

chapter 2

MEDIA EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EAST AFRICA

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Introduction

The subject of communication and media training in Africa has engaged scholars, trainers and practitioners in the last two decades, most notably under the auspices of UNESCO. In 2002, UNESCO produced a Model Curricula on Communication Training in Africa, and in 2007, another Model Curricula on Journalism Education was published by UNESCO. In the UNESCO Model Curricula of 2002, Odhiambo et al (2002) presented an appropriate theoretical framework, examining the role of communication training in the context of economic, political, social, and technological challenges.

Training in communication and media has been linked to the enhancement of professionalism by

the Government of Kenya (Kagwe, 2007), within the ambit of Freedom of Expression and the Press, and of the functions of the media in development. Similarly, the relationship between training, specialisation and democracy was discussed by Jacobsen (2007) who highlights the fact that professionalism demands continuous training. This is in addition to good working conditions and a favourable environment for media practitioners.

The importance of media training is predicated on the recognition of the critical role of the media in society. McQuail (1994), offers an appropriate assessment of the significance of the media on various fronts. In the economic arena, the media as a sector make great contributions as an industry that provides employment, and produces goods and services. One of the functions of the media that has preoccupied society and scholars is the media's political value, where they provide a forum where public life is played out, in addition to being a power resource—a means of control, management and innovation in society (McQuail (1994). The media have a role also on the social and cultural front: certain genres of media are an art form in themselves and media productions provide meaning as they are a source of definition and images of social reality.

Generally, the significance of media training can be linked to the discussion of the history of communication, media and development. African scholars like Ansah (1992), questioned the wisdom of the old paradigms of development within the concept of modernisation, he places greater emphasis on the significance of the media's role in the development. He quotes the position of Carmen on communication, who wrote that:

Communication is first and foremost a bridge building exercise, the foundation of which is trust in people's own ability to cope. People's participation is not something which can be mobilized or created from the outside; it is based on people's right to decide for themselves (Ansah, 1992).

This chapter thus seeks to discuss in detail media training in the East African region. It will attempt to analyse the factors that limit the role of media training and its impact on media excellence.

The chapter is divided into 5 parts: (i) General background to the chapter; (ii) Overview of media training institutions in East Africa: A historical perspective; (iii) Media training: A discussion on the factors/challenges that inhibit excellence in training for better practice; (iv) Suggested solutions towards mitigating the effects of the challenges; (v) concluding remarks.

General background

This chapter is anchored on the assertion that communication is pivotal to development. It draws on Moemeka's definition of development communication as "the application of the process of communication to the development process" (Moemeka 1996:6). Part of the failure of the development processes has been attributed to the relegation of communication to a secondary role, rather than its incorporation as a fundamental component in the primary process (Agunga, 1991). The mass media are a vital part of the communication process, as mass transmitters of information. Their effective utilisation by various members of society, can serve to increase the diversity of voices in the public arena, and not just the plurality of players in public discourse.

Media training cannot be separated from the other aspects of mass communication; indeed, there is a view that other aspects of mass communication have been responsible for the rise of mass media institutions, and have influenced them. A critical starting point for a discussion on communication and media training therefore, is the relationship between the society and mass media. Media systems have been described as a creation of society, thus reflecting the dynamics of the society in which they operate. There is a symbiotic relationship between media and society: whereas the media interact