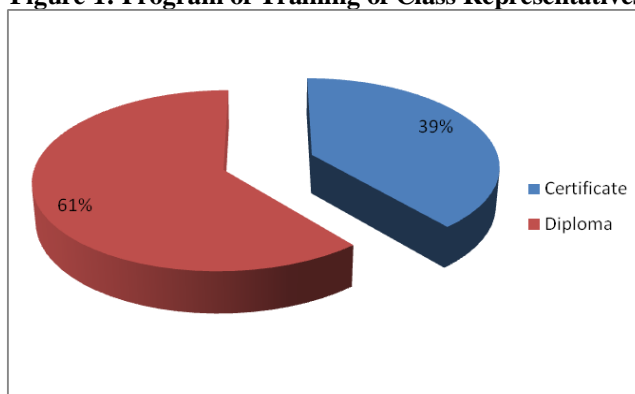
The study population comprised of 18 journalism training colleges in Eldoret town. The study targeted heads of journalism department in these colleges, they total up to 18 heads of departments. The study also targeted class representatives for all the three cohorts of training, first years, second years and third years. From the 18 colleges the total target populations of class representatives were 54. The total target population was 72 participants. However, a total of 63 respondents answered questionnaires given to them. This means that 9 other targeted respondents did not complete the questionnaire for various reasons.

III. Results

Class representatives Program of Training

When the class representative respondents were asked to state their program of training, majority of them (61%) stated that they were enrolled for a diploma course, while 39% were enrolled for a certificate course. This meant that the data collected for the study was collected from respondents pursuing different programs offered in colleges and hence the data is representative. Figure 1 represents the different percentages of respondents in each program.

Figure 1: Program of Training of Class Representatives

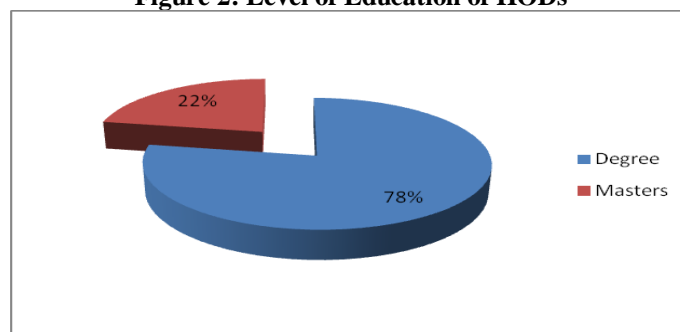


Level of Education HODs

The study sought to determine the level of education of HODs because it is directly linked to their competency in journalism training. When the HODs respondents were asked about their level of education, 78% said they had a degree certificate while 22% said they had a master's certificate. This meant that all the HODs involved in the study had a degree certificate and above and therefore their responses as HODs could be relied

on because they qualify to hold their positions. Figure 2 represents the distribution of respondents by education level as per survey questionnaire.

Figure 2: Level of Education of HODs



Respondents were asked to respond to the statements using a five point Likert Scale ranging from; 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Undecided / not applicable.

In the analysis class representatives agreed that; Middle level Journalism Colleges in Eldoret offer high quality market oriented training; Journalism training in middle level colleges’ balances theory and practical; Media colleges in Eldoret fully prepare their graduates for all careers in journalism and they also agreed that Journalism training in middle level colleges has a great emphasis on specialization. The class representatives however, disagreed that there college fully exposes its graduates to contemporary media issues and that there college involve students in media production. Table 1 shows the respective statements and the means for each statement as given by the class representatives.

Table 1: Student’s Preparation for Careers in Media Industry

	Percentages					Mean
	SA	A	D	SD	N/A	
My College offer high quality market oriented training	7.4	92.6	00	00	00	1.93
My college balances theory and practical	70.4	29.6	00	00	00	1.30
My college fully exposes its graduates to contemporary media issues	00	00	7.4	53.7	38.9	3.24
My college involve students in media production	7.4	38.9	7.4	00	46.3	3.39
My college fully prepares its graduates for all careers in journalism	24.1	61.1	14.8	00	00	1.91
My college has a great emphasis on specialization.	7.4	68.5	24.1	00	00	2.17

When the HODs were asked they agreed that; Curriculum in middle level colleges balances between theory and practical application as regards the teaching and practice of journalism. On the other hand they disagreed that Middle level journalism colleges in Eldoret offer high quality market oriented training and also disagreed that Middle level college curriculum links students to media and democracy. Table 2 shows the respective means for each statement.

Table 2: HODs Perception of Student’s Preparation for Careers in Media Industry

	Percentages					Mean
	SA	A	D	SD	N/A	
I offer high quality market oriented training	00	00	44.4	16.7	38.9	3.00
My curriculum, balances between theory and practical application as regards the teaching and practice of journalism	22.2	55.6	00	00	22.2	2.44
My curriculum links students to media and democracy?	22.2	00	5.6	38.9	33.3	2.83

Students and heads of departments had different opinions on whether middle level journalism colleges in Eldoret offer high quality market oriented training. The students had an opinion that the training was of high quality and market oriented while HODs felt otherwise. There was an inclination to belief the heads of departments’ opinion more than the students because of their exposure to the market world. To get some more insight into this discrepancy in opinions the study had this issue raised to HODs in an interview. Respondent 1 of the interview noted that employment to college graduates was a matter of chance rather than obvious based on the fact that they were trained. Respondent 2 when interviewed noted that in a class of 20 two or three can manage to secure a good job due to their dedication and commitment. The HOD when asked how marketable their products were stated:

I can have it that may be in a class of 20, two or three can manage due to their dedication and commitment. Most of what we are doing is to perfect in theory but you see when it come to

practical we have no option. But again remember that even some of the teachers trained in such environment that telling what is right and wrong is a challenge. This students if am to be sincere have a big challenge. Imagine finishing the course without seeing or touching on the tools of trade. Therefore in terms of job market and performance I will say that their competence is really low, (Respondent, 2).

The students however were found to be clueless about what the HOD was presenting to the study. Earlier on when asked, the students had expressed confidence that Journalism training in middle level colleges balances theory and practical and believed that media colleges fully prepare their graduates for all careers in journalism. When one of the HODs was further asked to clarify to be sure how practical the curriculum was, the answer was disturbing. He noted with concern that the curricular was majorly theoretical. He noted that;

These curricula for sure are theory based. There are very few practical assignments. Even if the curricula required practical, it won't be possible given the situation in these colleges. I have looked at ICM curriculum that I did, much is theory. However there is also mismanagement of ICM because no one from ICM based in London visits to see how the training is done. Colleges just apply and get permission to offer examination without physical proof of the existence of the college and facility required for training, (Respondent, 1).

Respondent 1 did not see any possibility of improving the situation to make the curricular practical. He said that this could not be possible because of the situation of the colleges. Most of the colleges had no adequate and efficient facilities to facilitate the practical aspect of the curriculum, and curriculums themselves did not have much practical components. The respondent also pointed a finger to the management aspect of the whole process. It was revealed that the custodians of the curriculum rarely visit colleges to make a follow up on how the curriculum is being implemented in colleges. As a result even the little practical aspect in the curriculum was not being implemented. The respondents raised concerns that colleges were being allowed to operate without being inspected if they indeed had the capacity to fully implement the curriculum.

When respondents were asked for general comment on journalism training in Eldoret, respondent 1 noted that the training was still low despite the numerous colleges in Eldoret. This meant that Eldoret can only boost of the quantity of graduates they produce in journalism but not the quality. Surprisingly the students had no idea that they were being given a raw deal. Most of them came to realize that they were half baked when they went to look for jobs. Because of unknown reasons HODs are aware that what they are offering is not of quality but still continue to offer the courses, admit new students and market the colleges to potential students.

Respondent 1 when asked to give a general comment on journalism training in Eldoret town stated that; I would say that it is still very low despite of many mushrooming colleges. Many of us who are trained get employed by chance. Otherwise some of the students decide to change courses. When I was a student I remember our lecturers in some areas seemed not to be sure of what they were teaching. Some of them had never practiced journalism and there pausing a challenge to the practice of students in the field. You know students trained in this trial environment that has just limited facilities, really require well trained and experienced personnel to train them. Like I mentioned some journalists are employed yet they have never even had a chance to see or touch the real tools of trade. This is horrible. Failure by the government also to check on the training might completely water down the career.

It is from this response that showed a possibility that HODs could be doing this poor work because they themselves are also products of poor work. Respondent 1 recalls times when lecturers were not sure of what they were doing because of the same system they went through. He however understands that all this poor work is because of the failure by the government to have a regulating body to guide middle level colleges in media training. Therefore, an indication of the failure of the colleges to achieve the desired results of producing dependable society journalists.

IV. Discussion

As identified earlier, while both HODs and class representatives view efficacy of journalism training in terms of availability of necessary tools and equipment, how training is conducted in middle level institutions does not prepare students fully for careers in the media industry. To determine whether middle level journalism colleges prepare students for careers in the media industry, an analysis was conducted into the nature of the middle level journalism colleges' role to the students under investigation in this study.

As outlined previously from the class representatives, though middle level journalism colleges prepare their students for all careers in journalism, they disagreed that their colleges fully exposes them to media issues that offer high quality market oriented training. On the other hand the HODs disagreed that Middle level journalism colleges in Eldoret offer high quality market oriented training. This is also perfectly captured in an interview session with one of the HODs who said that, "these students if I am to be sincere have a big

challenge. Imagine finishing the course without seeing or touching on the tools of trade. Therefore in terms of job market and performance I will say that their competence is really low.”

The study findings are in agreement with other research findings as discussed in chapter two, one of the few studies to explore middle level colleges prepare students for careers in the media industry was Mugo (2011) study which observed that many of the journalism colleges being set up, some without capacity to effectively offer the courses they teach together with poor quality curriculum means that their graduates cannot match the demands of a competitive work place. In agreement with Mugo (2011) Wamari (2010) also observed that the problem seems to be that many of these journalism colleges are not doing a good job. The ultimate result of this is that innocent “graduates” are knocking on doors for employment, unaware that they have been given a raw deal. The reality dawns on them when they notice they can’t effectively compete for positions.

V. Conclusion

In the analysis class representatives agreed that; Middle level Journalism Colleges in Eldoret offer high quality market oriented training; Journalism training in middle level colleges’ balances theory and practical; Media colleges in Eldoret fully prepare their graduates for all careers in journalism and they also agreed that Journalism training in middle level colleges has a great emphasis on specialization. The class representatives however, disagreed that there college fully exposes its graduates to contemporary media issues and that there college involve students in media production.

When the HODs were asked they agreed that; Curriculum in middle level colleges balances between theory and practical application as regards the teaching and practice of journalism. On the other hand they disagreed that Middle level journalism colleges in Eldoret offer high quality market oriented training and also disagreed that Middle level college curriculum links students to media and democracy.

In conclusion one can say that a general disagreement that middle level journalism training colleges in Eldoret town do not fully expose their students to practical media issues and don’t offer high quality market oriented training since students are not involved in practical media productions. This is also perfectly captured in an interview session with one of the HODs who said that, “these students if I am to be sincere have a big challenge. Imagine finishing the course without seeing or touching on the tools of trade. Therefore in terms of job market and performance I will say that their competence is really low.”

VI. Recommendations

Journalism training programs in middle level colleges should be tailored in such a way that trainees are fully exposed to contemporary media issues in order to cope up with the changing needs in the field of journalism and media industry in general. Failure to expose the trainees to contemporary media issues puts the colleges at risk of producing half baked graduates. In such an event, the graduates will contribute less to the society as in regard to the ideal role of journalism.

Media trainees would ideally establish working relationships with community groups as a practical extension of the above training. This could be achieved through the program where trainees and perhaps media workers themselves could engage in community service. In other words, in designing media syllabi, it is important that the training institutions and thereby trainees form some sort of organic relationship to the energies of the social struggles taking place around. The insufficient connectivity between theory and practice among middle level training institutions in Eldoret can result in half baked media practitioners who cannot be able to connect with the society.

Informing and enlightening the public is a difficult task. Few can succeed as practitioners in mass communications without mastering the principles and practices of broad areas of knowledge that comprise the basic ingredients of a College education. Society has become so complex, its specialties so numerous, and its varying relationships so involved that only a person with a sure intelligence and a comprehension of many facets of human activity can understand the meaning of events. And without understanding, any attempt at reporting or interpreting is not only superficial but actually dangerous to the security of a democratic nation.

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