Journalism Education Against All Odds

An Evaluative Study of the Undergraduate Mass Communication Programme at Makerere University

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Master of Philosophy Degree in Media Studies
Institute of Media and Communication
University of Oslo
Spring 2011
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... vii

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ ix

List of Abbreviations ..................................................................................................... x

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Makerere University ............................................................................................... 1

1.1 Department of Mass Communication .................................................................... 2

1.2 The Media Environment in Uganda ........................................................................ 4

1.2.1 Newspaper Media ........................................................................................... 4

1.2.2 Electronic Media ............................................................................................. 5

1.2.3 Journalism and Education in Uganda ............................................................... 6

1.3 Statement of the Problem ..................................................................................... 8

1.4 Objectives of the Study ......................................................................................... 9

1.5 Research Questions ............................................................................................... 9

1.6 Significance of the Study ...................................................................................... 10

1.7 Scope of the Study ............................................................................................... 10

1.8 Thesis Structure ................................................................................................... 10

CHAPTER TWO

JOURNALISM AND EDUCATION

2.0 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 13

2.1 History of Journalism Education .......................................................................... 13

2.1.1 Journalism Education Models ......................................................................... 15

2.2 Journalism Education Standards ........................................................................... 17

2.2.1 Benchmarks for Teaching Journalism at Undergraduate Level ....................... 18

2.2.2 The UNESCO Model Curriculum ................................................................ 19

2.2.3 Challenges Facing Journalism Education ....................................................... 21
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 25
3.1 Triangulation........................................................................................................... 25
3.2 The Qualitative Research Process ......................................................................... 26
3.2.1 Comparative Study Design ............................................................................. 26
3.2.2 In-depth Interviews ......................................................................................... 27
3.2.3 Focus Group Discussions ................................................................................ 28
3.2.4 Document Analysis ........................................................................................ 29
3.2.5 Observation ..................................................................................................... 29
3.3 Study Population .................................................................................................. 30
3.4 Data Analysis ....................................................................................................... 31
3.5 Validity ................................................................................................................ 31
3.6 Fieldwork Procedure ........................................................................................... 31
3.7 Challenges Faced .................................................................................................. 32

CHAPTER FOUR

DESCRIPTION OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION AT MAK

4.0 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 33
4.1 The Mass Communication Programme ................................................................ 33
4.1.1 Admission to the Programme ...................................................................... 34
4.1.2 The Curriculum .............................................................................................. 36
4.1.3 Description of Course Units Offered ............................................................... 38
4.1.4 Areas of Specialisation ................................................................................ 41
4.1.5 Mode of Teaching ......................................................................................... 44
4.1.6 Internship and Practical Work Experience ................................................... 45
4.1.7 Assessment of Students .............................................................................. 47
4.1.8 Collaboration with the Media Industry .......................................................... 48
4.2 Gaps in the Curriculum and the Training ................................................................. 49

4.2.1 Print in Relation to Other Media ............................................................................ 50

4.2.2 Community and Rural Media ................................................................................. 51

4.2.3 Journalism and Public Relations ........................................................................... 52

4.2.4 Courses on New Media ......................................................................................... 52

4.2.5 Optional Courses .................................................................................................. 54

4.3.6 Theory in Relation to Practice ............................................................................... 55

4.3 Challenges Faced at the Department .......................................................................... 57

4.3.1 Teaching and Reading Materials ........................................................................... 59

4.3.2 Lecturers as Teaching Resources ......................................................................... 61

4.4 Perceptions on Fresh Graduates of the Programme ..................................................... 65

4.5 Perceptions on the Mass Communication programme ................................................. 68

4.5.1 The Internship Programme .................................................................................. 69

4.5.2 Teaching Methods ............................................................................................... 71

4.5.3 Assessment Methods ............................................................................................ 72

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF JOURNALISM TRAINING AT MAKERERE

5.0 Introduction ............................................................................................................... 73

5.1 Dealing with the Curriculum .................................................................................... 75

5.2 Resources as Enabling and Hindering Factor ............................................................ 77

5.2.1 Reading Materials ............................................................................................... 79

5.2.2 Teaching Capacity .............................................................................................. 82

5.3 Utilising Media Contacts .......................................................................................... 83

5.4 Focusing the Curriculum .......................................................................................... 85

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................. 91

6.1 General Observations about the Programme .............................................................. 92
6.2 Gauging the Quality of the Training .................................................................................. 94
6.2.1 Lecturers and Students’ Perceptions ........................................................................... 99
6.3 Linkages with the Media ................................................................................................. 100
6.4 Ways to Improve the Training ....................................................................................... 101
6.5 Journalism Training at MAK and OUC ........................................................................ 104
6.6 Future Research Prospects ............................................................................................ 104
6.7 Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 105

Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 107

List of Appendices

Appendix i: List of Interviewees ............................................................................................. 116
Appendix ii: Guide for Makerere University Lecturers .......................................................... 118
Appendix iii: Guide for Former Students ................................................................................ 120
Appendix iv: Guide for Focus Group Discussion .................................................................. 121
Appendix v: Guide for Editors and Senior Journalists .......................................................... 122
Appendix vi: Guide for Journalism Union Officials in Uganda ............................................. 123
Appendix vii: Guide for Lecturers at Oslo University College ........................................... 124
Appendix viii: Introductory Letter Given to Students for internship ................................. 125
Appendix ix: Internship Evaluation Form .............................................................................. 126
Appendix x: Example of Term Plan used at Oslo University College ................................. 129
Appendix xi: Sample of Story Written by Student at MAK ................................................ 132
Appendix xii: Sample of Story Written by Student at MAK ............................................... 133
ABSTRACT

Journalism education has become a focus of research and discussion in recent years. Contemporary work on the subject centres on issues concerning the state of training at various colleges, schools and universities around the world. The debate on journalism education mainly critiques the general training; paying attention to the theory in relation to practice notion which scholars view as the greatest challenge facing journalism educators across the globe. Many institutions face criticism from media industry players who often complain that graduates of journalism schools lack hands-on practical skills which are a necessity in journalism practice.

Makerere, the oldest and most prestigious university in Uganda has been training journalists through the Mass Communication programme since the 1980s. However, critics say the training currently offered is lacking in quality. The programme’s curriculum at the time of this study was deemed old fashioned because it does not address the current trends in journalism and the media in general. It is from this background that I took an evaluative study of the Mass Communication programme to gauge its quality and relevance to journalism practice.

Right from admission of students to the programme, to the actual teaching and other related details, I set out to critically study the programme and the department and bring to light the state of journalism education at Makerere University (MAK).

Basing on information gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and observation; the study revealed that MAK struggles to meet the benchmarks of teaching journalism at undergraduate level as outlined by the World Journalism Education Council (WJEC) as well as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The university’s efforts are hampered by limited human, technical and financial resources necessary for decent training. A comparison of the MAK journalism programme with a similar programme offered at Oslo University College (OUC) in Norway indicated that resources play a vital role in the effective training of journalists. I also noted that most challenges faced at the department may be overcome with proper management, planning, coordination and creativity on the part of the department and the university as a whole. But against all odds, the department has for more than 20 years trained outstanding journalists in Uganda. Its most recent achievement was when it was recognised as UNESCO’s potential centre of excellence.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my dear mother Ms Justine Nalutaaya in recognition and appreciation of her sacrifice and love that got me to where I am today. And to the many mothers out there who have given up everything so that their children live a decent life. You are my heroes.

I extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Helge Ronning for his useful insights and guidance from the first time I expressed my motive to do this project. Without your wise supervision, this project would not have gotten this far. Thank You. My heartfelt thanks also go to the Norwegian government for funding my study through the Quota Scheme that enabled me to pursue a master's programme. Special thanks also go to the International Students Reception at the University of Oslo for their assistance throughout my course of study.

I am grateful to the staff at Makerere University Department of Mass Communication and Oslo University College Faculty of Journalism, Library and Information Science. Credit goes to Ivan Lukanda, Harriet Sebaana and Monica Chibita from the Mass Communication Department as well as Kristin Orgeret and Elsebeth Frey for their willingness to help me on short notice.

I would like to thank my friends Maria Roselynn Muzaaki and Winnie Namata for the brainstorming sessions that eventually led me to this thesis. I also thank friends Winifred Akeso for cheering me on to the finishing line and to Charles Nsamba for all the assistance rendered and words of encouragement. And thanks Annet K. Roenningsbakk for the friendship and research assistantship which enriched my research experience.

Special thanks also go to my pastor Annika and friends Naomi, Solange, Leticia and Robert of Shekinah Church for their love and spiritual support.

I glorify God for the gifts of wisdom, life and opportunities that are far beyond measure.

Florence Namasinga

University of Oslo

April 2011
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIMA Centre for International Media Assistance
DVD Digital Versatile Disk
FM Frequency Modulation
ICTs Information Communication Technologies
IUIU Islamic University in Uganda
KIU Kampala International University
LDCs Least Developing Countries
MAK Makerere University
MPL Monitor Publications Limited
NIJU National Institute of Journalists of Uganda
NMG Nation Media Group
NTV Nation Television
OUC Oslo University College
PR Public Relations
STM Science, Technical, Medical
TV Television
UCU Uganda Christian University
UMCAT Media Consultants and Trainers
UMCAT United Media Consultants and Trainers
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UoN University of Nairobi
USA United States of America
WBS Wavah Broadcasting Service
WJEC World Journalism Education Council
WIPO World Intellectual Property Organisation
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Makerere University

Makerere (MAK) is Uganda’s oldest, largest and most prestigious university. It was first established as a vocational school in January 1922 for Britain’s East African colonies (Mamdani, 2007). The school started with vocational courses in carpentry, building and mechanics¹. It was eventually renamed Uganda Technical College and began offering other courses in medical care, agriculture, veterinary sciences and teacher training. Later, it expanded to become a Centre for Higher Education in East Africa in 1935.

In 1937, the college started developing into a higher institution of learning offering post-school certificate courses. It became a university college affiliated to the University College of London in 1949. In June 1963, it became the University of East Africa offering courses leading to general degrees of the University of London. The relationship between the college and University of London ended and degrees of the University of East Africa were instituted in 1963.

In mid 1970, MAK became the national university of Uganda offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses leading to its own awards. According to Mamdani (2007), the university was first established to train a few elites to take over leadership in the newly independent Uganda but admission was later opened to anyone who met admission requirements.

The university was until the early 1990s a purely public institution, admitting students on government sponsorship. Following the World Bank’s liberalisation reforms, MAK opened doors to privately sponsored students by starting evening and external programmes (Ibid). This led to a surge in the student numbers at the institution.

At the time data for this study was collected, MAK had 24 faculties², institutes³ and schools⁴ offering a range of programmes to a student body of about 30,000 undergraduates and 3,000


⁴Business, Education, Industrial & Fine Art, Library & Information Science, Graduate Studies, Medical School.
postgraduates. Most of the faculties are made up of departments. For instance, Faculty of Arts, one of the largest faculties at the university, has seven departments which are: History, Geography, Literature, Philosophy, Music and Drama, Religious Studies, and Mass Communication.

1.1 The Department of Mass Communication

Little is known about formal journalism education in Uganda before 1988. The few people who had any form of training in journalism had obtained it from outside Uganda. Prior to 1988, aspects of journalism were offered as a subject then called Communication and Writing Skills in the Department of Literature, MAK. Eventually, the university realised a demand for a degree in journalism leading to the establishment of the undergraduate programme in Mass Communication under the Literature Department. In 1998, the Mass Communication department was formed.

Veteran journalists link the start of the Mass Communication programme at MAK to the President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni’s contempt for journalists’ poor training in the late 1980s and his anger at what he called recklessness. The president apparently pushed MAK to introduce a journalism programme to redeem the trade and transform it into a profession after an incident involving then Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda at a press briefing in 1987.

Formal journalism education in Uganda is therefore more recent than education for other professions like Law, Medicine and Education. Earlier, people who worked either in print or broadcast media lacked formal education in journalism. Before the establishment of the Mass Communication programme, anyone with modest education could practice journalism. President Museveni’s view was that journalism needed to be redeemed through professional training. A year after the incident (1988), a three-year Bachelor’s degree in Mass Communication was introduced. The programme prepares students for careers in journalism and or communication-

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7Oldest department in the Faculty of Arts. Mass Communication Department started under the Literature department before it became independent. See [http://arts.mak.ac.ug/lit.html](http://arts.mak.ac.ug/lit.html) (accessed 28.09.2010).

8A journalist reportedly asked Zambian President a personal question that his Ugandan counterpart deemed embarrassing.
related disciplines like Public Relations (PR) and Advertising. More information on the programme is discussed in later in chapter four.

The Department of Mass Communication is Uganda’s largest and most influential journalism trainer. The department currently has about 400 students in the various programmes and prides itself in training multi-skilled journalists as well as producing research in different areas. It was recently gazetted as one of UNESCO’s potential centres of excellence in Africa.

The department offers specialisations in editing and graphics of communication, television and radio broadcasting, photojournalism, newspaper reporting and public relations. It is home to journalism@mak and Campus FM 107; media projects that are run by students.

Information obtained from the department website states that it combines teaching theory with practical skills to produce “not just astute journalists but intelligent individuals as well.” Thus, in addition to studying Mass Communication theory and practice, students take two additional subjects such as Political Science and Economics.

Aside from the Mass Communication programme; which is the subject of this study; the department offers, master’s and doctoral degrees in journalism and communication. It also has a post graduate diploma in journalism, which emphasises the development of Mass Communication research skills.

In its 22 years of existence, the department has produced over a thousand graduates some of whom are practicing journalism while others have moved into communication-related fields. In fact during celebration to mark its 22nd anniversary, the department published a magazine and a documentary highlighting their achievements and future plans. Despite the success stories, the quality of journalism training offered through the Mass Communication programme has become a subject of discussion and therefore needs to be evaluated.

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12 The magazine is a relevant source of data for this thesis. See chapter three on methodology.
1.2 The Media Environment in Uganda

The development of journalism as a profession and journalism education in Uganda is largely related to the development of the media and expansion in or increased demand for higher education as witnessed in the proliferation of private universities. Uganda’s media has since the 1990s grown immensely from a state of one newspaper and radio station to a media industry diverse in type, ownership and coverage. Folarin F. Ogundimu (1996) and Bernard Tabaire (2007) attribute the dramatic growth to the liberalisation policy, which saw an explosion of private-enterprise media in Uganda. Peter Mwesige (2004) also asserts that the period after 1994 saw a remarkable proliferation of freewheeling private newspapers and the liberalisation of broadcasting, as well as increasing professionalism in the media.

1.2.1 Newspaper Media

The print media such as newspapers, magazines and books have not increased as fast as the radio or TV sector. Moreover, the oldest newspapers like the *Uganda Argus, Weekly Topic, Taifa Empire, Sekanyonya, Musizi, Munansi, Star, Ngabo and Citizen*\(^{13}\) have ceased publication. Currently, there are several newspapers operating on a daily, weekly and bi-weekly basis. The most notable ones are the *New Vision, Daily Monitor, The Observer, The East African, Red Pepper*, among others.

The *New Vision* is Uganda’s leading daily newspaper published by The New Vision Printing and Publishing Company Limited and is partly owned by the government. The corporation has several local publications including *Bukedde*, a popular local newspaper; *Orumuri*, published in Runyakitara; *Etop*, published in Ateso and *Rupiny*, published in Luo language. These local newspapers cover different regions of Uganda and are published in languages of the regions they target. *Bukedde* is for audiences in the central region, *Orumuri* for the western region; *Etop* for readers in the East while *Rupiny* is for people in northern Uganda.

Monitor Publications Limited (MPL) publishes the *Daily Monitor* newspaper, an independent and privately owned English newspaper. Established in 1992 by a group of journalists, the newspaper was taken over by the Nation Media Group (NMG) in 2002 and has grown tremendously both in coverage and circulation. *The East African*, a regional weekly paper is another NMG-owned publication. It circulates widely in Uganda’s elite circles. Other newspapers such as *Sunrise, Entatsi, The Razor* and *Message* are among other news print choices. On the other end of the

spectrum is The Red Pepper, a daily tabloid that focuses on sleaze stories. It also enjoys wide readership in Uganda and the most recent addition to the market is the weekly The Rolling Stone, which has become notorious as an anti-gay publication. All these newspapers are published in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, and circulate throughout Uganda. The Daily Monitor and New Vision have readership in Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda where copies are taken daily.

1.2.2 Electronic Media

Of all the media, Uganda’s broadcast media industry has expanded most tremendously. It has grown from one radio and television (TV) public broadcaster to about six privately-owned TV stations and over 100 FM stations. Today, people from all walks of life including those residing in remote areas can access radio. A number of private commercial radio stations have expanded their area of broadcast thus reaching larger audiences and providing information and news addressing the political, the economic and social aspects of life in addition to entertainment. Community and rural radio stations are also in place in different regions.

Radio Uganda, the public broadcaster, has subsidiaries such as Star FM, Radio Freedom, and Green Channel. When the airwaves were liberalised in 1994, many private stations started their broadcasts in either local languages or English. Notable among the private radio stations are Capital FM, Radio One, Radio Simba, KFM, Sanyu FM, Super FM, Beat FM, among others. These stations broadcast popular Western and local music as well as news and talk shows.

Television has also expanded and many private stations have been put in place. The most popular ones include Wavah Broadcasting Service (WBS), Light House TV, Nation Television (NTV-Uganda), Bukedde TV, NBS TV and Record TV. These stations focus on news and entertainment. The programmes and content broadcast on these stations is either foreign or locally produced.

Despite being a new forum in Uganda, the Internet is taking precedence as a number of people are increasingly turning to it for news and information. The Internet industry in Uganda has experienced a rapid growth over the past five years in terms of number of service providers as well as Internet users. Today, Uganda has over 11 licensed Internet Service Providers and over two million Internet users. This is an indication that the Internet is increasingly becoming an


alternative channel of information other than the traditional newspaper, radio or TV. Blogging, podcasting and web streaming have become popular among several elites in Uganda. Moreover, several newspapers, TV and radio stations have websites where readers can access their content and broadcasts. For instance, *The New Vision* can be accessed on [www.newvision.co.ug](http://www.newvision.co.ug), *Daily Monitor* at [www.monitor.co.ug](http://www.monitor.co.ug), and *The Observer* at [www.observer.ug](http://www.observer.ug). Most radio and private TV stations like Capital FM, Radio One, WBS and NTV-Uganda can also be accessed online.

In spite of the challenges of limited access and connectivity, the Internet has become an important aspect of Uganda’s media. As existing traditional media tap into the potential of the Internet, there is a need for journalists who can produce content for the Internet. However, it was difficult to find people who had skills in the broadcast media and the Internet since most journalists in Uganda before 1988 only had a background in print.\(^{16}\)

The growth of print, radio and TV media as well as the Internet has made the competition for readers, listeners and viewers stiff and subsequently led to the growth of journalism. It has also made the study of journalism more popular than ever before and has created a need for well trained journalists, making journalism education more relevant.

### 1.2.3 Journalism and Education in Uganda

The level of education for Uganda’s journalists has increased as requirements to membership to the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda\(^{17}\) (NIJU) forced most of them to obtain academic qualifications. This has created a need for more journalism training institutions.

Currently, a number of private universities and other tertiary institutions offer journalism-related courses either as diplomas, certificates or degrees. Communication or journalism programmes have become famous. For example, studying a Bachelor’s degree in Mass Communication at MAK is deemed prestigious. Institutions in Uganda are yet to offer purely journalism programmes as universities like Uganda Christian University\(^{18}\) (UCU), Kampala International University\(^{19}\) (KIU) offer Bachelor of Arts degrees in Mass Communication, while the Islamic

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\(^{16}\)This trend is attributed to the fact that the Uganda’s first media was print in nature.


\(^{18}\)A privately-owned university. Check [http://ucu.ac.ug/content/view/120/43/](http://ucu.ac.ug/content/view/120/43/) (accessed 25.04.2010).

University in Uganda offers a Bachelor of Science degree in Mass Communication. Other institutions offering journalism-related programmes are Nkozi University and the United Media Consultants and Trainers (UMCAT) School of Journalism and Communication, among others.

David Aduda, the former Training Editor at NMG in Kenya says there has been an expansion of journalism training across East Africa. He said this is good since journalism was an area in which it was difficult to get trained people for a long time.

The expansion of training opportunities was due to the liberalisation of the media industry, the liberalisation of the political landscape and the expansion in higher education, which allowed the establishment of private universities.

He added that the fast expansion of schools has not been matched with the expansion of trainers and training facilities. David Aduda observed thus:

Most of the universities, from my experiences after visiting some of them in the region, do not have adequate resources to teach media studies. In this case, I mean laboratories, studios both for TV and radio and the relevant equipment to support those studios. Many people who train in broadcast journalism leave school without acquiring the requisite skills necessary in the job market.

He further explained that there is a mismatch in terms of the curriculum offered and the requirements in the job market. “Media is a fast growing industry and in fact, it is driven by technology. Training institutions hardly adapt to these. Universities have not adapted to convergence, which requires skills in print, electronic and digital media,” he added.

Additionally, because journalism training in higher education is a recent phenomenon especially in East Africa, institutions have not developed a pool of trainers. There are few people with PhDs in journalism or media studies to train at the various institutions offering journalism programmes. The Department of Mass Communication at MAK faces the challenges pointed out by David Aduda as critics mostly from the media industry say the training at the university produces half-baked journalists who lack skills required in the newsroom.

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21Is a regional media company with headquarters in Kenya. The group’s has media franchises in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and is expanding its tentacles in Rwanda and Burundi. Check http://www.nationmedia.com/about_us.html (accessed 30.09.2010).
It is obvious that the growth of the media and journalism pose a challenge for MAK to keep up with the changes and at the same time meet the demands of the industry and the academic world. I return to some of these issues in addition to the history of journalism education, journalism standards and journalism education models in chapter two.

1.3 Statement of the Problem
The challenges facing journalism educators and practitioners throughout the world in their attempt to deal with the ‘skills and concept’ dilemma (Shawna, 2003), are no less intense in Uganda. A Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA) Report (July, 2007) on challenges and opportunities for professional development of journalists notes that despite the surge in student enrolments for journalism programmes, universities face challenges of facilities and curricula that do not match the changing needs of journalism practice. Some of the challenges the report notes include predominantly theoretical teaching methods and curricula and educators who lack journalistic experience. At the same time, universities like MAK need to properly balance curricula and training between the demands of the new technologies and concepts that are emerging from the technology with the traditional skills and journalistic values such as writing, reporting as well as ethics.

The rapid growth in technologies and the increasing dominance of computers has enabled convergence between the print and broadcast media. Convergence requires media organisations and journalists to produce their products across a wide range of available media outlets. This trend has had a profound effect on the job description of journalists and therefore calls for an all-round education. Journalism education at MAK finds itself at the cross-roads, being required to meet the needs of the fast growing media and at the same time deal with the changing media technologies. Indeed, Monica Chibita, a senior lecturer at the department, says in an article titled “Developing undergraduate journalism curricula: Concerns and Issues” that the challenge faced at MAK and elsewhere is the tension between balancing courses that make graduates marketable in the mainstream media and those that enable them to serve a ready and needy constituency in their country and also give them the versatility to fully exploit the opportunities offered by the new media.

The Department of Mass Communication at MAK grapples with these challenges with calls from teachers, students and journalists for an overhaul of the programme. There is a growing
conviction in both the academic and professional circles that the course does not adequately prepare students for journalistic practice in the face of the ever changing media.22

1.4 Objectives of the Study
The overall purpose of the study is to evaluate the relevance of the undergraduate Mass Communication course offered at MAK to professional/journalistic practice in Uganda. The study therefore aims at:

1. Gauging the quality of journalism training offered through the Mass Communication programme at MAK and its relevance to journalism practice in Uganda.

2. Pointing out linkages between what is taught in the journalism classroom and what is required of fresh graduates in the newsroom.

3. Suggesting improvements to the training.

1.5 Research Questions
The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the structure and content of the Mass Communication programme at MAK?

2. What gaps exist within the course’s curriculum and how can the gaps be bridged? For purposes of this study, the term gap was used to identify what is missing in either the curriculum or the training in the MAK Mass Communication programme. The term was also used to refer to an apparent difference between what is said or promised (in the curriculum) and what is actually offered or taught.

3. What perceptions do journalism practitioners have of fresh graduates of the Mass Communication programme from MAK?

4. What perceptions do lecturers and students at the department have of the journalism training offered through the Mass Communication course at MAK?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Institutions often carry out evaluations of their programmes. This thesis is a similar exercise for the MAK’s Department of Mass Communication. It is hoped that the evaluation will contribute to improving the programme. Since 2005, the department has been trying to review the Mass Communication programme curriculum. This study, it is hoped, will contribute to this process.

Several schools of journalism around the world grapple with the challenge of providing a university education and meeting the demands of an ever changing media industry (Zelizer, 2004). This study contributes to this debate and suggests the way forward for the department.

This study will therefore be an addition to the existing literature on journalism education in Uganda (and possibly elsewhere in Africa). I hope it can contribute to developing a framework to analyse how journalism training at MAK can be improved.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study aims at assessing the journalism training offered at MAK Department Mass Communication. The study only focuses on the journalism training offered through the undergraduate Mass Communication programme in relation to entry-level requirements into the journalistic field in Uganda. Focusing on the MAK undergraduate Mass Communication programme is not to suggest that it is the only institution that offers such a programme. I chose it because it is the most prestigious and oldest higher institution of learning in Uganda, and was the first university in Uganda to offer a degree programme in Mass Communication.²³

1.8 Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one introduces the thesis, gives back ground to the study, outlines research objectives and questions, significance as well as the scope of the study. Chapter two discusses the literature on journalism education, tracing the origin of journalism education, highlighting the shape journalism education takes across the world and the challenges institutions face in teaching journalism. The chapter also uses a summarised UNESCO journalism model curriculum for developing countries and other benchmarks for teaching journalism to explain how MAK can approach the teaching of journalism.

Chapter three discusses the research process and techniques that I used to collect data that were relevant to answering my research questions. In the same chapter, I justify the choice of each research technique and highlight challenges I faced during the fieldwork.

In chapter four, I answer the research questions by giving descriptions and a discussion about the Mass Communication undergraduate department and curriculum and the gaps between what is promised in the curriculum and what is actually offered. I also highlight the perceptions of students, lecturers and practicing journalists on the programme and graduates of the programme.

Chapter five analyses the journalism training offered at MAK and compares the programme with a journalism programme at OUC situated in Norway. A comparison of the two programmes was deemed relevant to paint a clear picture of the former. In chapter six, I further discussed the training at MAK and suggest recommendations to improve the situation as well as suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER TWO

JOURNALISM AND EDUCATION

2.0 Introduction

To thoroughly evaluate the programme under study, it is important to understand the existing literature on journalism education in general. In this chapter, I trace the history of journalism training and highlight the standards of journalism education across the globe. The chapter also points out the various models countries embrace and the challenges institutions face in teaching journalism. I further discuss the UNESCO model curricula for Journalism education for developing countries and emerging democracies. This model is further discussed in chapters four and five in comparison with the curriculum for the Mass Communication programme at MAK.

2.1 History of Journalism Education

Journalism education is an American invention. Teaching journalism began in the United States of America in the humanities around 1900, where news writing and the history of journalism moved from English departments into the beginnings of a journalism education that eventually expanded into ethics and the law (Dickson, 2000:1). In Europe, journalism training was offered on the job through apprenticeship as practitioners acquired their education in different disciplines. Journalism education in schools and universities in Europe did not take off until the 1970s. Africa and Asia either took on the European or American model or a combination of both depending on their relations or ties with the West.

Dickson (2000:vii) notes that the story of mass media and subsequently journalism education parallels to a large extent the story of the evolution of higher education from the classical college to the modern university. The history of journalism education is the story of how the concepts of liberal education and professional education have evolved and intertwined (Ibid).

Journalism education can be traced in the US in departments of English at liberal arts colleges. At the same time, departments and professional schools of journalism were established at universities. Even as components from other media-related fields were added to journalism programmes, the term journalism continued to be used as an overarching term for the field. When the word mass communication was introduced in the 1940s, it was used to refer to the entire
field as well as professional training for media-related fields other than journalism. It is also used to refer to a theoretical course called media studies or communication studies (Ibid).

Dickson (2000:2) argues that early educators deemed journalism mostly as a trade and therefore considered classroom-oriented journalism instruction of no importance. Dickson quotes Mirando (1995) as giving two reasons for that situation. First, printing was seen as a trade to be learned through apprenticeship. Journalistic terms like scoop, slug, sidebar, headline and by-line, gave journalism strong identification as a trade rather than a profession (cited in Dickson, 2000:2). Second, the primary values educators hoped to pass on to their students were not as concerned with gaining expertise as they were with overall notions of morality, refinement, maturity and respectability. These notions were tenets of a classical liberal education, the model for college education until the late 1880s (Ibid).

Originally, students mostly went to professional schools to prepare for academically-oriented professions such as law, medicine or education. The college role in education for journalism and other non-traditional professions had to wait until colleges moved away from providing classical education toward providing vocational education (Dickson, 2000:2).

As such, journalism education in the early years of the 20th Century was not well respected, even by some journalism educators. The conditions in education for journalism were bad and few journalism schools were equipped to provide comprehensive education for the profession (Farrar, 1993: 57 cited in Dickson, 2000:14). Part of the reason why journalism education was slow in gaining a prestigious place along with the established professional schools can be traced to its practical roots (Ibid). Journalism educators had a difficult time overcoming the commonly held opinion that journalism was no more than a trade. Academic critics argued that it was better to teach journalism in a trade school rather than a college or a university while journalists were of the view that on-the-job training was the best approach. However, as the need for professionalism gained currency, a number of people started to think of obtaining journalism training in school.

Dickson (2000:15) notes that journalism education became necessary with the rise of professional organisations which established curriculum standards to meet the needs of the growing discipline. He charges that two conflicting philosophies emerged from early attempts to establish journalism
education: one called for a very practical type of training while another emphasised the need for broad cultural programmes including a few technical subjects.

Scholars argue that early journalism educators faced the challenge of determining the best teaching methods. It later became evident that the most fruitful instruction in journalism was that which realistically duplicated the conditions of the newspaper office (Harrington, 1919’ cited in Dickson, 2000:23). It was noted that teaching students in a natural setting of work was the best option for providing the hands-on skills that were needed in the newsroom. Scholars state that as early as 1925, journalism educators were torn between the desire for academic respectability and the practical or technical demands of the working press (Ibid).

The president of the American Association of teachers of journalism in 1929, Edward Marion Johnson, identified three approaches to journalism education: teaching journalism as a social institution, as a craft, or as a profession. If journalism was seen as a social institution, journalism schools would offer cultural courses focused on that fact. If it were seen as a craft, journalism would be taught in trade schools preparing students for journalistic jobs. And if it were considered a profession, journalism schools would teach students about the nature of the services of the press, the evaluation of these services, and the methods that enable them to contribute to social progress (Johnson, 1930: 31; cited in Dickson, 2000: 25). At the time Johnson gave these views, journalism was hardly a major field in many societies. But since then, it has evolved immensely into a respectable field to the extent that countries are categorised according to the journalism education models they adopt.

2.1.1 Journalism Education Models

Journalism has become an autonomous field of study across the globe. This is reflected in the emergence of scholarly journals, annual scientific conferences with dedicated panels, sessions and interest groups and the development of a respectable body of literature particular to the field (Berkowitz, 1997; Loffelholz, 2004; Merrill, 2000; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Tumber, 1999; Zelizer, 2004, cited in Deuze, 2009). Current research into journalism focuses on journalists, their education, practices and the work they produce (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009).

Pragmatically speaking, journalism within the context of professional education means the preparation of students for a career in news media organisations and studying the work of editors and reporters (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996: 4).
Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (2009) note that academic efforts in journalism are drawn from communication and media studies as well as the less obvious fields of History, Sociology, Urban Studies, Political Science and Economics.

Rees and Cohen (2000) identify two main journalism education models. In the model that is widely identified with the USA, journalism is taught as part of the university curriculum. The second model is one in which training and skills are obtained on the job through apprenticeship. This model is common in continental-European polytechnics or Anglo-Saxon countries and came later than the American model (Ibid).

Deuze (2009:132) expounds on the above models by classifying them into five distinct types and identifying the countries embracing these models. In the first model, training is offered at schools or institutes located at universities. This model is for example adopted in Finland, Spain, USA, Canada, South Korea, Kenya, Uganda, Argentina, the Gulf States and Australia. This, according to Deuze (2009), is becoming the dominant mode of training journalists-to-be worldwide.

The second model is a mixed system in which a country may have both standalone journalism schools and university level training. This model, de Burgh explains, is common in France, Germany, India, Indonesia, China, Brazil, Nigeria, Turkey and South Africa. The third model is where journalism education is administered at standalone schools. This is common in Netherlands, Denmark, Italy and some countries in Africa like Ghana.

The fourth is primarily on-the-job training by the industry through apprenticeship systems. This model is what was originally known as a ‘British system’ of journalism education but Georgio Terziz (2009:49) says the system has undergone extraordinary transformations.

The last model comprises all the above characteristics and includes commercial programmes as well as in-house training by media companies, publishers, trade unions and other private or government institutions. This model, Deuze (2009:132) notes, is adopted in Eastern Europe, Cuba, North Africa, Southern Africa and the Middle East. A lot has changed since de Burgh published his work as to which country adopts what model. Many countries are moving towards the mixed system offering journalism training at universities, standalone colleges and on-the-job apprenticeship. For example, Britain originally identified with the on-the-job mode of training but now has over 27 universities offering journalism programmes at undergraduate and post-graduate levels (Sanders et al, 2008: 135).
Deuze (2009:132) in *Global Journalism Topical Issues* notes that most, if not all, systems of journalism education are moving towards the first or second model, indicating increasing levels of professionalisation, formalisation and standardisation worldwide. Whatever its shape or size, journalism education everywhere traditionally covers practical skills training on the one hand and general contextual education on the other hand (Deuze, 2006). In order to offer this kind of training, several standards and benchmarks have been put in place to guide journalism education as discussed below.

### 2.2 Journalism Education Standards

There are varying opinions as far as establishing appropriate standards for journalism education is concerned. The professional community usually calls for pragmatic hands-on preparation for the practice of journalism. On the other hand, the academic community strives to combine professional demands with experiences that will help students in life-long career pursuits.²⁴

Although the professional and academic communities have different views on what journalism education, they share the same goals²⁵ like professional ethics and skills. This creates the need to negotiate the process between the profession and the academy in achieving shared goals. This realisation has prompted both journalism educators and practitioners to come up with some standards on how journalism training should be approached and what the curricula should entail (Ibid).

Scholars like Rosen (2002) recommend that journalism education should be dynamic, introspective and continuously redefine its mission and its methods in response to evolving technologies, global culture and the needs of the media industries.

A number of journalism schools mostly in the US and the developed world have come to question the balance between two curricula aims in the modern journalism school. There is a general consensus on the two aims: One builds the basic skills of reporting and editing and the other enlarges the understanding that future journalists will place behind those skills (Ibid).

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²⁵ The goals include both skills and professional standards.
This balancing act between goals is not a new one for journalism education. Discussions between media professionals and media researchers regarding the relative values of practical skills and theoretical/liberal arts education began following World War II and they have grown and faded in intensity since (Dickson, 2000; Dickson and Brandon, 2000). Today, researchers continue to discuss the balancing of skills and conceptual content (Ryan and Switzer, 2001). Some scholars, however, urge the academy to abandon this theory versus practice discussion and instead focus on how well programmes teach critical self-reflection (Deuze, 2001).

Despite the lively debate and the many terms used in the discussion, journalism educators throughout the world continue to struggle to define the direction journalism education should take. The next sub-section gives benchmarks for teaching journalism education focusing on the UNESCO model curriculum and other proposed ways of teaching journalism. It is against these benchmarks that the evaluation of the MAK Mass Communication curriculum was based.

2.2.1 Benchmarks for Teaching Journalism at Undergraduate Level

Several researchers have come up with yardsticks for teaching journalism at undergraduate level, most of which advocate for a need to balance theory and practice. The World Journalism Education Council (WJEC) suggests that a journalism curriculum should provide a balance of theory and practice, focus on the core skills of reading, reporting and writing. It should also ground students in additional disciplines such as Law, Economics, Politics and Science as well as give students experience through classroom labs and on-the-job internships.

Related to the WJEC benchmarks is the UNESCO model curricula designed in 2005 for developing countries. It also advocates a balance between theory and practice. This study employs the UNESCO and WJEC benchmarks to evaluate the MAK Mass Communication programme. The UNESCO model was developed with responses from journalism educators with considerable experience in emerging democracies in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and South America. The proposed model curriculum aims at enhancing the capacities of media training institutions to create and provide high quality programmes and training for journalists.


The UNESCO model considers the following essential to journalism education; it should teach students how to identify news and recognise the story in a complex field of fact and opinion; how to conduct journalistic research; and how to write, illustrate, edit and produce material for various media formats and for their particular audiences.

The training should give students knowledge to reflect on journalism ethics and best practices in journalism and on the role of journalism in society. It should teach them the history of journalism, Media Law and the Political Economy of media. In addition, the education should teach them how to cover political and social issues of particular importance to their society through courses developed in cooperation with other faculties at university. It should provide a broad general knowledge and the foundation of specialised knowledge in a field important to journalism. It should ensure that they have as a prerequisite the linguistic ability necessary for journalistic work in their country, including, where possible, the ability to work in local languages. The education should also prepare them to adapt to technological developments and other changes in the news media.

The model curricula comprise 17 courses that form a complete teaching programme. The courses are designed to help students understand and master essential journalism skills. The curricula offer a set of competencies, course listings and descriptions for bachelor, masters and diploma programmes. This study focuses on the description of a bachelor’s course since the Mass Communication programme under evaluation was three years at the time data for this thesis was gathered. Below is the summary of the proposed model curriculum for a three-year undergraduate journalism programme.

### 2.2.2 The UNESCO Model Curriculum

In first year term one; students should be introduced to foundations of journalism, with units in: writing (incorporating grammar and syntax, and narrative, descriptive and explanatory methods); logic, evidence and research (incorporating critical thinking). After these, students should be able

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29. Newspapers and magazines, radio and television, and online and multimedia operations.

30. Including ownership, organisation and competition.

to think critically, incorporate skill in comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of unfamiliar material, and a basic understanding of research methods.

In addition, students should be introduced to knowledge of national and international institutions. This should be done by incorporating a basic understanding of one’s own country’s system of government, its constitution, system of justice, political process, economy, social and cultural organisation, its relations with other countries, and the place of journalism in the architecture of democracy. The other subjects should handle general knowledge; integrating a basic knowledge of national and international history as well as geography. Students should also be introduced to contemporary social issues of importance to journalists with training in applying analytical and critical techniques to news coverage of these issues. The curriculum also has to provide either Arts/Science courses.

In term two, the reporting and writing course which introduces students to basic news and feature stories should be offered plus a course in media law but departments may choose to offer it at a later stage in the programme. The model suggests that it has to be offered before students’ work is published or broadcast. In addition, Arts or science course should be offered.

In second year term one, students continue with reporting and writing. They are introduced to in-depth journalism plus other journalism tracks like broadcast reporting and writing for radio and television in addition to journalism ethics and any Arts/science course. Reporting and writing is continued in term two and students are introduced to multimedia/online journalism and digital developments in addition to media and society plus any other Arts/Science courses.

**Internship/Work Experience**

UNESCO considers four weeks the minimum length of an effective placement which should be done between second and third year. A longer placement is deemed to be more instructive. Where possible, students should be placed in national or international media and the work experience should be supervised and evaluated by a field supervisor.

In third year term one, reporting and writing is continued and specialised journalism starts. Students focus on one subject chosen. These courses stitch the substantive knowledge of an

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32 Such as gender, cultural diversity, religion, social class, conflict, poverty, development issues, and public health issues.
academic discipline into the craft of reporting. It is advised that subjects at this stage need to correspond to journalism beats and, where possible, to the student’s Arts/Science concentration. At this stage, some courses may be offered as one-semester electives.

In addition, newspaper workshop starts tackling reporting, editing, design and production. Basic instruction in photojournalism or broadcast workshops catering for radio and TV editing, production and performance are offered. Schools that require students to take both newspaper and broadcast workshops could offer them as shorter units or offer the broadcast workshop in the second term in place of an elective course. Other journalism electives are offered in addition to Arts/Science courses.

In second term, reporting and writing and specialised journalism is continued in addition to a bachelor’s project, journalism electives plus any Arts/Science courses.

Despite the benchmarks and standards put in place to guide journalism education, journalism schools continue to grapple with many challenges. These are discussed in the next section.

2.2.3 Challenges Facing Journalism Education

A 2007 report\(^\text{33}\) on university journalism education around the world notes that the growth in journalism has been followed by an increase in student demand for university-based journalism studies. The growth in enrolments is attributed to the continuing glamorisation of the field. This growth has also come with challenges.

Dickson (2000) says some of the most pressing challenges of journalism education are related to changes in curriculum brought by the evolution of the media and new technologies. The most difficult questions are related to its structure; should it exist as an integrated field, merge with other communication subfields or fragment into two or more separate fields (ibid)? One of the main complaints on journalism education is that there is too much theory and a contradiction between the teaching of practice and theory of journalism. One scholar says it is like teaching philosophy to someone who only needs to fix the toilet (Phillips in de Burgh, 2005: 228).

Critiques point out that many faculties remain fixed in the past, teaching the theory of journalism exclusively while others teach only tradecraft without proper grounding in ethics and other subjects (CIMA Report, 2007: 4). The report further notes that many programmes merge the teaching of public relations with journalism, failing to underscore the journalists’ mission as independent watchdogs holding the powerful accountable.

Journalism education, just like any other kind of education, is supposed to prepare students for the challenges of the journalistic profession. Over time, the new demands in the workplace, the evolving nature of journalism practice and the media in general and the development of new information and communication technologies have altered some of the methods journalists use and raised the expectations of employers (el-Nawawy, 2007). But scholars like Stephens Mitchell (2000) say there is a growing gap between journalism theory and practice. He further says:

> Academics have long whispered that journalism programmes are too professional: just a trade school. And journalists have long grumbled that some of them are too academic – filled with useless “theory” (Stephens, 2000).

Additionally, cutting-edge media technologies, which are transforming the media landscape, are out of reach for most journalism schools despite their critical role in the profession. It has also been noted that journalism education remains a stepchild at the universities despite growing enrolments. Many programmes lack the money and institutional support to reform and adapt to the digital age. Media scholars say the current journalism education is vocationally inadequate (Phillips in McNair, 2005). Michael Hann, a critic of journalism education says: “In their desire to get bums on seats and fees in accounts, colleges and universities are running courses that do not provide students, even after three years, with skills they need to get a job” (Hann, 2001, cited in McNair, 2005).

These sentiments are not new to Africa or Uganda since the media landscape has changed dramatically. Critics have now and again observed that the Mass Communication programme at MAK fails to meet the changing needs of the industry. Despite the challenges, journalism education is continually growing in demand and relevance across world. As the media and

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communication industry have grown in leaps and bounds, so has the demand for education in the field, grown worldwide. The same is true in Africa.

**2.3 Journalism Education in Africa**

Research on media education across Africa indicates that entry-level journalism training is gradually increasing resulting from the growth of the media and the communication industry (Morna and Khan, 2001, cited in de Beer, 2009:138). Minabere Ibelema and Tanja Bosch (2009:329) say journalism education in Africa has advanced considerably with countries offering degrees, diplomas or certificates in journalism or mass communication.

Indeed, an online database[^35] on African Journalism schools[^36] indicates that journalism education is mostly provided at university departments or schools focusing on journalism or mass communication or both. Most African countries embrace a mixed system offering journalism education both at universities and standalone schools with elements of on-job training[^37]. A survey of media training schools in Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Tanzania, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa conducted in 2001 indicates that in recent years, training programmes have emerged in all these countries resulting in a sprawling of journalism education (cited in de Beer, 2009).

In East Africa, where Uganda is situated, journalism training dates back to the early 1960’s when the International Press Institute ran a series of six-month training programmes in Nairobi, Kenya, for journalists from English-speaking African countries[^38]. Thus, the School of Journalism at the University of Nairobi was opened in 1968 to cater for students from Eastern Africa.

Today, Kenya has various institutions offering journalism training most notable being the University of Nairobi School of Journalism and Daystar University, which were recognised as potential centres of excellence by UNESCO in 2007[^39]. In Tanzania, the University of Dar-es-


Salaam is widely known for offering various journalism programmes. In Uganda, journalism education is mostly offered at universities through mass communication programmes. Ibelema and Bosch (in de Beer, 2009) name Makerere University in Uganda as one of the notable institutions offering journalism education in Africa.

In spite of the spiralling of training institutions, the journalism training offered in these institutions has become a subject of scrutiny. A study on the standards of journalism education conducted in 2005 notes that the standards in these institutions are not very high. The study further revealed that journalism courses offered in various universities tend to be too theoretical and do not match the needs of the working environment (study quoted in de Beer, 2009).

A report titled *Status of Journalism Education in South Africa* indicates that many African universities face the same challenges as other journalism institutions around the world. The challenges include how to strike a balance between research productivity expected at the university level and professional skills instruction expected by media organisations; how universities keep up with ever-changing new technologies; and how universities teach classes that continue to increase in size because of the popularity of journalism as an area of study. This justifies an evaluation study of MAK’s journalism programme.

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CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction
To find answers to the research questions outlined in chapter one, I used a number of research techniques to obtain appropriate data. This chapter discusses the methodological approaches employed to collect and analyse data for the study. It also justifies the choices of selected research techniques. Being an evaluation study, qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were deemed the best options to get opinions and attitudes of respondents for the study. By employing qualitative research approaches, I sought to undertake a detailed investigative assessment of journalism training at MAK through the Mass Communication programme.

Social researcher Silverman (2005:99) defines methodology as a choice a researcher makes about cases to study, techniques of data collection and forms of data analysis in planning and executing a study. Jensen et al (1991) elaborate that research methodology is a structured set of procedures and instruments by which empirical phenomena are registered, documented and interpreted. This chapter also presents the procedures on how the research was conducted. It explains the design, techniques used and fieldwork experience with details of the data gathering process.

The purpose of this study is not to generalise aspects of journalism education in Uganda, but to bring to light the training offered at MAK, point to a direction for analysing education for journalists and challenges institutions that offer the training face.

3.1 Triangulation
The choice of the research design was guided by the research problem and objectives (Silverman, 2005; Hamersley, 1992). I employed various qualitative approaches because they provided the best option for evaluating the programme under study. This strategy of using various research techniques is what Denzin (1978, cited in Patton, 1991) termed as triangulation; which is the use of more than one approach in investigating a phenomena. Denzin (1978b) as well as Jankowski and Wester (1991: 62) identify four types of triangulation which are: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. This study employed data triangulation (use of a variety of data sources like students, lecturers, practicing journalists and documents); and methodology triangulation (use of multiple methods like in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation and document analysis).
Using a variety of qualitative methods enabled me to counteract the shortcomings of using a single method. Their strengths vis-a-vis their suitability for the study enabled me to gather detailed information about the Mass Communication programme and also validate the findings. Therefore, data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions were validated through observations and document analysis.

3.2 The Qualitative Research Process

The qualitative research process requires conducting research in the field mainly in natural surroundings and trying to capture the normal flow of events (Brynman, 2004; Doyle, 2004). To conduct an effective qualitative research, it is important to understand the meaning people ascribe to their social situations and activities (Jankowski & Wester, 1991). What the two scholars say can only be achieved when a researcher is in close proximity with the phenomena under study. Therefore, I used in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observation methods that allowed interaction with the study respondents in a natural setting.

Any research whose goal is to explain people's experiences with a phenomenon is best undertaken using qualitative methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:19). It is from this point of view that I used in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation and document analysis to get comprehensive information from students, lecturers and practicing journalists for evaluating the Mass Communication programme.

The research process helped me to study the journalism training offered at MAK by comparing views of current and former students of the programme, lecturers and journalists in the media. The rest of the chapter explains the research design, methods for data collection and how I used them to achieve the study objectives and find answers to my research questions.

3.2.1 Comparative Study Design

The study employed a comparative approach to evaluate the Mass Communication programme by soliciting information from lecturers and students at the department and journalism practitioners from various media houses in Uganda. Comparing the views of these respondents was deemed relevant in identifying the gaps in journalism training offered at MAK. The journalism training offered at MAK was also compared to the benchmarks and standards (in section 2.2 and 2.2.1) for teaching journalism which were outlined in chapter two.
The comparative approach was used to identify and analyse similarities and differences between the MAK Mass Communication programme and the journalism course offered at OUC Faculty of Journalism, Library and Information Science hereafter referred to as Faculty of Journalism. Views on the OUC journalism programme were obtained from the head of studies and a couple of lecturers at the faculty. Comparing the MAK programme with one offered at OUC does not mean that I treated both programmes profoundly and equally. In selecting the OUC programme, I was aware that it is not comparable to MAK because two institutions are situated in countries at different levels of development. But I deemed it important to study education practices in two different cultural settings. This was aimed at putting MAK’s experience into perspective.

The OUC case was vital in analysing how the MAK Department of Mass Communication can approach journalism training basing on what I regarded as good practices. The views from respondents of OUC Faculty of Journalism were used to devise solutions to challenges the Mass Communication department faces.

3.2.2 In-depth Interviews

A number of social researchers affirm that one of the major ways qualitative researchers can understand a phenomenon, perceptions, feelings and knowledge of people is through in-depth intensive interviewing (Steiner & Svend, 2009; Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2003).

Steiner and Svend (2009) identify different forms of interviews; the most notable being structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are standardised in a way that the interviewer reads all the questions from an interview guide and rarely deviates from it (Ibid). In this case, all interviewees are asked the same questions in the same order. Semi-structured questions on the other hand are more flexible as the researcher can adjust questions depending on how the interviewee answers earlier questions in order to clarify the responses and to follow promising new lines of inquiry or to probe for more details (Ibid, Doyle; 2002:11-23).

Jensen (2002) and Jankowski & Wester (1991) further explain that the purpose of in-depth interviews is not to identify objective truth or to conclusively test hypotheses but to enable the researcher understand the experiences of the participants and the conclusions they draw from them. Creswell (2003) adds that in-depth interviews are appropriate for soliciting a rich, detailed and a holistic picture of people’s experiences.
I used semi-structured interviews with interview guides for the different groups of respondents to partly answer the first research question and the other three research questions. I based the choice of in-depth semi-structured interviews on their open-ended nature, flexibility and compatibility with the subject under study. I designed open-ended questions to elicit detailed information on the subjects’ experiences or views about the Mass Communication programme.

Interviewees for the study included former students of the programme who are currently working as journalists in the media, lecturers at the Department of Mass Communication, and senior journalists and editors who supervise graduates of the department. In-depth one-on-one interviews with these respondents yielded a broad range of information regarding the programme under evaluation.

I used interview guides with open-ended questions which allowed reformulation of new questions basing on respondents’ revelations. It gave respondents freedom to explicitly elaborate their answers, which would not be possible if questions required yes or no answers. The guides served as a tool to direct the interviews. Each interview took 40 to 60 minutes in a setting that allowed intensive one-on-one conversation. I recorded the interviews and took notes whenever possible. I later on transcribed the interviews and arranged the data in themes as shown in chapter five.

3.2.3 Focus Group Discussions

A focus group is a form of interview that involves between four to eight people discussing a given topic. The purpose of such technique is to gather large amounts of data from many participants in a short period of time (Patton, 1990: 335).

I used the focus group discussion technique to obtain information from a relatively larger group of current students of the Mass Communication programme. This method enabled me get information from about 12 students at once in a short time compared to the one-on-one interview method where one student would have been interviewed at a time. As a moderator of the discussions, I briefed students on the purpose of the study to enable them better explain their experiences with the programme. This enabled me get students’ views on the programme’s curriculum, the general training and challenges students deem inhibiting to the effective teaching at the department. The discussions were guided by an open-ended interview guide and follow-up questions were also asked depending on information obtained in the course of the discussions.

41 A list of questions or issues to be explored during an interview (Patton, 1990: 283).
I held two focus group discussions; one for third-year students and another for second-year students. Each focus group had six male and female students. The discussions, which were recorded, lasted between 60 and 80 minutes. I also took down some notes. Prior to the discussion, students introduced themselves, giving details of academic interests. Some of their names are used whenever their views are paraphrased or used as direct quotes in chapter four.

### 3.2.4 Document Analysis

An evaluation of the Mass Communication course would be incomplete without studying documents on the course and the department. Analysing such documents enabled me to get information to answer the first research question which sought to discuss the structure and content of the programme. The documents included a DVD[^42] about the department and documents about the department, the programme and MAK. They also included the curriculum, magazines relevant to the study, exam papers, course outlines and reading lists of the various journalism courses offered under the wider Mass Communication programme. A substantial amount of data was gathered from the Internet. Newspaper archives, the department’s, MAK’s website and other sites provided valuable information that further illuminated the study. Using the Internet was a faster and cheaper way of obtaining data.

These documents provided enormous amounts of background information that would not have been obtained through interviews, observation or focus group discussions. As Patton asserts, documents are a basic source of information about programme decisions and background or activities (1990: 233). They yield excerpts or quotations from programme records, official publications or reports. Analysing these documents enabled me to gain insights or angles that were useful in formulating questions for interviews.

### 3.2.5 Observation

Silverman (2005) and Deacon et al., (1999) note that observation enables a researcher to study the respondent’s interactions and behaviour in their real-life setting. Observation as a data gathering technique takes the forms of simple observation and participant observation. In the former type, the researcher has no relationship with the subject under observation and people remain unaware of the researcher’s activities. Participant observation requires the researcher to be part of a group under study for an extended period of time, observing behaviour, listening to what is said in

[^42]: The DVD titled *Makerere University Department of Mass Communication: 20 years of professionalising journalism & Communication in Uganda* was made in August 2009 when the department was marking two decades of existence.
conversations both between others and with the fieldworker and asking questions (Jankowski & Wester, 1991:61). Data from this method is a detailed description of people’s behaviour, attitudes, actions, interactions and organisational processes observed (Patton, 1990: 10).

This study could not adopt participant observation and take part in activities like attending lecturers because the university was officially closed in June and July, 2010 when the fieldwork was undertaken. But since the department office was open, I adopted simple observation to study what generally goes on at the department. Simple observation enabled me to study the general resource situation at the department. For instance, I personally observed the computer situation, office space, and did a head count of administrative staff at the department. Information on books, library resources at the department and university in general were obtained through visiting the libraries and observing.

Relevant observations were written down. These were used to either make further inquiries from respondents about specific issues relevant to the study or to validate information obtained through interviews, document analysis and focus group discussions.

Although this method is cheap, it is often criticised for heavily relying on a researcher’s perceptions about the subject under study. To overcome the bias, scholars Wimmer & Dominic (1997) advice that more than one observer is used but this was not possible as it involves extra costs. But I used other methods earlier discussed to validate the findings from the observations.

### 3.3 Study Population

Since this study aims at evaluating the Mass Communication programme, respondents were selected on the basis of their experience with the programme. As such, respondents are current or former students of the programme, lecturers/officials at the department and at OUC, senior journalists and editors who employ and supervise products of the department. Therefore, 12 students were interviewed in a focus group setting, 12 lecturers and officials from MAK and OUC, over 14 journalists (former students of the department working as journalists in the print and broadcast media) and editors were interviewed in a one-on-one setting.
3.4 Data Analysis

Huberman and Miles (1994) define data analysis as the combination of techniques for data reduction, display and drawing conclusions. These techniques are employed in the study design, during and after data collection. Stages such as choosing the subject of study, developing research questions, setting objectives, selecting the relevant literature, methodologies, which data to transcribe and use; were aimed at selecting important data pertinent to evaluating the Mass Communication programme. The data were summarised, interpreted and displayed as text. By aligning respondents’ responses in relation to the research questions, I drew out the similarities and differences in the data and arranged these into themes grounded in the research questions.

3.5 Validity

Validity is defined as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers (Neuendorf, 2002). Validity seeks to answer the question: is the study accurately measuring what it set out to do in the research questions (internal validity) and can the results of the study be generalised across populations, settings, time (external validity) (Ibid). To obtain validity in this study, respondents were selected on the basis of their involvement or experience with the Mass Communication department so they were knowledgeable about the topic, the interview guides were carefully crafted to answer the research questions and the use of several data collection methods and sources enabled me to corroborate the findings in order to identify and clarify any gaps.

My aim was not to generalise the findings to a broader population but to give a picture of journalism education at MAK by providing a thorough evaluation of the programme.

3.6 Fieldwork Procedure

Fieldwork data for this study was collected between 7th June and 31st July, 2010 in Kampala, Uganda and between October 2010 and February 2011 at OUC in Oslo, Norway through interviews, focus group discussions, making observations of what goes on at the department, and analysing documents about the department and the undergraduate Mass Communication programme and about the journalism programme at OUC. Before the fieldwork, contact was made with officials at the Department of Mass Communication and other key informants in Uganda and Oslo to explain my research motives. I also contacted various respondents and set appointments for interviews and the focus group discussion.
### 3.7 Challenges Faced

The main problem faced during the fieldwork was accessing respondents from the Mass Communication department since the study was conducted at the time when MAK was on holiday. Many lecturers were busy and wanted me to wait until the university officially opened. This was difficult since I had limited time to gather the data for this study.

In addition, accessing some documents about the programme was difficult since the department’s mini-library was closed throughout the time of the research. Nevertheless, I managed to collect relevant data through interviews, focus group discussion, observation and document analysis, which is presented and analysed in the next chapter.

In a positive light, I was privileged to have unlimited access to fast Internet through the University of Oslo network. This enabled me to access information relevant to my research.
CHAPTER FOUR

DESCRIPTION OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION AT MAK

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the training offered at the MAK Department of Mass Communication in regard to its relevance to journalistic practice. The discussion is developed from a description of the department and the Mass Communication programme; the gaps between what are considered the ideals of journalism education and the reality at MAK; perceptions on the programme and its graduates. The description is anchored in the research objectives and questions stated in chapter one.

The data are presented in an attempt to answer the research questions outlined in chapter 1.5. The information was obtained using document analysis, interviews, focus group discussions and observation. The data are arranged according to the study’s research questions. I discuss the curriculum and highlight courses offered in the three academic years, the modes of teaching and assessment. Having used a comparative approach, attempts are made to compare respondents’ views and also compare the programme under evaluation with the UNESCO model curriculum, benchmarks for teaching journalism at undergraduate level and undergraduate journalism programme offered at OUC.

4.1 The Mass Communication Programme

The first research question required a description of the Mass Communication Department with all its aspects and the undergraduate programme. This section therefore gives that description.

The Department of Mass Communication is run by the Head of Department who is assisted by two administrative assistants, an office messenger in addition to nine full-time and a number of part-time lecturers. One of the lecturers act as course coordinator and two others work as Assistant Coordinator and Internship Coordinator. Of the nine full-time lecturers, three are PhD holders and serve as senior lecturers. Only one of these, Goretti Linda Nassanga43, is associate professor. The rest either hold bachelor’s or master’s degree and therefore work as teaching assistants and assistant lecturers respectively.

43Is the only associate professor at the Department of Mass Communication. She was accorded the title in July 2010.
The lecturers share about seven offices, four of which are located in the same premises at the department while the rest are scattered elsewhere in the Faculty of Arts building.

The department has a mini-library and also makes use of the Faculty of Arts library as well as the university main library. The book bank is stocked with text books for journalistic and other communication disciplines.

The department also has a computer laboratory, and training radio station (Campus FM 107) plus an online newspaper to enable students practice journalism. The department also has a modest number of still, digital and video cameras for photojournalism and TV classes.

With an average population of 400 students, the department just like the rest of the university offers day and evening classes. Day classes run from 7:00am to around 5:00pm while the evening classes run between 5:00pm and 10:00pm.

4.1.1 Admission to the programme

Every academic year hundreds of students, mostly fresh from high school, apply for the prestigious Mass Communication programme but a few are admitted. For example, in the 2010/2011 academic year, about 600 students applied for the programme but only 113 were admitted. Successful applicants are admitted to the programme either as day or evening students.

According to the curriculum, which has been running since 1988, students admitted to the course must possess at least an Ordinary Level (O Level) certificate obtained at the sitting of the Uganda Certificate of Education or equivalent qualifications obtained at one sitting and two Advanced Level (A Level) principal passes in the Arts, Sciences, Commerce or other subjects obtained at the sitting of the Ugandan Advanced Certificate of Education or its equivalent. Alternatively, a candidate must have passed the MAK Mature Age Entry44 examinations or should hold a Diploma in Journalism from a recognised university or its equivalent or should hold a degree (or its equivalent) in any area of study from a recognised institution.

Whoever seeks enrolment to the programme has to apply directly through the university admission board. More than 90% of the students admitted are directly from high school while the rest enrol when they are already practicing journalism. Gorreti Linda Nassanga, a senior

lecturer and a former Head of the department, informed me in an interview that admission is competitive. This means that successful applicants are the crème de la crème.

Therefore, students applying directly from high school are admitted on the basis of good grades with no requirement for writing skills or any form of recommendation. Until 1996, admission to the course required applicants to have a B in Literature but this prerequisite was dropped because it left out many potential would-be journalists. Dropping the Literature requirement left admission open to students from any background. Still, candidates are required to have passed English in their O Level since English is the language of instruction.

The open admission policy raises questions on the quality of journalists that come out of the university as one may wonder whether the criteria is enough to identify future journalists. Whereas some respondents said admission to the programme should not be restricted to any subject requirement, others insisted that dropping the subject requirement could be responsible for the decline in the quality of journalism graduates from MAK.

Monica Chibita, for instance, said when the subject requirement was in place, classes were small and the quality of writing was high. “[...] the Literature requirement had something to do with it. When we dropped that requirement later, I think we opened up too wide,” she emphasised.

She explained that the problem with making admission open is that the department does not start off on a level ground because some students may have problems with written and spoken English while others may be fluent. “It becomes difficult to bring these two groups to the same level. The tendency at the department is teaching students other skills without concentrating on the language yet it is central to how people report or communicate,” Monica Chibita said.

In agreement with Monica Chibita, Don Wanyama, the Chief Sub-Editor at MPL, noted: “[...] Mass Communication, as it was originally, should have Literature as one of the main subject requirements especially if students are going to work for a medium whose main language of communication is English.”

Peter Mwesige, also a former Head of the Department and Daniel Kalinaki, Managing Editor of MPL disagree. Peter Mwesige said it does not matter whether students admitted to the course

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45 The language of instruction in schools in Uganda and at Makerere University is English. Most of national media in and out of Uganda also publish or broadcast is English.

46 He runs the African Centre for Media Excellence, an organisation that seeks to improve journalism standards in Uganda and Africa see http://www.acme.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2 (accessed 18.11.2010).
studied Geography, History and Economics, Biology, Chemistry or Literature as long as they have the passion. He added that they would be able to master journalistic skills if they are keen on learning. “People with passion are more likely to progress professionally and can learn and have a more meaningful learning experience than those with no interest,” he emphasised.

Daniel Kalinaki also concurred and said there is no problem with admitting students with a background in Physics and Mathematics. He thus asserted:

 [...] it is good because beyond the diversity of students you get, someone who studied those subjects might end up making a fine science/health reporter since they have some scientific knowledge. In the same way, someone with Economics and Mathematics could turn out to be good business reporter because they understand figures. The problem is that it (admission at MAK) is a blind process, getting in a mass of people just because they scored certain grades.

There was general consensus that the problem is with the general quality of education students get and not the subjects they study before they get to university.

Daniel Kalinaki emphasised that admission to the course should not be restricted to language since Uganda’s media is diverse in genre and language. He wonders whether the department can handle students who want to report for media houses that operate in the local languages. He, however, cautioned that whatever language it is, one must be proficient. He elaborated:

If you are reporting in English, you must understand English well. The university teaches in English but the challenge is; does it teach you well enough to become a TV English news producer? Does it teach you well enough to be a good sub-editor? Does it teach you well enough to be a journalist, ask the right questions, spot a good story and to write it? It is unreasonable to blame the university for someone who writes or speaks, say, poor Luganda

These views draw us to an important aspect of the programme, which is the curriculum.

4.1.2 The Curriculum

The curriculum under evaluation divides the programme in three academic years each with two semesters. Every semester has 17 weeks of which 15 are for teaching and two for examinations.

47 A widely-spoken local dialect by majority of the Ugandans.
It combines courses in print, broadcast, photojournalism and PR under the Mass Communication programme. Teaching these disciplines under the same programme is a point of contention as some people think journalism should be separated from other communication subjects since they serve different purposes. In fact, Monica Chibita said the word “mass” has a negative baggage associated with it.

She further explained that the department prioritised a broad undergraduate education in recognition of the multi-disciplinary requirements of the journalistic field. The curriculum therefore offers courses from Arts and Social Sciences in addition to courses specific to journalism and communication.

Monica Chibita wishes they can offer more of these subjects including Political Science (PS), Economics, Sociology, Philosophy, Issues in Science and Literature but the menu is been limited by inadequate resources. This is in line with the UNESCO model which notes that journalism is not a standalone discipline and should therefore be combined with education in disciplines like Arts and sciences to steer students towards an education that expands and enriches their understanding of the world.

The model curriculum states that journalism education at university should be organised around three curricula axes: (1) an axis comprising the norms, values, tools, standards, and practices of journalism; (2) an axis emphasising the social, cultural, political, economic, legal and ethical aspects of journalism practice both within and outside the national borders; and (3) an axis comprising knowledge of the world and journalism’s intellectual challenges.

The first axis prepares students to report, write and edit for the various media. It represents the core of any programme designed to prepare students for careers in journalism. This axis forms the practical part of any journalism education programme. The second axis elucidates the institutional and societal contexts within which journalists function and connects the practice of journalism to related human activities. Such studies strengthen professional identity, values, and goals through an understanding of democratic functions and legal and moral constraints. The third one involves non-journalism courses that expand students’ knowledge of the world. The Mass Communication curriculum addresses these axes but whether it addresses them adequately is a subject of discussion which this study is attempting to contribute to.

The role of general knowledge and knowledge of a vast array of subjects by journalists cannot be over emphasised. Journalists need general knowledge on almost all areas of life and a deeper
understanding of almost everything in and out of their country. A report on *Challenges and Opportunities for the Professional Development of Journalists* (Centre for International Media Assistance, July 2007) says there is a need for basic knowledge of science and government, geography and history in addition to specialised knowledge of at least one subject area important to journalism in one’s own country. Aspiring journalists need to gain broader knowledge in fields of science, law, literature, public health, humanities, business and other such subjects so they can better cover the news and meet the demand for interdisciplinary skills. A journalism school has to work closely with other faculties in the university to prepare journalists to cover complex issues of importance to society.

The Mass Communication curriculum offers no specific courses on general knowledge yet the UNESCO model provides that such a course be offered as a foundation journalism subject in first year. In recognition of the inter-disciplinary nature of journalism, the department works closely with the faculties of Social Sciences, Economics and Law at MAK for subjects like Political Science, Economics and Media Law. Courses offered from these faculties plus Mass Communication courses like Media History and Issues provide students with a better understanding of their country’s system of government, its constitution and the economy.

**4.1.3 Description of Course Units Offered**

According to the department website [www.masscom.mak.ac.ug](http://www.masscom.mak.ac.ug), First year students concentrate on understanding how the media convey meaning and the fundamentals of media theory, history and media organisations’ set-up. Students are also introduced to writing skills, which is the basis for all media work. Courses offered in first year are: Introduction to Mass Communication, Writing for Communication, Media History and Issues, History of Uganda and Introduction to Computer Science, Political Science and Economics.

Introduction to Mass Communication introduces students to theories of mass communication, systems and institutions including historical developments, social responsibility and ethics.

Writing for Communication is about the discovery, selection, organisation and presentation of facts in essay form. Emphasis is put on accurate observation and recording of facts, logical organisation of facts and clear communication.

Media History and Issues aims at providing political and economic knowledge necessary for a mass media practitioner including world political and economic systems; political
history of Uganda; international relations, history of the press in Uganda; interaction and influence of politics and the press and vice versa.

The History of Uganda course unit introduces students to major issues in Uganda’s history from the colonial period up to date with particular reference to the development of the media.

Introduction to Computer Science initiates students to different computer applications. It aims at providing students with basic knowledge on using computer packages like word processing, Microsoft Power Point as well as web browsing.

From the Social Sciences, first year students offer Introduction to Political Science and Comparative Political Systems in first and second semester respectively. Introduction to Political Science explores what politics is about, the different forms of political organisation and the relationship between the citizen and the state. Comparative Political Systems on the other hand is a comparative study of political behaviour and institutions of selected political systems.

From Faculty of Economics and Management, first year students take Introductory Micro Economics and Introduction to Mathematics for Economists in first and second semester respectively. These aim at introducing students to basic knowledge of commerce and economics.

In second year, students are initiated into core journalistic skills and basic production in print and broadcast. The Assistant Programme Coordinator, Ivan Lukanda, said year two courses cut across all media to enable students get a broad outlook of the various media and to make choices regarding which media to specialise in their final year. At this stage, all Mass Communication courses are compulsory and students continue with either Political Science or Economics. Students continue with the retained subject along with the Mass Communication courses in their area of specialisation, through third year.

Courses offered in second year are: Mass Media and Society, Media Law, Public Information Programmes, News Writing and Reporting, Introduction to Public Relations and Introduction to Broadcasting. Others are Introduction to Photojournalism, Research Methods and project. Those retaining Political Science offer Politics of Africa and International Organisation while those who continue with Economics study Industrial Economics and Managerial Economics in their first and second semesters.
Mass media and Society aims at providing students with knowledge about the relationship between the media and society. Students are taught media roles and controls, the social responsibility of the media plus media ethics. In addition, students are supposed to learn media and social change and the relationship between media and politics.

Media Law should provide students with basic legal concepts and legal problems affecting mass media and the media profession. These include Libel, defamation, censorship and other legal controls and regulation of the media. The Media law course is taught in second year before students go for internship. This is in line with the ideals of journalism education proposed in the UNESCO model curricula and the WJEC as pointed out in chapter two.

The Public Information Programmes course introduces students to health information programmes and their effects on public knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Information programmes on agriculture, energy conservation, and environmental protection are emphasised.

News Writing and Reporting provides essentials of good research-reporting methods, how to cover stories; interviewing techniques, how to get information, practical workshops, instructions and practices in news writing basic skills. It includes review of writing fundamentals and instruction to news story structure and news gathering.

Additionally, students are introduced to Public Relations principles, history and practice of public relations in business, education institutions, social welfare, literary and theatrical contexts.

On the other hand, Introduction to Broadcasting exposes students to the nature of broadcasting including the role of broadcasting in society. Emphasis is put on writing for broadcast journalism and practice in writing for radio and TV.

Introduction to Photojournalism introduces students to the field of photojournalism, providing skills for identifying and producing pictures for press publication.

The Research Methods and Project course covers theory and principles of media research. It aims at providing training in Mass Communication research by acquainting students with fundamental knowledge in philosophy, techniques and principles of research in the media. The course, which is assessed together with internship, culminates in the writing of a research project.
The project is a dissertation on any topic related to journalism or communication. The project constitutes 50% while the exam and internship constitute 25% each.

Between second and third year, students are required to do internship for a minimum of four weeks either in the media as journalists to enrich the practical part of the journalism or in communication units. Students work as apprentice reporters, editors, photographers, designers or graphic artists in a news media outlet, within the structure of the newsroom under the supervision of a senior editor and gaining from the experience of other journalists. The students’ work experience is supposed to be supervised and evaluated. A more detailed discussion of the internship programme at the department is dealt with later in chapter 4.1.6.

4.1.4 Areas of Specialisation

Third Year, which is the final year of study, provides specialised training in one of the medium. The areas are print (covering newspapers and magazines); broadcasting (covering radio and television); Photojournalism and Public Relations; an area that exposes students to corporate or strategic communications. Depending on the specialisation, students have a range of courses to choose from in addition to Environmental Management and Politics of Development and Technological Change for those who study Political Science. Those retaining Economics study Development Economics and Project Planning and Management.

Final year students take all the core courses in their area of specialisation and have a range of options of additional courses from other areas of specialisation.


Students majoring in broadcast journalism study all courses related to broadcasting such as TV and radio production and can select from the subjects mentioned in the preceding paragraph.
The same applies to Photojournalism majors who can also choose from the courses listed above in addition to the core advanced photojournalism course.

In addition to selected courses, third year students are required to write a project in their area of specialisation. This is in line with the UNESCO model curricula which stresses that the project should demonstrate students’ ability to conduct in-depth research, gather and organise large amounts of material and present that material professionally.

Newspaper Editing teaches students to edit, write headlines, handling wire copy, editorial aspects, layout, typography and page editing. Advertising and copy layout introduces students to key aspects of advertising focusing on advertising copy writing and layout with emphasis on particular requirements of the media.

Public Relations Strategy takes students through making communication strategies for companies and organisations and teaches students how to conduct public advocacy campaigns and generally doing PR for an organisation.

Public Relations Services and Production focuses on publishing manuscript assessment, copyright, royalties’ distribution, cover design printing and various production processes.

Public Relations and Media Practice, focus is on research design production and writing public relations media, includes news release features, pamphlets, brochures, financial statements, management reports, scripts.

Public Affairs reporting on the other hand entail identification of public issues, research and writing articles of significant public concern.

The Art of Public Speaking provides communication skills in message design and delivery. It enhances students’ skills of addressing press conferences, making public presentations, and speech writing skills but does not include training students in how to speak on radio.

In Specialised Writing, students are taken through features writing for newspapers and magazines; study of other articles like editorials, books reviews, theatre reviews and manuscripts submitted for publication.
Media Management exposes students to the theoretical framework of the media industry, planning production, media marketing, concepts, media image and promotion, strategies for circulation and advertising. It grooms students into managing the media.

Graphics of Communication looks at how to combine words and pictures for effective communication. It focuses on message design, sketches, maps, charts and posters.

The Issues in Mass Communication course raises issues in international communication, comparative media systems in the West, Socialist and Third world countries. The course also tackles journalistic aspects of news agencies, the New International Information Order, freedom of the press and commercialisation. Development Communication is generally about the role of journalism and communication in development. Therefore communication is taught from a development point of view. Advanced Photojournalism provides skills and techniques required in photojournalism practice.

Radio Production focuses on the basics of selecting, compiling, editing and presenting information for radio broadcast. It is supposed to equip students with hands-on experience with basic radio equipment. It is also supposed to expose students to radio studio operations.

Television Production focuses on the basics of selecting, compiling, editing and presenting information for television broadcast. It should also provide hands-on experience with basic television equipment and exposure to television studio operations.

The Mass Communication curriculum has a lot in common with the UNESCO model curriculum. The two curricula consist of courses like Media and Society, Media Law, Writing and Reporting and some aspects of the broadcast media. The main difference between the two curricula is that the UNESCO model is specifically designed for a purely journalism programme while the mass communication curriculum covers journalism, public relations and advertising. The two curricula differ on general knowledge, critical thinking, journalism ethics, multimedia and online media courses. The Mass Communication curriculum offers no specific courses on such subjects.

Just as the UNESCO model recommends, the Mass Communication curriculum provides for internship to be done between second and third year as part of the programme to prepare students for the craft of the journalistic profession in addition to a written project. Both curricula provide for optional courses either in the Arts or science fields. The difference is that the mass
communication curriculum at MAK only provides Political Science and Economics with no options from Arts or even sciences.

The two curricula differ when it comes to the teaching of journalism ethics. While the Mass Communication covers ethics under the Mass Media and Society course, the UNESCO model curriculum provides journalism ethics as a standalone course. The UNESCO curriculum provides writing and reporting courses every semester right from first year through third year while the Mass Communication curriculum is not specific on these. The courses outlined in sections 4.13 and 4.14 are taught in various ways as discussed below.

4.1.5 Mode of Teaching

The main mode of teaching the various courses at the department is the lecture method. Gorreti Linda Nassanga said in first and second year, teaching is limited to lectures and sometimes group discussions because most of the courses offered during the two years are mostly theoretical. In third year, the work is more practical, therefore group work and presentations are used.

J.B Wasswa, one of the pioneer lecturers at the department, said the lecture method is limiting. He said the large numbers of students and limited facilities hinders the use tutorials, seminars or workshops, which are more effective teaching methods. Peter Mwesige suggested a variety of pedagogical approaches in teaching journalism courses. He recommends seminars, workshops and case studies for Issues in Mass Communication, ethics courses and the practical ones like News Writing and Reporting. Lectures are most appropriate for courses like Mass Media and Society and Introduction to Mass Communication.

His views match with what the UNESCO model curriculum for journalism education proposes. The model gives a range of pedagogical approaches and modes of teaching various courses. Foundations of journalism courses require a combination of lectures, workshops by guest speakers, case studies, seminars and classroom discussion and presentations. The model suggests that practical courses like writing and reporting require a strong student-lecturer interaction, which is important during the reporting/writing process. The model suggests a class size of 20; factoring access to communication technology into the class structure. These are intended to enable students acquire hands-on practical experience. The other way of exposing students to the practical world of journalism is through internship.
4.1.6 Internship and Practical Work Experience

Literature on internship indicates that it is an opportunity to integrate career-related experience into an undergraduate education by participating in planned and supervised work either at campus or off campus. The major aim of any internship programme is to allow students to digest the theory they study in class in a practical setting. In journalism, internship should be the intersection where the academic and practical worlds meet. A report on journalism education deems internship as a vital part of successful university-based journalism training.

A paper\(^{48}\) from Ohio State University says an internship: contributes to the student’s personal and professional development through challenging work assignments; is completed before students graduate from the university; is planned and scheduled through consultation with the department; is supervised; includes career-related experiences that complement what is learned in the classroom; is evaluated at the conclusion of the internship; builds upon the relationship the department/university has with employers.

Documents on internship at the department indicate that the programme is intended to help students become familiar with the rigors of journalism or communication-related work and to help prospective employers mould students into suitable professionals for the job market. The internship is done for not less than four weeks either in second or third year before graduation.

At the department, students are required to find placement in any media house or organisation with a communication or public relations unit. The department in turn gives students an introductory letter stating the obligations of the student during internship and the obligations of the media house where the student will be working. The letter also requests the organisation to allow the student work for at least four weeks and judge them objectively on the account of enthusiasm, skills, talent and ability to work (see copy of the letter in appendix viii).

In addition, students take with them an assessment form (see appendix ix), which the employer is required to complete at the end of the internship period. Students are required to present the signed and stamped assessment form to the Internship Coordinator at the end of the training. Students are moreover required to write a report and present samples of the work published during the training. For instance, if a student does his internship in a newspaper, the samples

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have to be published articles written by the student. The Internship Coordinator, Harriet Sebaana, in an interview said, students’ reports are not graded without the samples.

Ivan Lukanda added that asking students to find internship placement poses a challenge but there is little the department can do because of the high student numbers. He further elaborates:

It is not easy to get 100 media houses and 100 organisations to take on students for internship. We also have logistical problems to facilitate supervision. We do not have lecturers to go out and supervise students. If supervision is not possible it even becomes harder to look for internship placement for them.

During fieldwork, I learnt that the department creates internship places for students who fail to find placement. For example, in the 2009/2010 academic year, 16 students failed to get placement in any media organisation. They did their internship at the department, writing stories and taking pictures for the student-run online newspaper Journalism@mak.

The department has established student-run media projects on campus to enable students familiarise with practical skills. In 2005, the department set up a radio station Campus FM 107 run by students. Despite the challenges that are discussed later in the chapter, the radio helps students to gain relevant skills.

In the past, the department has had a number of online publications run by students. First was the masscom online, which was later replaced with theivorypost and then the current journalism@mak. Students are supposed to write, edit and upload stories and pictures to the website, which is supposed to be updated regularly. These publications would be training grounds for aspiring journalists. If managed well and properly supervised, such publications serve as an excellent avenue for hands-on work experience for students to get enough practical exposure for more demanding internships or jobs in the media.

Students and journalists who studied the same programme noted that despite their efforts to have online publications to help them practice, the lecturers’ lack of interest and input in such projects and inadequate support to run these is a setback. Students who worked on the journalism@mak during internship said they lacked financial support to do their day-to-day activities as would be the case in a newsroom setting. They said they lacked facilitation like transport in case there was a need to cover stories off campus.
The low internet connectivity at the university and the problem of inadequate equipment like computers and cameras makes the running of online publications very difficult. Despite these challenges, hundreds of students graduate from the programme and join the media industry but before that, they have to pass all disciplines they undertake. Their performance is therefore assessed in a number of ways as analysed below.

4.1.7 Assessment of Students

The UNESCO model proposes that students should be assessed according to the following categories: research skills, writing skills, skills in use of journalism tools, skills in editing, designing, producing materials for print, broadcast and online media with understanding of and ability to adapt to convergence and technological developments in journalism. Other categories are: familiarity with examples of journalistic best practices in one’s own country and the world; understanding of journalistic ethics; work place competencies like working on deadline, independently and in teams; knowledge of journalism and society; basic knowledge of science and specialised knowledge of at least one subject area important to journalism.

Students at the department are assessed in most of these skills depending on the courses offered in the curriculum and availability of equipment to enable assessment of practical courses. Students’ research, writing and editing skills are assessed through progressive assignments either individually or in groups.

The curriculum states that students are assessed using coursework and end of semester exams. The department’s website www.masscom.mak.ac.ug notes that all undergraduate courses are assessed on the basis of 100% total marks with coursework taking 30% and the written exam takes 70%. All undergraduate continuous assessment courses are totally by assignments of which a minimum of eight is graded out of 100%. The marks are converted into Grade Points. Coursework consists of progressive assessment derived from at least two assignments and or tests or fieldwork. Exams at the end of each semester account for 50% for each course unit.

Monica Chibita noted that some courses are 100% progressive assessment. The assessment is therefore based on what students do throughout and not just at the end of the semester.

Additionally, students are examined on what they study; questions that require them to do some research or to test a particular skill that has been taught like how to: write a literature review and make citations for theoretical courses or story assignments for practical courses. Courses about
writing, editing and computer science, where recollection is not the main issue, are assessed progressively. The examinations do not test recall but understanding and application.

Monica Chibita said the number of tests and course assignments is limited by the population of students in relation to lecturers and the resources available.

While the assessment of students at the department is mostly by coursework and end of semester exams, the proposed UNESCO model considers students’ assessment to be progressive and not only limited to assignments, tests or exams. For the foundational journalism courses, the model suggests that students be assessed on the basis of class participation and attendance; open book exams and group presentations. For the practical courses like writing and reporting, the model suggests progressive assessment through weekly journalism assignments.

The model proposes that most of the assignments be done outside the classroom where students will function as reporters writing for publication. Just as in any media operation, students should be responsible to an editor; in this case a lecturer; who coaches them through the reporting and writing process and evaluate their work, focusing on strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. These aspects of assessment are lacking in the programme.

4.1.8 Collaboration with the Media Industry

Graduates of the programme are employed in print or broadcast media as writers, photographers, news anchors and sub editors while others go directly into public relations or advertising. Since this study focuses on the journalism component of the programme, focus is on people who end up as journalists. Therefore, the relevance of department, as Monica Chibita points out, depends on its relationship with the media where the department’s products end up. The internship programme discussed earlier is one of the ways the department keeps in touch with the industry. It also collaborates with the industry in hosting awards such as the Tebere Mudini Journalism Excellence Award sponsored by MPL, the Uganda Investigative Awards sponsored by Danish International Development Agency in conjunction with the East African Media Institute and the Cranimer Mugerwa Photojournalism Award sponsored by the New Vision.

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Additionally, the department sometimes invites journalists as guest lecturers to offer inspirational talks to students. Some part-time lecturers are former editors or current journalists in either print or broadcast journalism.

Once in a while, the department organises visits to media houses to give students an impression of what goes on in a newsroom. Despite these arrangements, media practitioners described their relationship with the department as weak and feel they need to be actively engaged in the training of future journalists, which many say is lacking. This leads us to the next section which identifies gaps in the Mass Communication curriculum and training.

4.2 Gaps in the Curriculum and the Training

In Chapter 1.5, I noted that the term *gap* was used to identify what is missing in the curriculum and journalism training at MAK and or what is promised and is not actually offered. Answers to this research questions were obtained through interviews with students, lecturers and journalists who are products of the programme.

Monica Chibita identifies various gaps in the Mass Communication curriculum. These are:

1. The curriculum is heavily biased toward the traditional print media.

2. It does not cater for community media or rural media and therefore did not for instance have language provisions to train people to report for upcountry newspapers, radio or TV media.

3. It does not make a clear distinction between journalism and Communication (Public Relations and Development Communication). The courses were mixed together and students came out not really knowing the distinction between the two.

4. There are not enough courses that address changes in media technologies.

5. Since 1996, the department had to narrow down its optional courses. Originally, the course curriculum offered a range of subjects including Political Science, Sociology, Economics, Literature and languages but when the privately-sponsorship scheme was introduced, the population of students increased; timetabling became difficult and it became imperative to pay lecturers for every course they taught. This means that the department had to pay to have their students offer these courses. “We narrowed down to just
Political Science and Economics but we always regretted not allowing students to study other important subjects,” she said.

These gaps are expounded in the next sections, incorporating views of other interviewees. I take each of the gaps pointed out by Monica Chibita and categorised them as: print media in relation to other media, rural media, journalism Vs PR, media technologies and optional courses.

4.2.1 Print in Relation to Other Media

Monica Chibita said the curriculum is heavily biased toward the traditional print media. She attributed this to the fact that most of the founders of the course had a bias in print journalism. Interviewees also attributed the gap to available resources, noting that both human and technical resources at the time of establishing the programme and the department favoured the teaching of print journalism.

Former newspaper editor J.B Wasswa agreed with Monica Chibita. In an interview, JB Wasswa said the curriculum was inclined towards print journalism. He said the print media being the oldest medium in Uganda, many journalists at the time of the establishment of the programme were print journalists and so were the pioneer lecturers.

In addition, the media industry at the time of drawing the curriculum was mainly dominated by the print media. Today, the media environment has changed with the radio and TV expanding and growing in numbers. At the time of fieldwork for this study, the department was still using the 1988 curriculum designed when the country had one radio and TV station.

Although the curriculum offers radio and TV broadcast courses, respondents noted that inclination towards print is seen in the way attention is paid to each of these courses. It was, for instance, pointed out that much as broadcast courses are offered, there is no equipment to support the teaching of these courses. Monica Chibita in a magazine published to mark the department’s 20 years of existence notes that there were times she had to drive her class to a friend’s house to watch tapes of what a good TV story should look like, or drawing to illustrate long and medium shots. It was not until 2005 that the department got a training radio (Campus FM 107). These cannot be entirely blamed on the curriculum or the department. Teaching radio and TV requires equipment, which is expensive to acquire.

There are journalistic principles and values pertinent to journalism whether broadcast or print. Therefore, with or without equipment, any journalism education programme has to teach values such as ethics, writing, cultivating sources, meeting deadlines and team work in addition to
theories and research related to media and or journalism. These values are relevant to print, broadcast or online journalists. The challenge is whether the department imparts its students with such values before they join the journalistic field.

4.2.2 Community and Rural Media

Monica Chibita also said the curriculum did not cater for community media and rural media. For that matter, the curriculum did not for instance, have language provisions to train people to report for upcountry newspapers, radio or TV. Initially, the curriculum had provisions for students to study a language but this was never to be as is discussed later in the chapter.

Uganda’s media especially radio has grown to the extent that there are many community and rural media (both radio and newspapers) hence a need to address this development in the training. As pointed out by Daniel Kalinaki, the media in Uganda is diverse in both genre and language and many rural areas have one or more radio stations that broadcast in a language of that particular area. This means that there is a need to have journalists who are competent to write or report in local languages, but the department offers no language options.

To illustrate the challenge of language in some journalism schools, Wallace Chuma in an article entitled “Western Paradigms, African media experiences” notes that English is the language of instruction in all journalism programmes (in English speaking countries) in Africa. This gives an impression that teaching journalism and subsequent practice is essentially an English affair. The effect has been to marginalise the development of local African languages as media languages.

It should, however, be noted that Uganda has over 52 languages. The department has a big challenge when it comes to what languages should be included in the curriculum and what should be left out. In reference to Daniel Kalinaki views, the issue is not whether a curriculum offers a range of languages but whether it teaches what is available in the best way possible. Various regions in Uganda have community radio stations addressing development issues like poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS control, environmental protection, and gender issues. These stations broadcast in local languages. Apart from the Development Communication course offered in third year, there are no other provisions to prepare students for community media or to report on issues that are pertinent to a developing country like Uganda.

4.2.3 Journalism and Public Relations

The other gap noted is that the curriculum does not make a clear distinction between journalism and course units like PR. Monica Chibita said the disciplines are mixed together and students came out not really knowing the distinction between the two.

“We did not have a strong PR section and a strong journalism section that were distinct from each other,” she said. She added that the problem is not in teaching all these courses together but in teaching them as if they are one and the same. She emphasised: “Students must be given a clear distinction between the two because a person trained to do PR has a completely different mindset from the person trained to be a journalist.” She added that these disciplines meet very specific needs yet their distinction has not been clarified enough.

Monica Chibita, however, said that there are efforts to change this. The vision of the department has been distilled into “[...] a centre of excellence in journalism and communication education, research and professional development on Africa.” This signals a deliberate effort to make a clear distinction between equipping students to become journalists or communication specialists serving in areas such as advertising and public relations.

J.B Wasswa noted that there is a gray area between journalism and mass communication training in the curriculum right from the conception of the programme to people’s understanding of the courses offered, which is confusing.

Sara Namusoga, a product of the department, also said graduates of the programme are not properly defined. She said at the end of the day, the course produces students who are neither grounded in journalism nor PR because they just get a little bit of everything.

4.2.4 Courses on New Media

The fourth gap is that the curriculum lacks enough courses that address changes in information and communication technology (ICTs) and the new media. The only course with the technology component in the curriculum is the computer science course offered in first year. This course only exposes students to basic computer skills with no options regarding the new media, online journalism.

Sara Namusoga, currently working as a part-time lecturer, said the other gap in the curriculum is the limited attention paid to changing technological developments in the media.
The same was emphasised by John Matovu, a lecturer, who said the curriculum does not appreciate the emerging media platforms like the Internet. He noted:

We need to realise that people who are specialising in print, broadcast or photojournalism are increasingly writing material for online media yet there is a rising need for people who are competent in all these fields. We need to incorporate new media aspects in our curriculum.

John Matovu added that one of the challenges facing the department is keeping up with the rapid developments in media technology. The department’s challenge is finding a balance between what it can afford, what is in the industry and giving specific attention to technological developments in general. The department also has a challenge of staying technologically up-to-date to produces graduates who are relevant to the job market.

According to benchmarks outlined in chapter 2.2.1, a journalism education curriculum should address changes in media technologies. Gone are the days when journalism was only confined to the traditional print and broadcast media. Technologies have transformed the traditional media enabling what has come to be known as media convergence. The wave of the Internet, blogging, podcasting and social networking media is redefining journalism and the education of journalists thereof. The Mass Communication programme has to address these issues to remain relevant to the ever changing media landscape.

The UNESCO model curriculum proposes a course on multimedia and online journalism to teach students the recent evolution of the internet as a journalistic tool and a medium and the impact of mobile technologies. A journalism programme should therefore teach students how story telling can be transformed by technology, how journalists can use technology to do their job better, and how relationships with audiences can be transformed into more interactive engagement with citizens through the Internet and other networked media.

Through such a course, students learn to write for online and multimedia sites, including how to organise links and use data bases, how to post stories, update and advance them as developments occur. They have to learn to create pages for websites, upload them to a server and use digital cameras in addition to using audio and video technology to make their stories interactive.
4.2.5 Optional Courses

Respondents gave conflicting views on Social Science courses like Political Science and Economics. While students say these subjects are irrelevant to their pursuit of a career in journalism, lecturers and journalists think otherwise. Students say these courses are imposed on them without being educated on why they should offer these courses.

Peter Mwesige who is also an alumnus of the department said one of the gaps in the curriculum and the training is that not much attention is paid to the importance of courses in the liberal arts, humanities and social sciences. Students tend to treat these courses as a by the way and the Mass Communication courses as what they only have to study. He added that most students do not think about Political Science or Economics as important to their whole learning experience as courses like Introduction to Mass Communication or Writing for Newspapers.

“Looking back, I wish it had been made very clear that these subjects are as important to becoming a journalist as the journalism courses,” he noted.

Peter Mwesige noted that the curriculum design made it difficult for emphasis to be paid to these courses. If tasked to redesign the curriculum, he would perhaps not be very keen on admitting students to do journalism at the university but would admit them to study general education in both humanities and social sciences and then introduce them to journalism in their final year of study. He said in first year, students can be introduced to a whole range of subjects in the liberal arts, humanities, social sciences and even the natural sciences. He added: “In other words, one would have to prove themselves in first and second year to qualify to major in journalism or mass communication in third year. This way, a student would have an all round education.”

Daniel Kalinaki, another alumnus of the department, is glad the Mass Communication programme introduced him to Political Science and Economics. He applies knowledge from these courses in the stories he writes. “I covered business for some time after university. The Political Science knowledge has turned me into a political economy analyst and educated me about the nexus between politics and the economy and how interdependent they are,” he said.

Other courses students deem to be irrelevant are those that teach the history of the media, and the theoretical based courses. Instead, students prefer to be introduced to the practical and skills-based courses early on “instead of being bogged down in theory throughout first and second year.” But the UNESCO model curriculum stresses the importance of theoretical courses to any journalism education. For instance, courses like Media History and Issues, which is compulsory
for first year students, is important as it provides political and economic knowledge relevant to journalists. The course also takes students through the history of the press in Uganda.

As a former student of the programme, I attest that students are not adequately educated on the relevance of these subjects to journalism. Since many students join the programme fresh from high school, they tend to think these non journalistic subjects are not important to becoming a journalist. Serious orientation right from the start can indoctrinate students into the notion that journalism is not only about writing and reporting.

Additionally, Monica Chibita pointed out that the department has not done enough to groom critical analytical thinkers. She clarified that some products of the department like Onapito Ekomoloit\textsuperscript{52}, Mwesige and Andrew Mwenda\textsuperscript{53}, are analytical because of their natural abilities not because of the training they received from MAK.

The department’s inability to groom critical thinkers could be attributed to the absence of a course that teaches logic and analytical skills in the curriculum. Such a course would provide students with logical, analytical and research abilities that are fundamental for informed journalism on public issues. Such a course could expose students to logical analysis of arguments, language and evidence.

This leads me to the other gap of imbalance between theory and practice of journalism pointed out by the majority of respondents. This gap, as discussed later in the chapter, is blamed on the lack of equipment like cameras and computers and the lack of teaching resources.

**4.3.6 Theory in Relation to Practice**

The theory and practice gap is more related to the actual training than the curriculum. This gap is earlier in chapter two pointed out as one of the challenges facing journalism programmes around the world. Students, practicing journalists, editors and lecturers noted that the training is more theoretical than practical yet journalism is learnt through practice. Daniel Kalinaki said a lot of time is spent teaching students theory, which students never get to apply. This, he added, is


\textsuperscript{53}Journalist and Managing Editor of the Independent Magazine. See \url{http://www.independent.co.ug/} (accessed 18.12.2010).
worsened by lack of equipment and facilities necessary to expose students to practical skills needed for journalistic practice.

He said that although there are attempts to bridge this gap by setting up a radio station and a students’ online publication, the practical training at the department is still inadequate. “Many students leave the university without producing anything journalistic. When they come to the newsroom, we have to retrain them,” Daniel Kalinaki said. Similar sentiments were echoed by most, if not all the editors and journalists who have supervised and worked closely with graduates or students (as interns) from the department.

Norman Katende, an official at the Uganda Journalist Union and a practicing journalist at the New Vision, said in an interview that the university syllabus is theory-oriented, using out-dated books; “Books which were used when the country only had one TV station, and one newspaper. “Now, we are looking at a country with over 15 newspapers, 100 radio stations and 10 TV stations notwithstanding the Internet yet the syllabus has not changed to match the changes in the media landscape,” he noted.

John Matovu wonders why a university like MAK, which owns a printery, cannot have its own newspaper run by journalism students at the Department of Mass Communication. He said:

> It is unfortunate that students are being taught to produce a newspaper, told about font sizes, newspaper design, layout and how to write stories in class but leave the university with little or no editing or writing skills because things were just demonstrated in class. We really need to move away from teaching students to earn marks and instead equip them with necessary skills.

Charles Wendo, an editor at the New Vision newspaper in an interview put it this way: “The impression I get when I interact with students from the department is that they do not get enough practical exposure when they are at the university. When they come to the newsroom we have to train them afresh.”

He added that journalism is a practical profession and therefore students need to be introduced to practical journalism from the time they join the university until they graduate. That is not happening at the department. “In a medical or veterinary school, time is dedicated to practical work. “There is no reason we do not do the same in a journalism course,” Charles Wendo said.
He disagrees with people who say that practical is a preserve for vocational institutions. “We need the full practical training at MAK as much as we need the theoretical training. As a journalist, I need to be a good writer, a good journalist. I also need to understand the theory and be able to conceptualise issues that I write about,” he noted.

The challenge of balancing theory and practice is not unique to MAK Department of Mass Communication. Many journalism schools around the world face such criticism from industry players as the latter expect the former to match their training with the ever changing trends in journalism and the media, which is not always possible.

The inadequate practical exposure and some gaps discussed earlier reflect the challenges the Department of Mass Communication and many journalism schools around the world are facing.

4.3 Challenges Faced at the Department

Students and lecturers at the Mass Communication Department attributed the inadequate practical exposure and other related gaps to limited resources and equipment. They also pointed out that the large numbers of students per class in relation to the available resources as another impediment to providing necessary practical exposure.

Bernadette Nagita, a final year student at the time of this research explained during a focus group discussion that specialising in broadcast journalism and photojournalism requires hands-on physical equipment but unfortunately, the available equipment is either substandard, inadequate or not available at all.

Even the student training radio is frequently on and off air. At the time of the fieldwork for this study between June and July, 2010, the radio had been off air for the past four months apparently due to lack of an operational licence. My visit to the station proved that the radio premises had been closed for a reasonable period of time.

Archie Luyimbazi, a lecturer of TV and radio production at the department said the biggest challenge of teaching broadcast media courses is equipment since the courses are practical. “In most cases, you are forced to teach more theory than practice,” he added in an interview. He clarified that radio production has been more privileged than TV because of the training radio studio, which allows students to go on air, produce programmes. But he cited challenges when it comes to accessing recorders and other sound gathering equipment.
When it comes to teaching TV classes, Archie Luyimbazi noted that students only learn about cameras which are also very few. He, for instance, said in the 2009/2010 academic year, the TV class had 25 students working with five cameras, which according to him is still on the low side.

Regarding equipment for photojournalism, Joseline Ninsiima, another student, said during a focus group discussion that they had access to only three old substandard cameras serving five groups of students. This means that not every student gets a chance to learn how to use cameras.

The same is true with computers. The department is supposed to have two computer laboratories one for the undergraduate and the other for post graduate students. But at the time of this research, the lab for post graduate students had no single computer.

The undergraduate computer lab is stocked with 20 old computers which use floppy disk drives. Of the 20 computers, only five are working and are fully connected to the Internet. The rest are out of service without parts like, key boards and or mouse. Yet one of the working computers lacks a mouse. I observed that the six students who were using the lab during their internship had to use the computers in turns. The computer lab serves a population about 400 students and some lecturers who have no personal computers. I visited the lab for five random days and students on internship always complained that the slow Internet connectivity and unreliable power supply was affecting their work. Students found it difficult to meet story deadlines and to upload stories on the website (journalism@mak).

The same is true for the Internet kiosk next to the Department of Mass Communication, serving the Faculty of Arts. Of the fifteen old computers in the kiosk, only three were working and the Internet connection was not any better at the time of the fieldwork.

Ivan Lukanda said the situation is further compounded by the lack of relevant software, which is worsened by the bureaucratic university procurement process. However, the computers are installed with basic software like for Photoshop, for editing pictures; QuarkXPress, for laying newspaper pages and programmes like Cool Edit for editing TV and radio materials; Microsoft Word as well as Power Point.

Despite the challenges, students benefit from the available equipment. Jared Ombui, a radio journalist at Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, attributes his skills to the exposure he got at MAK. Having been a programme manager at Campus FM 107, Jared Ombui said the exposure sharpened his skills. He, however, noted that lecturers would illustrate Omni-directional and directional microphones in class instead of taking students to the radio studio and teach students
how to actually use the different microphones. Other respondents attribute their research, writing, interviewing, photography skills and other professional values to the programme.

The criticism of students lacking practical skills was blamed on the high number of students. MAK was a government-run institution admitting few students on government sponsorship until the university was commercialised when a private sponsorship scheme was introduced in the early 1990s. The private sponsorship scheme opened the university to self-financing students leading to the introduction of evening programmes (Mamdani, 2007). Mamdani in his book titled *Scholars in the Marketplace* (2007) says the scheme saw a surge in student population which was not matched with the resources. The Mass Communication Department was also affected when the evening programme was introduced in 1996.

Currently, the average student population at the department is 400 undergraduate and post graduate combined. These share the few available resources like the department’s mini library and computer lab.

4.3.1 Teaching and Reading Materials

Each course unit has a reading list given to students at the beginning of every semester with both required and recommended books as well as Internet links containing information relevant to a particular course. The lists highlight the chapters of a particular book relevant to a topic or course. For instance, the most common required book for the writing and reporting courses is Melvin Mencher’s book(s) on news writing and reporting plus William Strunk and E.B White’s book titled *Elements of Style*. Although there are more recent editions of these books, the Department of Mass Communication mini library only has the editions of the 1970s and 80s.

Reading and teaching resources especially text books are accessed through the mini library. But there are other options of the university main library, the Faculty of Arts library and the MAK university bookshop for those who can afford to buy their own text books. In addition, the university subscribes to a number of international online journals and has partnerships with several universities, whose resources can be obtained online.

Gorreti Linda Nassanga said some of the challenges they face is lack of locally-generated teaching materials and dependence on externally-produced teaching resources. She attributed the lack of local materials on limited resources and time which lecturers need to carry out research and develop local teaching materials like books and manuals. She said lecturers do not get enough time to do research because of the heavy teaching load.
Monica Chibita noted that research is a practical way of generating home-grown teaching materials but doing research requires adequate time and motivation, which lecturers do not have.

Daniel Kalinaki has issues with the lack of locally generated reading materials at the department in particular and the university in general. He said that although students can learn from books from the West, there is a need for locally generated materials to provide examples that are in touch with the local realities.

Reading lists for courses like Mass Media and Society, Issues in Mass Communication, News Writing and Reporting, Radio and TV Production courses confirm that all recommended books are foreign with no book produced or published from Uganda. The department lacks any relevant locally produced books on journalism and the media.

Despite the lack of locally-generated teaching and reading resources, the department’s mini library is stocked with a combination of old and quite recent books on different journalistic and communication disciplines. The available books were published in the 1980s, 1990s and a few were between 2000 and 2003.

However, students expressed concern that books are inadequate. They noted that if an assignment is given, the two or three books available on a given topic have to be shared among them. In case of an assignment, students have to photocopy the relevant chapters at their cost. This makes it very expensive for students who offer about five courses per semester as they have to make photocopies of the various books recommended for each course.

The cheapest option would be getting books off the shelves and reading from the mini library. But the capacity of the book bank makes this option close to impossible. Much as the book bank is stocked with relevant books as Monica Chibita and J.B Wasswa said, it is too small to allow a reasonable number of students at a given time. The book bank can only accommodate 10 to 15 students at a given time yet the department has an average population of 400 students. The situation is worsened by the fact that students sometimes share the mini library with lecturers.

Additionally, students have issue with the fact that the mini library does not open regularly. This was attributed to manpower problems. I also observed this during the fieldwork. During the eight weeks of this research at the department, the book bank only opened once although I learnt that it was supposed to open every Monday afternoon during holidays. I was told that the attendant was absent because she had another job elsewhere.
Students have another option of using the university main library and Faculty of Arts library. But when I visited these libraries and asked for books particular to journalism, I was referred to the department’s min library. This means that students do not have so many options as it may seem.

The other option is buying books. The university bookshop, which sells textbooks for disciplines like Law, Agriculture and Social Sciences, would be the best option but student cannot afford to buy their own textbooks because they are expensive for an average university student in Uganda. Besides being too small for a university like MAK, the bookshop has a limited collection of books relevant to the field of media and journalism.

Although MAK now has access to online reading resources like international journals, which would a great resource of relevant information for both students and lecturers, access to these valuable online resources is hindered by unreliable Internet connections and limited access to computers both at the department and university in general.

Lecturers teaching radio and TV broadcast courses said they lack up-to-date reading materials, which is a result of the changing technology in the electronic media. Archie Luyimbazi said the electronic media compared to other areas of journalism develops at a very fast rate and so does the literature. “But the rate at which the university stocks reading materials for these courses is not matched with the new developments in the field,” he noted.

4.3.2 Lecturers as Teaching Resources

Lecturers form part of the teaching resources at the department. As noted earlier, the department has nine full-time and a number of part-time lecturers. Three of the lecturers hold PhDs and the majority are master’s degree holders. Aside from teaching, setting, and marking assignments and exams, the lecturers also supervise students on master’s, bachelor’s and diploma level on top of other activities like research. The majority of the lecturers are products of the Mass Communication programme because the university has a policy of retaining best students as lecturers. These are encouraged to go for further studies and take up teaching positions.

Peter Mwesige has issues with this policy. He said the fact that someone emerges the best student in class does not make him a good teacher. He also noted that some lecturers lack pedagogical skills. “University lecturers need to be given pedagogical training. They have to be equipped with skills of teaching university students,” he said.

He added that there are many inexperienced people teaching at the department. “Half of the people teaching at the department are recent graduates who still need as much training as their
own students. I am saying this with maximum respect for my colleagues but the fact is the department does not have enough experienced teaching staff,” Peter Mwesige said.

Related to the above is the problem of understaffing. The department has a few lecturers handling a large number of students. The university policy is such that an establishment like the Department of Mass Communication should have 14 permanent teaching staff but the department currently has nine full-time staff, meaning that it falls short of five staff members.

Marjorie Niyitegeka, the Programme Coordinator, said of the nine full-time staff, two were on long study leave at the time of this research. This means that the lecturer to student ratio is very high, confirming Gorreti Linda Nassanga’s assertion that lecturers are overwhelmed by the heavy teaching load. Statistics from the department, for instance, indicate that an average first year class has between 100 and 150 students at a given time.

The result of understaffing is that the teacher-student contact time is limited since one lecture has to deal with many students at a time. The second effect of large class size is that lecturers do not get enough time for research.

Gorreti Linda Nassanga noted that the department is understaffed and has few PhD holders on as teachers and a gap is created when some staff members go for further studies. “The university is not expanding our staff establishment although we are growing in numbers. This leaves us with little time for research because of the heavy teaching load,” she said.

She further explained that the department hires part-time lecturers to fill the gaps but they are not well motivated since their payment is low and irregular.

It was noted that relying on part-time lecturers also presents its own challenges. The most notable is the lecture-student contact outside classroom. Since the part-time lecturers have other commitments, they only come to the university to teach for a few hours and leave.

Sara Namusoga, a part-time lecturer and an editor of the magazine for the Parliament of Uganda said little time and attention is spent with students outside the classroom. She further explained:

Given the high numbers, contact and assessment of students on a daily basis becomes very difficult for someone who has another job. You do not interact with students as much as you would want to because you have your other job to keep. The only time I have with students is when I have a lecture with them.
Peter Mwesige stressed that the high numbers of students have diluted the quality of education because it makes it difficult for lecturers to engage with students adequately.

John Matovu concurred with Peter Mwesige and Sara Namusoga and affirmed that the contact between students and lecturers is limited to meeting in the classroom; give an assignment and then examinations at the end of the semester. Students voiced the same concerns and said they do not get enough time for consultation with their lecturers outside the classroom. Yet contact out of classroom is also very important.

The issue of who is fit to teach journalism courses came out strongly in discussions about lecturers at the department. Most respondents agreed that journalism courses are better taught by people with both academic and practical background. Current students took issues with being taught journalism courses by lecturers who lack prior experience in journalism. Media practitioners and lecturers held similar views. For example, Sara Namusoga said journalism courses should be taught by two kinds of lecturers; those who are theoretically grounded and those with hands-on practical journalistic experience.

She said most of the current lecturers at the department are not properly defined. That is, they are neither academic nor practical. “Most of the lecturers at the department are not into active journalism practice or have not practiced journalism before, which creates a gap in the training,” Sara Namusoga added.

She suggested that journalism lecturers need to be defined either as academicians or practitioners or both. She said a lecturer with hands-on practical experience makes it real for students. She thus notes:

In our days, lecturers were practicing journalists. They made you aspire to be like them. We would read (Peter) Mwesige’s stories in the newspapers and (Julius) Mucunguzi54 (former student and lecturer) would share with us his field experiences.

But now, someone is telling you as was taught or told.

J.B Wasswa noted that the quality of the products of the department depend much on the type of teachers at the time. He said lecturers at the department are normally from two backgrounds, those in active journalistic practice and those who are not in the field but teach because they have

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54 He currently works as the Assistant Spokesperson for Africa at the Common Wealth Secretariat in London. See http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/151462/161884/communications_staff/ (accessed 03.05.2011).
interest or have academic qualifications but without real practical experience either in newspapers, radio or television. He asserted:

That makes a big difference because you can give all the theories and concepts; which is good; but when it comes to practice you need someone who has been there or who is actually there to give inspiration and to act as a role model. Students tend to believe more in people who are actually there because you know all the corners and the challenges.

He added that whenever the department has lecturers who are not in active practice, there are problems with their graduates because of lack of linkages with the real market.

Although UNESCO is not specific on who should teach journalism courses, the CIMA report (July, 2007) on Challenges and Opportunities for the Professional Development of Journalists states: “[...] you need to be able to train journalists by journalists who have done it.” The report further suggests that teachers need to have experience as journalists since supervision of the tradecraft involve skills that are practical rather than theoretical. Such a conclusion is highly debatable considering that it does not consider that journalists require an all round education.

It was further noted that the department lacks technical and support staff to handle the radio station, the computer lab and sometimes the mini library. At the time of this research, six students were doing their internship at the computer laboratory but I only got to meet the attendant once yet I visited the lab five. Further inquiry, revealed that the attendant is not “well motivated to attend to the lab every day.”

John Matovu blames the understaffing on the university rigid recruitment policy. The university does not provide for the recruitment of technical people to, for instance, manage Campus FM. The policy to have 14 permanent staff at the department does not include technical people to handle the equipment. There should be a technical person to maintain the equipment and to handle the day-to-day issuing of equipment to both students and lecturers. He thus asserted:

[...] without such a person, the handling of the equipment becomes problematic because you cannot know who brought back which equipment and who did not. In due course, you end up losing expensive equipment.

His point of view holds water because lecturers cannot do the teaching and handling or issuing of equipment or management of the training radio station.
Most of these challenges are not unique to the department. Journalism institutions around the world continue grappling with inadequate financing, limited teaching and reading resources and inadequate equipment (see section 2.2.3) but in varying degrees. There is no doubt that these challenges hinder the effective training of prospective journalists but the onus is on universities to efficiently utilise the resources at their disposal to offer an ideal journalism education.

The Department of Mass Communication has since its establishment been able to produce graduates who are successful journalists. Whether they meet the needs of the industry at the time of graduation is another aspect this research addresses (with research question three in section 1.5), pointing to a need for collaboration between the department and media industry in training future journalists.

4.4 Perceptions on Fresh Graduates of the Programme

To answer my third research question, I deemed it necessary to interview reporters, photojournalists and senior editors in both print and broadcast media. The intention was to find out how media practitioners perceive journalism graduates from MAK. I selected respondents on the basis of their interaction and experience with the graduates in the newsroom. The general perception was that fresh graduates from MAK lack practical journalism skills and basic language abilities, something that was blamed on Uganda’s entire education system. There was consensus that earlier products of the department were of better quality than recent graduates.

Daniel Kalinaki said there are few fantastic graduates leaving the university. But he noted:

[... it is very rare that you get a journalist who comes out of MAK and hits the ground running. In most cases we get graduates who cannot spell; who cannot punctuate and who do not have the barest kind of civic education.

He blamed this situation on the general education system. He said the quality of university education is generally compromised by the education at lower level and the government’s policy to support mass education at primary and secondary level other than university level.

Chris Obore, another editor at MPL also affirmed Daniel Kalinaki’s sentiments and said the department no longer produces excellent journalists. But he said earlier graduates were

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55 Uganda has embraced the education for all strategy by providing free education at primary and secondary levels of education. This increased enrollments and is said to have diluted the quality of education. There is concern that this strategy shifted the government’s attention and support from higher education.
academically and practically competent. He mentioned successful journalists like Charlotte Kawesa, Andrew Mwenda and Julius Mucunguzi, who are products of the department.

Chris Obore attributed the decline in the quality of the products of the department to the commercialisation of MAK and the decline of the quality of education in general. He, for instance, said most of graduates cannot even write a proper story for publication.

Don Wanyama who constantly supervises journalism graduates from MAK added: “[...] MAK journalism graduates critically lack a sense of expression in what should be simple but straightforward English.”

He added that graduates lack good analytical, basic writing and investigative skills. They also lack the craft of news writing and scripting, interviewing skills and research skills. But he noted that some graduates are promising journalists.

Another issue raised by most respondents was that the graduates lack the passion for journalism. This was mainly attributed to the open admission policy and the lack of career guidance in Uganda’s entire education system.

Editors and journalists alike noted that some students apply for the Mass Communication programme not because they have interest and passion to pursue journalism or communication but because the programme is prestigious. Respondents noted with concern that many students apply for the course when they have no idea what they are applying for.

Don Wanyama said to pursue a career in journalism, one needs the passion. “[...] if you do not have the passion to tell a story you would be flogging a dead horse,” he said. He blamed the lack of passion to the old mentality about prestigious courses. “Students end up doing courses they do not actually want. Reality eventually hits many of them that journalism is not as luxurious as they thought it was,” he said.

James Tumusiime, the Managing Editor of The Observer newspaper, also said some people who study journalism do not have the interest in journalism as such yet people with the interest sometimes do not end up in those classes because Uganda’s education system is structured in such a way that many do not actually study what they are interested in but what grades dictate.

He noted that when he taught some of journalism classes at MAK, he discovered that a number of students pursue the programme not because they have interest in journalism but because they had the grades and because the course is prestigious. He thus said:
[...] in such a case, the training may not change much because it is coming a little too late. You cannot train someone to be interested or passionate about journalism. They need to have it in them. That is not a weakness in the training but a weakness of the general education system.

The lack of passion was also blamed on inadequate career guidance in Uganda’s education system. Many students in Uganda pursue the wrong courses because they never get any guidance on what courses they should offer to fit their interests and abilities.

Daniel Kalinaki confirmed that there is no significant level of career guidance in Uganda. And as such, people study Mass Communication because they obtained the grades required for admission and because it sounds good. He added:

[...] the course is competitive and so there is a sense of achievement in getting into Mass Communication. Many apply and study the course when they do not even want to be journalists or want anything to do with communication. The university makes matters worse by giving such students a blanket training pumping them with theory and a little bit of practice which is not adequate.

Many broadcast and print newsrooms in Uganda are occupied by graduates either from MAK or from other backgrounds. Don Wanyama said the best performing journalists in the MPL newsroom are not journalism graduates and most top editors are not trained journalists but have made their mark in journalism because they have the passion for the profession. He noted that the current New Vision editor-in-chief and the current MPL executive editor are trained teachers.

James Tumusiime of The Observer has his first degree in Social Sciences.

However, this does not mean the department has not produced excellent journalists. Many outstanding journalists like Andrew Mwenda, the Executive Editor of the Independent, Daniel Kalinaki of MPL and Arinaitwe Rugyendo of The Red Pepper, among others, are products of the programme.

Lecturers at the department said most of their former students are successful journalists working as news anchors, senior reporters and senior or managing editors in both the electronic and print media in and out of Uganda. In this regard, Monica Chibita said: “I feel proud that in spite of the constraints, we have been able to train students who have gone ahead to become good practical journalists.”
4.5 Perceptions on the Mass Communication Programme

Answers to my fourth research question were obtained through interviews with current and former students of the programme and lecturers. I sought their perceptions on the Mass Communication programme and the general training. Their general agreement was that the programme is relevant to producing journalists for Uganda’s fast growing media industry.

Students generally said the course exposes them to different disciplines within the wider Mass Communication programme. They said the course gives a bit of everything such that students get basic knowledge in broadcast, print, photojournalism and PR before they specialise. However, some expressed concern that teaching these disciplines together does not give students an opportunity to master in any.

Richard Serunjoji, another student, said during a focus group discussion that the time allocated to the programme is not enough to exhaust everything there is about various subjects. While Bernadette Nagita wishes students are introduced to subjects they want to specialise in from first year so that they get enough time to concentrate on what they actually want to study.

When it comes to resources, students were the most disgruntled. They said some books are old yet the subjects of journalism change almost every day. Students hold similar sentiments regarding equipment as pointed out earlier in the chapter. From computers, cameras, to radio and TV equipment, they said the relevant equipment for the different journalistic disciplines is not enough yet what is available is either not in good working condition or is out-dated.

Students said their lecturers are qualified but were concerned that some are never available whenever needed. It was noted that the lecturers’ assessment policy is not satisfactory. Bernadette Nagita said the assessment policy for lecturers is not efficient and it is abused because there was no system to track their performance. “Serious measures should be put in place to assess and evaluate lecturers periodically. There is also a need to hire competent lecturers and fire those who are not up to the task,” she added.

Until the 2009/2010 academic year, there was no systematic mechanism of assessing lecturers’ performance. In April 2010, the department implemented the student evaluation mechanism put in place by the Quality Assurance Division of MAK. The mechanism also allows students to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The evaluation is done periodically and students are issued a form containing information about various aspects of a particular course. During the evaluation, students’ responses are solicited to enable the department and lecturers
get valuable feedback about the university’s ability to meet their learning needs and expectations. Under this mechanism, students are supposed to gauge and rate the quality and effectiveness of the syllabus, the quality of the course and individual lecturers.

Earlier, Monica Chibita said, there was no such a system in which lecturers were assessed by their students. She said that initially, the university’s system was such that every six months, individual lecturers do a self evaluation and discuss their performance with their supervisor, who in this case should be the head of department. The evaluation is standard practice across the world. She explained:

We were behind time. Such a system improves the quality of teaching. It helps you to know whether you meet students’ needs or not so that you can revise the programme and the modes of teaching. I am not saying students’ evaluation on its own is adequate to base decisions regarding the curriculum because sometimes students can evaluate out of their emotions. The evaluation should be used alongside other evaluation measures.

All in all, students and lecturers agreed that the programme is overloaded and three years is not enough. They welcome the plan to increase the time of the programme to four years.

4.5.1 The Internship Programme

Students were of the view that the internship, which is supposed to give them an opportunity to do more practical journalism work, is given little time and comes a little late. Students at the department are supposed to do internship for a minimum of four weeks between second and third year. Harriet Sebaana, the Internship Coordinator said industry players are unsatisfied with the one month as it does not allow students the exposure they need. She added that people in the media want the duration to be increased to at least eight weeks. “But we have limitations in increasing that duration because there are many students from other institutions studying the same course. Therefore, we face competition for internship placement,” she noted.

J.B Wasswa, a former editor at New Vision and MPL, said the department’s internship programme is completely off point and unrealistic to assess students on the basis of punctuality, enthusiasm, attendance as the current system does. He said:
As an editor, I do not need to know how an intern relates with other people. Although this is important, it is not on the top list of what I expect from a student. I want a good story that will sell my paper or my station.

He advised that the media houses should be the one to set the criteria and rules of what they expect students to do and design the job description and targets. There should be a set of expectations, targets and yardsticks against which the performance of an intern is gauged.

He recommended that the programme is revised in a way that gives guidance to institutions on how they should help the students. He added that the department and media houses have to come to an understanding on: what the university expects interns to do and what employers expect from the interns. Students expressed concern that many of them end up doing their internship in “substandard” media houses because the department does not find them internship placements.

J.B Wasswa also finds it perturbing that students find placement for themselves, which should be the university’s role. He was quick to add that the university and the department have a challenge to find internship places for the many students since many institutions in Uganda offer journalism-related courses.

About the supervision of students, respondents revealed that no lecturer from the department ever goes to the media organisation to supervise them during internship.

John Baptist Imokola, a News Editor at WBS TV station said student supervision by the department is lacking. “Students just come here (WBS) with introductory letters and once they are accepted, they complete the internship without any supervisor coming to check on how they are doing,” he added. He said it is not enough for the department to test students’ performance on internship reports they do not determine whether the internship was useful or not.

Harriet Sebaana explained that the department initially did on-spot field assessment and evaluation whereby lecturers went to where students did their industrial training, talked to their supervisors, assessed them and graded them. She acknowledged that at the moment, the department cannot afford on-spot field supervision due to funding limitations.

As noted earlier in section 4.1.6, supervision is a major element in any successful internship programme. Much as students are supervised by, say, an editor, supervision by someone from the university is vital as it enables the department keep up with students’ performance.
Doing internship without supervision raises serious issues about the programme, which need urgent attention. In fact, the internship is an integral part of an undergraduate journalism curriculum and a channel through which any journalism school keeps in touch with the industry. Without any form of supervision, it becomes difficult to effectively harness the input of the industry, which is relevant in the training of future journalists.

Monica Chibita in the MassCom@20 magazine emphasises that the relevance of the department depends (so much) on keeping in touch with the industry. The department’s inability to follow-up and supervise students during internship somewhat widens the gap between the two institutions. Editors confirmed that there is limited contact between them and the department, which is reflected in the fact that the department just sends students to them with introductory letters to find internship placement. They said that rarely are they contacted on matters of students’ performance yet their input would be important to the entire learning process.

In addition, practicing journalists are an important teaching resource that the department can use to bridge the gap between the newsroom and the classroom. It is therefore important to have people from the industry teach journalism students. Although the department once in a while invites journalists to teach, there is no formal policy regarding guest lecturers. However, some part-time lecturers are former editors or journalists while some are still in active practice.

4.5.2 Teaching Methods

There is a general view that the modes of teaching at the department are limited to the lecture method without seminars, tutorials and student workshops. Such methods are impossible if the class size is large as pointed out by the UNESCO model curriculum.

Students said there is no need to teach practical courses in a classroom as is the case with courses like News Writing and Reporting and Newspaper Editing. Practicing journalists hold the view that aspiring journalists should mostly be sent to the field to learn through practice. For example, if it is a writing course, students should actually write stories instead of sitting in class and being taught how to write. Their views are in line with the UNESCO model curriculum which proposes that writing and reporting courses should consist of class sessions, extensive field experience, writing workshops and computer laboratory for editing courses.
4.5.3 Assessment Methods

The department mainly uses course works, tests and end of semester exams as modes of assessment. Courses like Computer Science (offered in first year) are assessed on a progressive basis. Such courses are not examined at the end of the semester. Students saw no reason for assessing practical courses with written exams at the end of the semester. The department does not assess students’ class attendance, which the UNESCO curriculum deems relevant to the entire learning process. The number of assignments or course work given to students is limited by the large size of classes. Lecturers said it is very difficult to give many students more than two assignments in the 17 weeks of each semester.
CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF JOURNALISM TRAINING AT MAK

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an evaluative analysis of journalism training offered at MAK. The analysis delves into how the training at the department can be made more relevant by giving suggestions for improvement. Attempts are also made to compare the MAK programme with the journalism course at OUC.

Chapter four describes the programme in line with the research questions in which I sought to explain what the Mass Communication programme is about; its shortcomings; perceptions on its graduates and perceptions on the programme itself. Answers to the questions were obtained by analysing documents about the programme and the department; observing what goes on at the department, interviewing key informants like lecturers and journalists; plus holding focus group discussions with final year students of the programme.

Through these data gathering techniques, a number of issues were highlighted pointing to a need to improve and provide a more relevant education that meets both academic and professional standards in Uganda.

I incorporated views on the professional training of journalists from OUC lecturers because the college specialises in education for a variety of professions (including journalism) and focuses on research and development work for studies in professions. It also has a centre for the study of professions. See http://www.hio.no/Welcome-to-OUC/Faculties-and-Centres/Centre-for-the-Study-of-Professions/About-CSP (accessed 07.03.2010).

Respondents quoted in chapter four have differing views on the mode of admission of students to study journalism at MAK. While lecturers like Monica Chibita and editors like Don Wanyama say the open admission policy affects the quality of the department’s products, others like Peter Mwesige, Daniel Kalinaki say restricting admission locks out many potential journalists.

56 See http://www.hio.no/Welcome-to-OUC/Faculties-and-Centres/Centre-for-the-Study-of-Professions/About-CSP (accessed 07.03.2010).
To stress her view, Monica Chibita in a paper titled: *Developing undergraduate journalism curricula: Concerns and Issues*, argues that the lowering of entry points to accommodate more “clients”\(^57\) has led to a crop of relatively weaker students from the outset. She added that the final product seems to be declining in quality. She, however, says the deteriorating quality of training may have as much to do with the quality of students admitted as with other factors such as the teacher-student ratio and inadequate teaching resources. In any case, one continues to hear complaints from industry players that the department’s graduates are ill-prepared to work for today’s media. Although there is no research to prove Monica Chibita’s sentiments, the criteria of admission to any programme affect the quality of its products either directly or indirectly.

These views notwithstanding, admission to any university programme should have certain restrictions to guard the quality and standards of a profession. The restriction may be a subject requirement as is the case with the medical profession or qualifications based on students’ previous academic performance.

OUC also has no subject requirement for admission to a journalism programme except for the grades. Rune Ottosen, a journalism professor at OUC Faculty of Journalism, Library and Information Science informed me in an interview that it is the grades that determine who gets into their journalism programme. Applicants with A or B in their high school diploma (overall grades) have a high chance to be admitted to the programme. This is where the MAK and OUC differ on admission. To be admitted to the Mass Communication programme, applicants are required to have two principal passes. This means that applicants with grades ranging from A to E can be admitted to the programme.

Just like Monica Chibita said, admission to the MAK programme was opened to allow in students from any background, hence affecting the quality of the graduates of the programme. Through interviews, a number of respondents expressed concern that admitting students basing on good grades allows in students who may not have the passion for journalism as some may apply for the programme because it is prestigious. Several respondents emphasised the need to test students’ zeal for journalism before they are admitted to the programme. The reasoning is that many students opt for the Mass Communication programme not because they actually have the passion to pursue a career in journalism but because getting into it is an achievement on the side of the applicant.

\(^{57}\) After commercialisation of the MAK, students admitted to the programme are regarded as a source of income for the university operations.
Admission to a journalism programme needs not be restricted to grades only. There is a need to ensure that students intending to pursue a journalism programme have the interest. This can be done by instituting a subject requirement like Literature and administering “passion tests” to examine the applicants’ interest in the profession. Chris Obore advised that aptitude tests should be used to assess students’ competence and their interest in journalism. In such a case, the training would be directed to those with interest in journalism.

The other requirement would be restricting the grades applicants should have just like OUC does. Such requirements will make entry to the programme more competitive and reduce the student numbers, which is often blamed for the dwindling quality of teaching at MAK.

Just like Monica Chibita noted that the high student population at MAK was a result of the introduction of the private sponsorship scheme. The more students the university admits, the more fees it will raise to run some of its operations since its commercialisation in the early 1990s (Mamdani, 2007). Therefore, implementing a policy that could reduce the intake of students to a prestigious programme like Mass Communication could have financial implications for the Department of Mass Communication, the mother Faculty of Arts and the university in general (Mamdani, 2007:111). Nonetheless, there is a need for mechanisms to guard the quality of journalism training offered at MAK. These could be in designing the curriculum, its execution and availing resources necessary for training prospective journalists.

5.1 Dealing with the Curriculum

The undergraduate Mass Communication curriculum is designed with courses that introduce students to the media in general and the world in which journalists operate. Through courses like Introduction to Mass Communication, Media History, Mass Media and Society, the curriculum introduces students to the media, institutional and societal aspects within which journalists work. In addition, the curriculum offers Political Science and Economics to provide knowledge relevant to journalistic work. Lecturers at the Department of Mass Communication and practicing journalists who were interviewed for this study deem such courses relevant to being a journalist.

58. Aptitude tests should consist of multiple questions that gauge the applicants’ verbal ability on spelling, grammar and ability to understand and follow written instructions; ability to identify the underlying logic of a pattern which is an indicator of fluid intelligence and ability to learn new things quickly. Students can also be tested on vocabulary, paragraph reading, arithmetic, algebra, interest in journalism as well as personality. See http://www.psychometric-success.com/aptitude-tests/aptitude-tests-introduction.htm and http://www.jstor.org/stable/27531199 (accessed 24.03.2011).

59. Mamdani (2007:112) says the scheme was aimed at funding operational costs of faculties and was deemed a cost-free way of increasing university revenue. In some privately sponsored programmes, financial considerations seem to supersede academic quality assurance (Ibid: 72).
Even the UNESCO model curriculum stresses the importance of exposing prospective journalists to a wide range of knowledge. But current and former students of the Mass Communication programme hold the view that these courses are too theoretical and irrelevant to their pursuit of a career in journalism.

At OUC, the journalism curriculum offers theoretical courses like Journalistic Theory and Methods and News plus Media journalism in first and second year⁶⁰. But OUC’s journalism curriculum does not offer non journalism-related courses like politics or economics as is the case at MAK. Rune Ottosen said students admitted to the journalism programme are expected to have basic knowledge on political, economics and general knowledge from high school. He holds the view that focus of a journalism programme should be on reporting. But he noted that general knowledge is usually embedded in the various journalism courses. Rune Ottosen added that each course in the curriculum is designed such that they have one or two lectures with general background knowledge but these lectures are also journalism centred. For example, a law and crime journalism course can have some lectures on law and crime in general but such knowledge is administered to students with a journalistic background.

Since students at MAK see no reason to study general knowledge and optional courses, the Department of Mass Communication needs to emphasise the importance of theoretical courses to students during the orientation period and find a way of offering these courses from a journalistic point of view. Just like Peter Mwesige is quoted as saying in chapter four, students need to be told that these courses are as important to being a journalist as the skills courses.

Regarding non journalism courses like Political Science and Economics, the department could pick a leaf from OUC and administer the knowledge to students through the journalism courses. In such a case, students would not be required to study Political Science or Economics as independent courses. These subjects would be embedded in journalism courses and taught from the journalistic angle. For example, courses on business reporting will not only give students business reporting skills but will also equip them with knowledge about the economy. That way, students will study journalism and at the same time gain the relevant knowledge. Such an approach will also go a long way to reduce the department’s expenditure since the department has to pay for each course offered in other faculties (Mamdani, 2007).

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⁶⁰Check out http://www.hio.no/Studietilbud/Bachelorstudier/Bachelorstudium-i-journalistikk (accessed 27.11.2010).
The main criticism of the MAK journalism curriculum and the programme, which many respondents cited as a gap, is that the training is more theoretical than practical. Most respondents noted that even courses about writing, photography, radio and TV production, which are by nature designed to be practical are taught in a theoretical manner. This was partly attributed to lack of relevant equipment.

The Mass Communication curriculum offers journalism courses that teach students to report and write for print, radio and TV media and photography. Through courses like newspaper reporting, students are taught how to write news and feature articles for various media. The curriculum provides no courses on the new media yet courses on Internet reporting, online journalism and multimedia are relevant to the pursuit of a career in journalism today.

As Hugh Stephenson writes in the foreword of a book titled *European Journalism Education* (2009, 13), journalists in this technology-driven media world need to forget their original position in the traditional scheme of things and deliver their ‘product’ across the whole range of available media outlets. This, Stephenson said, has profound implications for the training of journalists. Rune Ottosen confirmed that journalism today is all about new technology. This should therefore be reflected in a journalism curriculum and in the training of journalists.

To start with, the Department of Mass Communication needs to incorporate courses like multimedia, online, digital, web, Internet, new media journalism, digital journalism production and digital photojournalism, among other courses in the curriculum as resources may allow. However, introducing such courses without relevant facilities and resources would not make much difference. Examining the functioning conditions of human and technical resources like laboratories and equipment is vital to understanding how the department can offer new media courses and other practical journalism courses.

**5.2 Resources as Enabling and Hindering Factor**

As pointed out in chapter four, the Department of Mass Communication’s ability to effectively teach practical courses and courses on new media is hindered by inadequate resources and equipment. Teaching such courses also requires specific teaching and reading resources as well as equipment like computers, digital TV and radio equipment, radio, TV sets and cameras.

The journalism faculty at OUC is able to offer courses on new media because the college has technological resources important to teaching such courses. The college has a learning centre stocked with about 40 desktop computers fully connected to the Internet. More so, students have
personal computers and have access to wireless Internet at the college. Rune Ottosen noted that it is mandatory for students to own video and photographic cameras.

The centre has databases, books, newspapers, journals and reference desks plus study areas and rooms for personal reading and group work. The centre provides IT support and is also stocked with digital equipment like video cameras, camcorders, sound recorders, radio and TV sets, headphones and earphones for journalism programmes. The issuing of the equipment is done by the centre’s administrators while maintenance is handled by technicians.

The OUC Faculty of Journalism has an editing room for undergraduate students which is also stocked with computers, radio and TV studios. In this room, students run their own projects like the online newspaper called *Journalen*[^61], they produce radio and TV programmes and edit pictures, among other practical exercises. All these resources are vital in helping students get practical skills first hand.

At the MAK Department of Mass Communication, the undergraduate computer lab is stocked with 20 old computers most of which are not functioning. Although MAK has limited resources to afford standard equipment compared to OUC, the available equipment could be usable if repaired and handled well. Still, there is a need to restock the laboratory with computers that are in good working conditions. The MAK department also needs to upgrade existing equipment as well as acquire up-to-date machines to effectively offer courses on new media.

Makerere may not have the same resources as the OUC but MAK has partnerships with other institutions of learning which can be utilised to acquire relevant equipment. There is also a need to initiate partnerships and submit applications to institutions that may provide support for equipment. Networks with other journalism institutions at national and regional level can enable partner institutions share human, technical resources and books, and experiences on teaching and curriculum issues. Such partnerships would also facilitate joint research and the establishment of a financial support system to fund research, student and staff exchange programmes. Journalism schools in Norway have a similar network (Bjørnsen *et al*, 2009: 187)[^62].

Since the department was gazetted as a UNESCO centre of excellence, it can benefit from donations in form of computers, cameras, radio and TV equipment and textbooks from the


[^62]: Journalism schools in Norway are party to an active network at Norwegian and Nordic level. The schools are members to the Nordic Council and the European Journalism Training Association.
United Nations agency and other partners. But it is not enough to have such equipment if they are not handled well. The department might be able to make do with limited resources if they are utilised efficiently. There is a need for someone to handle the issuing and maintenance of this equipment. This way, the equipment can be repaired and upgraded when it breaks down.

Thus, it is not only a question of resources but also of organisation and administration at the department. In my observation, it is clear that there is lack of organisational capacity coupled with limited planning procedure, lack of initiative and creativity. The organisational structure of the department gives an impression that administrative issues are not properly handled.

During my fieldwork, I learnt that the Mass Communication department plans to establish a multimedia journalism laboratory. If the plan succeeds, students at the department will be able to get hands-on training, which many respondents said has been missing in the training. In an article titled Makerere to get multimedia journalism lab, the head of the department George Lugalambi said the multimedia lab will enable them to equip students with relevant skills that cut across all media platforms. News of a multimedia lab should be greeted with excitement because it will make the programme more practical and at the same time mark the beginning of the teaching of new media and multimedia journalism at the department. But the announcement leaves questions on how the department will execute the plan because of the lack of an elaborate plan of how it intends to acquire the lab.

5.2.1 Reading Materials

One of the issues pointed out in chapter four is that the Department of Mass Communication has a limited collection of text books on Journalism, Mass Communication, PR and Advertising. I also noted that most of these books are old. The department has a mini library separate from the university main library while the OUC Faculty of Journalism uses the same library with the other faculties at the college. But OUC has opportunities that put it in a better position when it comes to accessing reading and teaching materials. Apart from being able to access up-to-date locally and internationally produced text books and other reading materials from partner universities in Norway, OUC Faculty of Journalism has access to over 15,000 electronic journals. Students and

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63 It refers to the way an organisation arranges people and jobs so that its work can be performed and its goals met. See http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Ob-Or/Organizational-Structure.html (accessed 03.05.2011).

64 See http://masscom.mak.ac.ug/ (accessed 03.12.2010).
lecturers easily access these journals because of fast Internet connections unlike their counterparts in MAK where Internet connection is a daily problem.

In principle, many international journals from major publishers are available electronically for free to universities in Least Developing Countries in a scheme through WIPO\(^{65}\) and STM\(^{66}\) publishers\(^{67}\). But using these journals presupposes availability of computers and Internet connectivity. These issues are all interlinked and absence of one causes a setback in other areas.

Due to reliable Internet connection, students at OUC can access these journals online and also print out some documents at the learning centre. In addition, students have access to the latest international magazines, newspapers, government publications and printed journals. Facilities like scanners, printers, projectors and photocopy equipment available at the centre and the college in general make access to reading and teaching resources easier to students and lecturers. Some services like photocopying are paid-for at OUC but that may not be big a problem for students since higher education is free in Norway at all public institutions\(^{68}\). This is not the case for students in Uganda who; on top of paying tuition; have to pay for photocopying, scanning and other related services.

Journalism students at OUC have access to a variety of reading resources produced in Norway, Scandinavia, and internationally. Anne Fogt, the Head of Studies at OUC Faculty of Journalism, said in an interview that most journalism lecturers at the college write textbooks about different subjects in journalism, media and communication. This means that lecturers and students at OUC have access to a range of local and international teaching and reading resources.

Mamdani (2007:75) stresses that there is a dire shortage of reading materials at MAK, whether externally or locally produced. While the OUC Faculty of Journalism has both locally-generated teaching resources generated from academic research the lecturers undertake, MAK Department of Mass Communication lacks such materials which Gorreti Linda Nassanga attributed to inadequate time to engage in meaningful research due to the heavy teaching load.

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\(^{65}\) Stands for World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

\(^{66}\) Science, Technical, Medical. See \url{http://www.stm-assoc.org/} (accessed 07.03.2011).

\(^{67}\) See \url{http://www.wipo.int/ardi/en/} (accessed 07.03.2011).

\(^{68}\) See \url{http://www.culturalprofiles.net/Norway/Directories/Norway_Cultural_Profile-2066.html} (accessed 28.11.2010).
A Kenyan academic Tom Odhiambo⁶⁹ in an article published in the Kenyan newspaper *Daily Nation*⁷⁰ confirms Gorreti Linda Nassanga’s views when he asserts: “[...] to talk about academic journals and serious research in local universities (in Africa) is like making a silly joke at a serious corporate dinner.” He adds that university research committees are always financially strained and wonders how hundreds of young master’s degree holders teaching several courses can ever manage to publish their work.

Tom Odhiambo notes that several academic programmes (at many African universities) are often run on the goodwill of the lecturers because the libraries cannot keep up with the demand for new books, journals and yet research is ever strained.

Findings revealed that one of the department’s goals is to generate and disseminate relevant knowledge about journalism, communication and the media through staff and student research. Achieving this requires financial and administrative commitment from the university and other stakeholders. The department may not have the resources to upgrade its library facilities to the standards of OUC but efforts can be made to stock the libraries with relevant up-to-date teaching and reading resources like text books, printed journals, newspapers, magazines, among others. Since local teaching and reading resources cannot be published overnight, the department should acquire more recent international text books that address all aspects of journalism. The books should tackle subjects like writing and reporting, editing, radio and TV production, media theory, multimedia and online journalism, among others.

A proposal to acquire enough textbooks for all students and lecturers would be an ambitious strategy since resources are generally scarce but resource sharing with other institutions would go a long way to make reading and teaching resources more available. Just as Tom Odhiambo suggests, collaborations between local, regional, African universities and their counterparts in the West and North would help in conducting and publishing research, which is important in generating local materials.

My observation of the resources at the department gave an impression that there is a general lack of coordination of resources. I discovered that people (mostly students) actually do not know the

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⁶⁹ Lecturer of Literature at the University of Nairobi.

potential library resources available to them. This is linked to the lack of coordination and contact among different units at the department. I therefore argue that it is very easy to apportion the lack of resources to the challenges the department faces but the question worth pondering is, how are the available resources utilised? There will never come a time when resources are in plenty, it is crucial that the available resources are used in a proper manner.

5.2.2 Teaching Capacity

Other than books, lecturers are also an important teaching resource at a university. OUC Faculty of Journalism has about 28 full-time lecturers while the MAK Department of Mass Communication has nine. Anne Fogt informed me that the faculty has two professors, 12 associate professors and five assistant professors. The remaining staff members are either PhD candidates or master’s degree holders. On the other hand, the MAK Department of Mass Communication has three PhD holders of which one (Gorreti Linda Nassanga) was just confirmed associate professor in July 2010. The remaining members of staff are either pursuing PhD degrees or hold master’s degrees. One of the reasons given for having few PhD holders at the department is that journalism studies started late in Uganda compared to other countries. Yes it is hard to get PhD holders in journalism or media overnight but the department can motivate the existing ones and encourage others to pursue the same qualifications.

From the above observation, I concluded that the department is understaffed and the lecturer to student ratio is high. This is confirmed by Mamdani’s assertions in a book on neo-liberal reforms at MAK in which he notes that some programmes at Uganda’s oldest institution of learning have few permanent staff members and they have very heavy responsibilities, both administrative and academic (2007:76). Many times, they have to double up for other duties not directly under them.

Since the number of full-time lecturers is limited at MAK department of Mass Communication, the department relies on part-time lecturers. Mamdani (2007) confirms that the running of some programmes depends mainly on part-time and temporary junior staff because there are few permanent members of staff.

The OUC Faculty of Journalism also employs part-time lecturers who often come in as guest lecturers but the degree to which it does so is not the same as that of MAK Department of Mass Communication. The faculty just like other established journalism schools (J-Schools) in Norway, has an established relationship with the media which allows active journalists and editors to regularly teach and also act as examiners during exams (Bjørnsen et al, 2009: 186). Cultivating a
close relationship with the media industry will help the MAk department have practicing journalists come in as guest lecturers. As noted in chapter 4.1.8, the relevance of academic journalism programmes depends on their relationship with the media industry because practicing journalists are an important teaching resource.

Regarding the professional background of lecturers, I learnt that lecturers at OUC Faculty of Journalism have a combination of academic background and or professional journalistic experience while some members of staff are still practicing journalism as pointed out by Hovden et al (2009:149). Rune Ottosen insisted that journalism courses should be taught by lecturers with a mixture of academic background and professional journalism experience. Similar views were held by respondents like Sara Namusoga, a part-time lecturer at MAk Department of Mass Communication, who noted that being taught by someone with both academic and professional abilities makes the training more realistic.

Anne Fogt also affirmed that people with practical journalism experience make lectures more relevant for students because the lecturers would know about newsroom operations, how to write and report. Students and some lecturers at the Mass Communication Department were critical of employing lecturers with no prior journalistic experience to teach. They said being taught by people who have no journalistic experience explains why the course is more theoretical.

The department could do as OUC does by employing people with a background in professional journalism practice. But people with a combination of a strong academic and professional journalistic background may not be easy to find since journalism education and media studies started late in Uganda as Gorreti Linda Nassanga pointed out but efforts can still be made to attract, motivate and retain high quality staff.

Besides being a source of lecturers, the media are a training ground for journalism students during internship and it is in newsrooms that most journalism students end up. Basing on the notion that learning through practical work is an important element in learning; OUC Faculty of Journalism operates on the idea that internship is a vital element of journalism training (Bjornsen, 2009: 186). It is upon this notion that its internship programme is premised.

5.3 Utilising Media Contacts

Through an established system, the OUC faculty depends on its contacts in the media to help students find placement for internship. Anne Fogt noted that they keep contact with the media industry and send out letters to all their contacts in newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations.
who advise them on the number of internship places available. She said such arrangements ensure that their students get the internship placement they want. By contacting the media directly for the internship, Anne Fogt said, the college has control over the entire programme. This signals a deliberate agreement with the media industry to manage the internship programme.

Students at MAK Department of Mass Communication on the other hand find internship placement for themselves, something that several respondents blamed on a lack of an established relationship with the media. Journalists and editors said that the department is yet to develop a good relationship with them. They said the department just sends students to them for internship with no prior arrangement. On further scrutiny, I learnt that there is no formal contract between the department and the media regarding students’ internship placement. This means that there is no formalised commitment which is vital to an efficient internship programme.

Anne Fogt said every student at OUC Faculty of Journalism has a contact lecturer at the college and supervision is mostly done by the contact person in the media where students take internship. That person makes an internship report and sends it to the faculty. Students are also supposed to write their own report and present proof of work in form of newspaper articles or radio/TV programme(s). This is similar to what the Department of Mass Communication does.

Students at MAK as well as practicing journalists criticised the department’s inability to find internship places for their students and provide supervision during internship. Although some lecturers blamed the department’s failure to find placement and provide supervision for students on high student numbers, journalists and editors blamed it on an unsystematic relationship between the department and the media and poor coordination of the internship programme.

Streamlining the relationship with the media would make supervision possible. Otherwise, this impossible if there is no contract. It is the department’s responsibility to initiate contact with the media by explaining the terms of the internship programme, what is expected of the media, the students and department. Such an arrangement will enable students to get practical journalism exposure as the department and the media enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship.

The duration of the internship is another issue that MAK respondents were dissatisfied with. While the internship at OUC Faculty of Journalism takes 10 weeks (for all the three years of the bachelors programme) that of the Department of Mass Communication takes four weeks (for the whole course). In both cases, the time is deemed inadequate. I argue that OUC students are at a better advantage since they are exposed to practical journalism work right from first year. The
department should increase the internship duration to at least eight weeks and coordinate it more efficiently.

5.4 Focusing the Curriculum

The difference in the time dedicated to internship could be attributed to the focus of the curricula of both institutions and the approach they take in teaching journalism. The OUC journalism programme is practically oriented with substantial theoretical components taught from a practical perspective. Findings indicate that most programmes at OUC (including journalism) are characterised by close contact with working life through relevant professional practice. As such, the content of the curriculum is practically oriented with emphasis on journalism as a craft (Bjørnsen et al, 2009: 183). Anne Fogt emphasised that their students get hands-on practical skills from the time they join the programme so that they can practice journalism right after school. Therefore, theoretical and factual topics are taught from a journalistic point of view and seldom in academic depth (Ibid).

The modes of instruction and assessment at OUC Faculty of Journalism are also practical. Students are obliged to do practical work throughout their course of study. Anne Fogt noted that journalism students have to write about 16 articles in first year, 10 in second and third year. In total, students do over 35 practical assignments on top of individual written papers and take home assignments. Students are given many practical assignments because journalism requires a lot of practical exposure to different media be it pictures, newspaper layout, editing and production.

The MAK programme on the other hand aims at preparing students with professional and intellectual skills for careers as practitioners and scholars in journalism, communication and the media, which in my view is an unequivocally good approach. The problem at MAK is that theory and practice are taught as if they are different and independent of each other instead of integrating them.

Journalism students at OUC and MAK run online newspapers which enable them to practice journalism. At OUC, students run the *Journalen* while their counterparts at MAK run

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Journalism@mak. In fact, students at the department who fail to find internship placement in the mainstream media work on the online newspaper during the internship period. Journalism@mak is run just like a real newspaper with some students acting as editors of different news beats like campus news, national and international news, sports and entertainment while others write stories, take pictures and upload them to the website. This is one way through which students can put the theory they acquire in class into practice.

But former and current students of the MAK programme said their efforts to practice journalism through the online newspaper are hampered by lack of supervision from their lecturers.

Dennis Muhumuza, a former student of the programme, told me that students’ efforts to learn journalism through the online newspaper are frustrated by the lack of departmental input in the project. My interaction with internship students at the department confirmed that there was little input of lecturers in the students’ work. Although there was a lecturer supposed to supervise the students, not at any one point during the five times I visited the laboratory did I witness any form of supervision. No lecturer looks at students’ stories before they are published, something proved by the mistakes in stories published in the online publication.

A visit to the website (www.journalism@mak.co.ug) between November 2010 and February, 2011 revealed that the site was last updated in July 2010. All the stories running on the site were published between June and July by students who were on internship at that time. The most recent stories on the website were published on 08.07.2010. This means that throughout the semester running between August and December, no student work was published on the student-run online publication. Finding content as old as six months on the website is an indication that students did not do any practical work throughout the semester that run between August and December 2010. A student-run newspaper should be updated regularly as an indication that students actually use the platform to practice journalism on a regular basis.

The student publication for OUC Faculty of Journalism on the other hand is up-to-date with stories published throughout the semester even during the examination period.

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74 See http://journalism.mak.ac.ug/ (accessed 03.12.2010).


The OUC Faculty of Journalism runs four student projects covering media platforms of Internet, radio, TV and newspaper. The term plan (see Appendix ix) for term two, academic year 2010/2011) allocates specific time for the practical projects in which students go to a dummy newsroom at the college and practice journalism. From first year, students get hands-on practice in online journalism (working on the Journalen), print journalism, radio and TV journalism and there are lecturers in charge of each of the four projects. In the dummy newsroom, one student works as the assigning editor who gives fellow students (reporters) assignments. Elsebeth Frey, a lecturer who supervises the Internet project (Journalen), informed me that on a particular assignment, three students are assigned to a task; one takes pictures, another one takes the video camera and the other student writes the story. For instance, looking at a story titled Ikke glemt, which was published on 27.01.2011, I noticed that the photos were taken by one student (Therese Alice Sanne), the text was written by another (Caroline Gundersen Enge) and the video was done by (Magnus Buer). Elsebeth Frey noted that students are encouraged to practice journalism across all media platforms, that is, take pictures, write text and at the same time take video. This kind of training equips students with various journalistic skills, moulding them into more dynamic journalists than their counterparts at MAK who only practice for one media platform.

She added that students actually source their own news which is in the categories of national news, news from Oslo, news from OUC, education news, entertainment news, among others. For instance, a story titled Ber ordførerne si nei til olje falls under national/domestic news. Just like any newsroom setting, OUC first year journalism students generate story ideas as a team and each is assigned and given deadlines within which to hand in the stories. Elsebeth Frey explained that the practical work is done on a rotational basis to make sure that every student gets hands-on training in the four media platforms.

The second term (Spring Term) plan (see Appendix x) for the first year journalism class is designed to combine both theory and practical classes. The second and third weeks of January were dedicated to a language course, courses on how to do news reportage, how to write, media

\[77 \text{ See } \text{http://journalen.hio.no/journalen/Kultur/article34731.ece} \text{ (accessed 29.01.2011).} \]
\[78 \text{ See } \text{http://journalen.hio.no/journalen/Innenriks/} \text{ (accessed 12.02.2011).} \]
\[79 \text{ See } \text{http://journalen.hio.no/journalen/Nytt_fra_Oslo/} \text{ (accessed 12.02.2011).} \]
\[80 \text{ See } \text{http://journalen.hio.no/journalen/Nytt_fra_HiO/} \text{ (accessed 12.02.2011).} \]
\[81 \text{ See } \text{http://journalen.hio.no/journalen/Innenriks/} \text{ (accessed 12.02.2011).} \]
and society with specific focus on freedom of expression. I also learnt that specific time was allocated to teaching students how to search in data bases of government registry for journalistic information.

According to the term plan, week four and five were dedicated to practical work with the exception of Fridays on which two hours were dedicated to language and human rights lessons.

Attempts to provide practical training at MAK Department of Mass Communication are hindered by limited resources like radio and TV equipment, computers, cameras and low Internet connectivity. While OUC Faculty of Journalism has an editing room stocked with computers, radio and TV studios for students to practice journalism at the university, MAK journalism students have no access to such facilities except for a radio studio and scores of substandard cameras. Students majoring in TV production for example, study most topics on TV in theory because MAK does not have any TV studios. Even the radio studios available had been off air for about four months at the time of this research between June and July. Students and lecturers informed me that the equipment available is substandard and sometimes out of service.

One must of course be aware that MAK is an institution situated in Uganda, a developing country with most institutions of learning facing almost insurmountable problems. These include lack of or poor infrastructure such as laboratories, workshops, libraries, office space for lecturers and classrooms, inadequate funding for research and in some cases teaching resources, crumbling or ancient libraries, poorly trained or overworked staff, and outdated curriculum.

The easiest solution would be the acquisition of up-to-date equipment relevant to journalism training and practice like radio and TV equipment, photographic cameras, computers, among others. But this calls for commitment on the side of the university and the department in particular to also hire trained personnel to maintain the equipment. In addition, there should be adequate space to house this equipment. For instance, if the department of Mass Communication is to establish a TV studio, there will also be a need for space to house it. However, I argue that setting up a TV studio does not require enormous space since the equipment can be compacted. Being just a journalism department (not a media house), all that is needed is a small news studio necessary for academic purposes.

The Department of Mass Communication faces challenges of limited resources because the student population does not match the available resources. Matching resources to student population would save the university from a lot of criticism and probably contribute to quality
assurance. The reason why most resources are inadequate is that the few available resources are shared among many students. This confirms Mamdani’s views when he said that the commercialisation of MAK saw a surge in student numbers but the increment was not matched with the resources (Mamdani, 2007). Even though student numbers almost doubled in most programmes at the university, the number of permanent lecturers and infrastructure like teaching space were not increased to match with the student numbers (Ibid:76).

Mamdani (2007:14) for instance noted: “[...] whereas the student population at all levels had risen from 1.4 million in 1980 to 2.9 million in 1988, there was an absolute decline in resources available for education over the entire period.” In Faculty of Arts, where the Mass Communication Department is situated, students’ admission increased from 364 in 1992/1993 academic year to 1,907 in the 2003/2004 academic year (Mamdani, 2007:51). The number of students admitted to the Mass Communication programme more than doubled from 1996 when the private scheme was introduced. Admissions to the programme increased from 20 in the 1994/1995 academic year to more than 100 students in the 2003/2004 academic year (Ibid: 63). There is no doubt that increasing enrolments resulted in the deteriorating quality of education at the university. Therefore, controlling student numbers could be the starting point in solving problems the university and specifically the Department of Mass Communication is facing.

The department can also redefine the training by taking a more practical approach just like the OUC Faculty of Journalism. With such an approach, more attention would be paid to getting students to do more practical journalism work. Better still, balancing the two aspects would be the ideal approach to teaching journalism. The UNESCO model and a number of scholars of emphasise the importance of theory courses and general knowledge subjects to becoming a journalist but my argument is that such subjects have to be taught from a journalistic angle. I hold the view that an institution like MAK is better off focusing its journalism curriculum on either the professional aspect or the theoretical one instead of tackling all aspects which may be difficult to sustain.

One of the gaps in the Mass Communication curriculum mentioned in chapter 4.2.3 is that journalism and communication are treated and taught as if they are the same yet they are actually different. As earlier noted, journalists and PR people serve different interests. While PR people are trained to be spin doctors for companies, individuals and organisation; journalists are by principle supposed to write about and uncover whatever PR people attempt to hide or sugar-coat. There is a need for the department to streamline the teaching of journalism in the
curriculum and thereby separate the teaching of journalism and communication-related courses like PR and Advertising. The department can teach journalism and communications as two different programmes just like OUC does and also clearly define the disciplines. Otherwise, there is a risk of producing graduates who are jacks of all trades but masters of none.

The department has to match the undergraduate curriculum to the changing media landscape in Uganda. At the time of this study, the department was still operating on a curriculum that only focuses on teaching journalism in traditional media like newspapers, radio and TV broadcast media. Uganda’s media landscape is now diverse with local/rural, national and regional newspapers; radio and TV stations; magazines, to mention but a few. There is a need for courses that equip students with skills to write and report for say rural and community media as well as the new media.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This study sought to evaluate the journalism training offered at MAK through the Mass Communication programme. The specific objectives for undertaking this research are: (1) to gauge the quality of journalism training offered through the Mass Communication programme; (2) to point out linkages between what is taught in the journalism class and what is required of fresh graduates in the newsroom; and (3) to suggest ways the training can be improved.

From these objectives, I developed the following four research questions to guide the study:

1. What is the structure and content of the Mass Communication programme at MAK?
2. What gaps exist within the course’ curriculum and how can the gaps be bridged?
3. What perceptions do journalism practitioners have of fresh graduates of the Mass Communication programme from MAK?
4. What perceptions do lecturers and students at the department have of the journalism training offered through the Mass Communication course at MAK?

To find answers to these research questions, I employed qualitative research techniques to collect data. The techniques included: interviews, focus group discussions, observation and document review. Part of the analysis was done by comparing the MAK Mass Communication programme to the journalism programme offered at OUC. The data were also analysed basing on the UNESCO model curriculum for journalism for developing countries and benchmarks for teaching journalism at undergraduate level. I got the benchmarks from the UNESCO model and other literature on what is deemed ideal journalism education.

The chapter gives an overview of my observations about the programme; reviews the research objectives and questions presented in chapter 1.4 and 1.5; discusses conclusions drawn from the study and suggests possible angles for future research.
6.1 General Observations about the Programme

Basing on data obtained through assessment methodologies of observation, interviews and document review, I made the following observations in regard to the state of journalism training offered at MAK.

Too little of what is taught in the classroom at the department reflects or rhymes with the demands of the industry. I reached this conclusion from views of journalists and editors who supervise the products of the Mass Communication programme when they go to the newsrooms for internship and after graduation. A number of graduates of the programme have to be retrained in the very basic aspects of journalism like writing an intro and identifying news.

This is a confirmation that there is a contradiction in the teaching of theory and practice at the department. Fred Masiga, an editor at MPL substantiated this point and said the majority of the students come out of the university as raw as they first went there. A couple of respondents blamed this on the material situation at the university; poor coordination of the internship programme, a poor relationship between the department and the media industry and having lecturers with no practical journalism experience, among others.

The criticism labelled on the MAK journalism graduates hold water since students get little practical exposure during their course of study. Students at the department do very few practical assignments compared to their counterparts at OUC. Even the online newspaper which should be an avenue where students practice their journalism skills is not often used. However, many journalists that I interviewed attribute their skills such as writing and editing, photography to the Mass Communication programme.

Findings show that the department lacks relevant equipment to facilitate the teaching of practical courses and courses on new media. I observed that even the existing equipment is not maintained, something that was evident when I went to the computer lab. The lab is stocked with 20 computers out of which five are working. The rest are in bits: some are just monitors without parts like external hard disk drives, mouse and or key boards. The equipment at the department is a question of maintenance and repair. I hold the view that the department would not be in dire shortage of equipment if the available ones are well handled and repaired in case of breakdown.

I further observed that the Mass Communication department lacks relevant up-to-date library resources like textbooks and other reading and teaching materials, like newspapers, magazines,
journals, among others. The existing literature is mostly externally produced while locally-produced books are completely lacking.

From this finding, I concluded that part of the department’s challenges emanate from the lack of coordination between university administration and the department. I can only deduce that the university does not allocate adequate resources and administrative support to enable the smooth running of the department. My reasoning is confirmed by Mamdani (2007) who blames the situation on the liberalisation of higher education, which started at MAK in the 1990s. The policy gave academic units autonomy, meaning that faculties, schools and departments had to recruit staff and generate funds for themselves.

The liberalisation was followed by the introduction of privately sponsored students and the reduction in government funding for MAK (Ibid). This, according to Mamdani (2007) forced academic units to maximise the number of privately-sponsored students to increase revenue.

[...] pressed against the wall with no other alternative but to generate funds [...] to purchase rudimentary teaching materials, the academic staff made tough choices that led to the entry of fee-paying students alongside government-sponsored students (Ibid: 3).

The result was the rapid expansion of student numbers that exceeded what could be reasonably accommodated within existing teaching and research facilities of the university. The expansion of numbers paid no attention to the available facilities, teaching space, reading resources and equipments. Mamdani (2007:110) argues that this trend set in motion a set of processes that slowly but surely eroded MAK’s traditional claim to be a centre of excellence. The impact of liberalisation was adverse on the quality of education at the university and as such, academic units like the Department of Mass Communication, were not spared.

Monica Chibita elaborates on this situation but saying that resource constraints force universities (MAK) to get into the “numbers game”. She thus notes:

Entry points were lowered to admit more students letting in relatively weaker students from the outset. The final product appears to be deteriorating in quality. This may of course have as much to do with the quality of students admitted as with inadequate teaching resources.
The high student population casts the lecturer-student ratio into focus. In so doing, the number of lecturers does not correspond with that of students. This situation is responsible for the heavy workload many lecturers complained about. The effect of this is manifest in the limited research work by teachers and in the limited time spent with students outside the classroom.

On a positive note, I observed that there are a number of dedicated lecturers who want to improve the situation at the department and provide relevant training to aspiring journalists. They make efforts to give their students relevant knowledge and skills and are optimistic about the future of the department and the training in general.

6.2 Gauging the Quality of the Training

My first objective, which sought to gauge the quality of journalism training at MAK, was met by all the four research questions. Through interviews, focus group discussion and observation, I determined the quality of the training at the department by assessing the programme basing on benchmarks for teaching journalism at undergraduate level outlined in chapter two. Doing so enabled me determine whether the programme meets the required standards for journalism education and provided guidelines for drawing sharp conclusions. Earlier in chapter 2.2.1, I noted that journalism education should:

1. Teach students to tell news from opinion, write news, carryout research, edit and produce material for various media.

2. Enrich students with journalism ethics and knowledge of best journalism practices, the role and history of journalism, media law and the political economy of the media.

3. Teach them how to cover political and social issues of importance to their society through courses developed in cooperation with other departments at the university.

4. Ensure that students have the linguistic ability necessary for journalistic work including the ability to work in indigenous languages.

5. Get students to adapt to changes in technology and the new media.

Viewing the Mass Communication curriculum from the perspective of the first benchmark, I noted that various journalistic courses in the curriculum are designed to teach students how to write news stories. Courses like “News Writing and Reporting” aim at equipping students with skills to gather facts; ask the “who, what, why, when, where and how” (5 Ws + H) questions;
write different leads and also write stories for publication. Students are also taught the elements of news writing such as accuracy, brevity and clarity as well as news values. Although the course outline actually contains what one would consider the basics of news writing and reporting. I got the same criticism that graduates of the programme often lack the basics of news writing.

Shifa Mwesigye, a reporter at the *The Observer* newspaper substantiated this claim by saying the programme encourages students to read notes to pass exams but they do not master the essential aspects relevant in journalism practice. This trend cannot be entirely blamed on MAK; it should instead be blamed on Uganda’s education system which encourages students to just read about things that should instead be done. On this note, she urges:

[...] instead of telling students about editors and sub-editors, they should be given an opportunity to actually do what these people do. Students have to source stories and actually write and edit them, lay and design newspaper pages throughout their course of study.

Shifa Mwesigye’s views are much in line with my findings which show that the programme pays more attention to teaching theory than practice.

When it comes to ethics, the Mass Communication curriculum offers a course that seeks to enrich students with knowledge about ethics. Through the Mass Media and Society course, the department endeavours to teach students general journalism ethics and ethics that are particular to Uganda. The course also aims at enriching students with knowledge about the role of journalists and the media in society as well as the history of the media.

Related to ethics is the Media Law course which teaches students the various laws related to the media as well as journalism. The Mass Media Law course introduces students to laws such as defamation, sedition as well as constitutional provisions for freedom of expression, which are relevant to journalistic practice. Ethics and media law are very important to the practice of journalism. The decision to teach the two separately is wise since they are different though they both aim at moulding students into responsible journalists.

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82 The lead is the first word, sentence or paragraph of the story. See [http://www.ohlone.edu/people/bparks/docs/basicnewswriting.pdf](http://www.ohlone.edu/people/bparks/docs/basicnewswriting.pdf) (accessed 24.12.2010).

83 These include impact, proximity, timeliness, prominence, novelty, conflict, relevance, usefulness and human interest.
Edward Echwalu, the Photo Editor of *The Observer*, confirmed that he benefitted from the courses as he applies the ethics knowledge he acquired in his daily work. Shifa Mwesigye also emphasised that she is a responsible journalist because of the course in Media Law.

But I observed that although ethics and media law are taught, the level of emphasis is not strong because they are taught in an abstract manner. These courses would be more beneficial if the ethical and legal knowledge is married into practice. On this note, Fred Masiga assert: “[...] if the practice is lacking, the ethical knowledge acquired in class remain hanging. But if you practice, ethics and legal issues become part of you.”

Fred Masiga’s views are also in line with my findings that relate to aspects of theory and practice. Over and over, the findings pointed to a need for the department to find a balance between theory and practice. Putting one of these aspects on the top of the other creates a deficiency in the entire training process and is the basis of criticism of most academic journalism programmes. Borrowing from Elsebeth Frey’s views on the situation at OUC, theory and practice help students to be better journalists, and gives them better grounding. But the theory must go hand in hand with practice. Although journalism is a craft, it is also theory-based. Therefore, both must be given equal attention.

The third benchmark urges that journalism students should be taught to cover political and social issues that are important to society. I mentioned that the Mass Communication curriculum offers Political Science and Economics in cooperation with faculties of Social Sciences and Economics Management but I observed that these courses lack a journalistic angle. The courses are designed to give students some political and economic knowledge but not to teach them to cover such issues from the journalistic point of view. It is my contention that such courses should be designed and taught from a journalistic perspective just as OUC does (chapter 5.1). By doing so, students would acquire vast knowledge and at the same time learn journalism through courses like political reporting and business reporting. The findings also show that these courses are not clearly defined. This is one of the reasons why most students deem these subjects irrelevant to journalism. Similarly, I learnt that the relationship between journalism and general knowledge courses is not clear since they are taught differently.

I suggest that incorporating courses like human rights journalism, reporting on administration of justice, court reporting, media and gender as well as media and conflict resolution would not only give students knowledge on social issues but also teach them how to report about these issues.
The fourth benchmark recommends that journalism students need the linguistic ability necessary for journalistic work including the ability to work in indigenous languages. The main national newspapers, radio and TV stations which employ a big percentage of MAK journalism graduates, are published in English. But I also observed that the majority of these media houses publish and broadcast in local languages like Luganda, Runyakitara, Luo, among others. As noted in chapter 4.2.3, the Mass Communication curriculum does not offer any language courses, meaning that students who wish to work for media that broadcast or publish in local languages do not get an opportunity to learn to do so in any local language. Dealing with the language basically requires proper coordination with the Institute of Languages at MAK to tailor language courses that are considered relevant to journalism.

More still, English being the language of instruction in Ugandan schools, one would expect journalism students to be proficient in it. But findings show that some graduates have problems expressing themselves in English as the level of the language mastery is low.

Don Wanyama and many editors said many graduates critically lack a sense of expression in English. But his sentiments could not be entirely believed without validation since (in my experience) senior journalists tend to look down on fresh graduates. I therefore examined two students’ stories published on journalism@mak to prove or disprove Don Wanyama’s views. A story titled *Climate change is still a big threat to East Africa*® actually proves the criticism that some students’ English abilities are wanting. The first two paragraph of the story (see appendix xi) are grammatically wanting. Another story *Private Media Blamed for Poor Coverage on Environmental Issues*® (see appendix xii) is not any better. The question that came to mind after reading these stories was how they were published with such glaring errors. This corroborated earlier assertions that students’ work is not closely supervised by any lecturer.

Respondents like Monica Chibita attributed the English language deficiency to the dropping of the Literature (in English) language admission requirement to the programme although there is no empirical evidence to prove such deductions. I concur with Monica Chibita because opening admission allowed students with a poor English background in the programme yet the curriculum does not provide any language course.


Generally, language should be a critical demand for students to study journalism. Since journalism is done in English and local languages, journalists should be able to comfortably do their work in the official language and at least one local language. Similarly, there is a close relationship between academic and journalistic English proficiency. I therefore presumed that if the journalistic one is questionable, the academic aspect may as well be lacking but this thesis concentrated on the former.

Being a product of the programme myself, I believe the department also produces graduates who are proficient in English. Due to time and space limitations, this study assessed the issue basing on views of a few interviewees and the articles obtained from the student-run newspaper. Therefore, generalisations cannot be made basing on these but an empirical study focusing on language competences of graduates of the programme would paint a clearer picture.

The fifth essential benchmark advocates for undergraduate journalism education to teach students new technology and the new media. At the time of fieldwork, the Mass Communication curriculum only offered one course on media technology. Despite the Computer Science course, some students graduate without basic computer knowledge. This is still a question of organisation and timetabling at the department. How can students complete a three-year programme without basic computer skills yet a whole course is dedicated to that effect? There could be a couple of explanations for this: (1) either the time allocated to the programme is not enough for students to acquire the necessary basic skills or, (2) the one course that is offered is insufficient (3) it is also possible that students do not make effort to learn.

It is unthinkable that a Mass Communication student can graduate without basic skills in computer usage. But the state in which I found the department’s computer lab confirmed this. A lab with less than 10 functioning computers cannot serve over 300 students. In such a case, it becomes a case of survival for the “fittest”, the “unfit” students are most likely to miss out.

My observations revealed that the lab is stocked with computers that are faulty and in urgent need of repair. This was corroborated by respondents who said the department lacks equipment maintenance capacity. Maintenance is an extremely important component in an institutional setting that uses computers; radio, TV and photographic equipment. The department must revise its organisational structure and define the duties of every unit to ensure equipment is always in good working condition and to avoid overloading the existing staff. There should be teaching staff to handle teaching, administration staff to handle the day-to-day running of the department,
staff in charge of internship and technical staff to handle equipment. Without this, the academic staff gets overloaded as they have to perform all these duties on top of teaching.

There is no doubt that resources are a constant constraint at MAK but I strongly believe that creativity and effective planning would put the department in a better position to diversify its sources of funding necessary for investment in relevant infrastructure and equipment. It is very easy to blame every shortfall on resources but a question to ponder is how the department utilises the limited resources at its disposal.

On the whole, the quality of journalism training at the department is on the right track but its shortcomings greatly outweigh the advantages. Although most of the blame for the department’s inability to deliver quality training is put on inadequate resources, it is my contention that resources are part of a bigger problem. Unless the problems discussed in the preceding sections are tackled wholly, resources alone will not deliver the most desirable journalism education.

6.2.1 Lecturers’ and Students’ Perceptions

Findings indicate that lecturers and students have different perceptions on what journalism training should be. While students of the programme deem classroom-based training irrelevant; teachers think otherwise. They hold the view that theory is as important as practice. I concur with teachers on the ground that students need to understand the underlying concepts, theories, background and history of journalism as well as the media before starting to write, take pictures, use microphones and video cameras. My point of departure was on the department’s failure to integrate both theory and practice and instead teach them as if they are different.

The difference in opinion on what the training should be is a sign of a lack of communication between students and the administration of the department. It points to insufficient orientation of students when they join the programme and or lack of guidance on matters relating to the entire programme and especially on what it is about. This poor communication is reflected in students’ attitude towards some courses, which they deem irrelevant.

Related to the above is the observation that some students pursue Mass Communication because of its reputation and the prestige that comes with studying the programme. I noted that such people lack the passion for journalism, something reflected in their career and professional life when they join the newsroom.
This issue signifies the lack of career guidance which is lacking in Uganda’s entire education system. The fact that people apply and are admitted to a programme simply because it is prestigious is a sign of a much bigger challenge which MAK cannot solve on its own. It is a challenge which must be dealt with right from the lower education level.

From the analysis of the Mass Communication programme in light of the benchmarks for teaching journalism education, I argue that the department is not completely off the mark. What is needed is proper management of the programme, coordination, effective utilisation of the available resources and acquisition of new ones, among others. More suggestions for improvement are listed later in section 6.4.

6.3 Linkages with the Media

The second objective of this study was to examine linkages between what is taught in the journalism class and what is required of fresh graduates in the newsroom. This objective was met by research questions two, three and four which sought to identify gaps in the training; seek perceptions on the programme itself; and perceptions on graduates of the programme. Findings revealed that the journalism training at MAK does not largely rhyme or match with what is expected of graduates in the newsroom. Through interviews, practicing journalists, editors told me that many fresh graduates have to be retrained when they join the newsroom. It was also revealed that the department’s internship programme is ineffective because of the poor relationship with the media industry. The department’s relevance largely depends on the media industry because: (1) the media is a training ground for students during internship; (2) it employs the students after graduation and (3) it is a source of journalism teachers. It is therefore imperative that the department initiates contact with the media for internship and not students as is currently the case. I believe the current situation puts students at a disadvantage and makes it hard for them to get proper assessment. There should be agreement on how and who should supervise and assess students during internship.

More still, I learnt that the programme trains students to specialise in one kind of media, say newspaper, radio or TV. On this note, Simwogerere Kyazze, a former lecturer at the department (in an article published in the Masscom@20 magazine) observes that specialisation in either print or broadcast is no longer enough. Students must ideally know it all – write, edit, take pictures, design a newspaper or magazine, record with a microphone and with a video camera and be able to understand html (basic Internet language). These views are in line with those discussed earlier
in chapter five in which I stressed that today’s journalists need multiple skills to deliver content across all media. At the same time, findings indicated that students have no option for specialising in the new media yet Uganda’s media industry requires journalists who are versatile with skills in print, broadcast journalism as well as journalism for the new media.

6.4 Ways to Improve the Training

The third objective of this thesis was to suggest ways to improve the journalism training at MAK. It is my argument that teachers, journalists, critics and other stakeholders concerned about the state of journalism training can take comfort in the fact that the Department of Mass Communication’s case is not unique to MAK.

Tom Odhiambo in the newspaper article86 referred to in chapter five titled “Enough about what ails our universities, now the cure” notes that universities, technical colleges and post secondary institutions all over Africa face numerous problems. These include: lack of or poor infrastructure such as laboratories, workshops, libraries, office and classroom space; lack of adequate funding for research teaching resources; crumbling or ancient libraries; poorly trained or overworked staff, and outdated curriculum.

Despite these problems, institutions like MAK Department of Mass Communication are expected to produce graduates who meet required standards of journalism education and also meet the demands and needs of the media industry and the society in general. As the department undergoes restructuring, issues that hinder effective training have to be addressed right from admission to the programme to the curriculum; the actual training and the dealings with the media industry. My study indicates that the following can be done in order to make the programme more relevant:

1. There is a need to guard entry to the programme in the form of essential subject87 requirements or other requisites that are critical for admission.

2. The department should redesign the curriculum to:

-----


87 Before 1995, candidates needed to have at least a B (on the scale of A to E) in Literature to be admitted to the Mass Communication programme.
i. Reflect the changing media landscape in Uganda as well as the changing technologies and the new media. One course on media technology is not enough. A curriculum of a journalistic programme must address developments in technology and the new media by offering courses that not only equip students with knowledge and skills of how the new technology is used in their journalistic work but also how it affects the profession and how to actually report for the new media. I recommend that the curriculum should offer such courses as Science and technology in development, computer applications, new information and communication technologies, reporting on science and technology, editing and desktop publishing, online journalism, multimedia graphics and communication. Such courses would not only teach students about the new media but also prepare them to produce content for such platforms.

ii. Make provisions for training people in rural/community media to address pressing social issues in Uganda such as poverty, disease, gender and the environment.

iii. Enable students to practice journalism in indigenous languages since there are many opportunities of working in community/rural media.

iv. Offer an English language course to prepare students to do journalism in English. The department could also integrate English language training in all practical courses just as the Norwegian language training is a component of Norwegian journalism courses.

v. The department can pick a leaf from OUC and teach the theoretical aspects with a practical and journalistic perspective. This will interest students in the so called theory courses.

3. Teaching students how to write a story in class is not the same as getting them to write it. Therefore, the department should encourage students to do as much practice as possible.
They should be obliged to write a certain number of articles every semester to ensure that it is taken seriously. This can be done by effectively using student-run projects like the journalism@mak online newspaper.

4. There is a need to design courses like Political Science and Economics from a journalistic angle such that students get political and economic knowledge and at the same time learn how to report them. That way, students will study such courses without deeming them irrelevant to journalism.

5. Serious attention and resources should be dedicated to student-run projects like the online newspaper (journalism@mak,) and the radio station (Campus FM 107) for hands-on practical experience. Deliberate measure must be put in place to make the internship programme more relevant. Cultivating a good relationship with the media will be the first step in the right direction.

6. The department needs to keep contact with the media and consult with them regularly on curriculum matters and internship. Linkage with the industry is paramount and therefore should be planned and be given priority. There should be a clear contract between the department and the media institution(s) on what an internship implies in responsibilities of the student, the department and the medium.

7. Coordination and effective planning are key to the department’s success. Through proper coordination, the department can obtain more funding and other forms of assistance in form of textbooks, teaching and support staff; and all sorts of equipment. A functional training radio station, a TV studio, library and laboratory are essential to a meaningful journalism department.

8. The university should allocate resources for running the department. The support should be in form of recruitment of; remuneration and motivation of staff, providing reading and teaching resources as well as equipment.

A number of factors come into play when such recommendations are made. Issues to do with teacher to student ratio, equipment and Internet access have to be dealt with as well.
6.5 Journalism Training at MAK and OUC

To adequately meet the objectives of this study, I considered a comparative evaluation vital to give a comprehensive clearer picture of the MAK Mass Communication programme. In so doing, I compared the MAK programme to a somewhat similar one offered at OUC to enable me put the former into perspective. It also allowed me to point out the differences between the journalism education offered at an institution in a wealthy developed country (Norway) and one offered in a developing country (Uganda).

Through interviews with lecturers at OUC, I noted that the college’s biggest advantage over MAK is to do with technical and human resources as well as the level of management and coordination. The college has sufficient modern equipment such as computers, radio and TV equipment, both online and physical library resources for both students and lecturers, qualified teachers and a team of support staff that make teaching and learning easier. The Department of Mass Communication on the other hand has inadequate and substandard equipment, limited teaching and support staff, limited teaching and office space and limited library resources.

More so, findings show that the OUC programme is practically oriented since all the courses are designed and taught from a practical journalistic angle. The Mass Communication programme is more theoretical although the aim is to provide both theory and practice. Courses, including those meant to be practical, are taught theoretically, which is blamed on limited resources. One accomplishment worth noting is that despite the challenges the department faces, it has functioned and managed to maintain a good name and has grown into a notable journalism trainer in Uganda as well as Africa. The department has gone from the state of no resources at all to basic ones that have kept it operational until today and that is an achievement in itself.

Comparing the two programmes showed how different resource situations can impact on an education system. It also reveals the challenge researchers face in attempting to study institutions located in countries at different levels of development. Resources are unequally divided between the developed and less developed world and this makes comparative research of the two difficult but an area worth exploring.

6.6 Future Research Prospects

This study was an evaluation of the journalism training offered through the undergraduate Mass Communication programme at MAK. Due to time, space and financial constraints, I only studied one journalism programme yet there are many institutions that offer such academic programmes.
There is a need for a survey and comparative study of the various journalism programmes in Uganda. Another feasible study would be a comparison of the MAK programme to similar programmes at other African universities.

Another possible area of research should gauge the impact of journalism education on the professionalisation of journalism in Uganda. There is a need for a study that analyses the role education plays in journalism practice. Such a study would go a long way to reinstate and reemphasise the relevance of formal journalism training.

6.7 Conclusion

The findings indicate that MAK Department of Mass Communication is yet to fully provide an ideal education for journalists although it makes effort to that effect. In chapter 2.2.1 I highlighted what the WJEC deems the ideal journalism curriculum. It is against these ideals that I gauged the Mass Communication programme. Findings show that the department does not provide a proper balance of theory and practice. Although the programme's curriculum contains components of journalistic practice, findings indicate that there is little focus on reading, reporting and writing, which are core skills of journalism. It was noted that some students graduate from the programme even if they have not been properly trained.

On a positive note, the programme exposes students to disciplines that are related and are important to journalism. The courses are Media Law, Economics and Political Science. But it was noted that these courses are taught as if they are independent of journalism. The OUC programme can also be criticised for being more preoccupied with the practical aspects of journalism and paying less attention to the importance of these subjects.

The study showed that the Mass Communication programme at MAK gives students experience through on-the-job internships but the programme is ineffective because of poor coordination and limited commitment on the side of the department. Even the time dedicated to internship is deemed inadequate for proper grounding of students into journalism practice.

Generally, resources play a central role in education. A lack of resources puts institutions in a very difficult situation and can be a hindrance in many ways.
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Chibita, Monica (no year) Developing undergraduate curriculum: Concerns and Issues. At http://www.journalism.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2734&Itemid=0 on (03.15.2010).

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112


Media in Uganda:


Norway Cultural Profile:


Status of Journalism Education in South Africa at: 

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix i: List of Interviewees

Practicing journalists who are graduates of the department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Media house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dennis Muhumuza</td>
<td>Monitor Publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Edward Echwalu</td>
<td>Weekly Observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Jared Ombui</td>
<td>Kenya Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Shifa Mwesigye</td>
<td>Weekly Observer</td>
</tr>
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</table>

List of Editors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Media House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Charles Wendo</td>
<td>New Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Chris Obore</td>
<td>Monitor Publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Daniel Kalinaki</td>
<td>Monitor Publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. David Aduda</td>
<td>Nation Media Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. David Tumusiime</td>
<td>Weekly Observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Don Wanyama</td>
<td>Monitor Publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fred Masiga</td>
<td>Monitor Publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. John Baptist Imokola</td>
<td>WBS TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Norman Katende</td>
<td>New Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Peter Mwesige</td>
<td>African Centre for Media Excellence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of lecturers at Makerere Department of Mass Communication

1. Archie Luyimbazi

2. Gorreti Linda Nassanga
3. Harriet Sebaana
4. Ivan Lukanda
5. JB Wasswa
6. John Matovu
7. Marjorie Kyomuhendo
8. Monica Chibita
9. Sara Namusoga

List of Lectures at Oslo University College
1. Prof. Rune Ottosen
2. Elsebeth Frey
3. Anne Fogt

Focus group participants
1. Ayebare Agatha
2. Bernadette Naggita
3. Eric Wakabi
4. Evah Nabawanga
5. Joseline Ninsiima
6. Richard Sserunjoji

NOTE: Each of these respondents were informed about the purpose of this study and agreed to be quoted.
Appendix ii: Guide for Makerere University Lecturers

1. How old is the curricula? When was the curricula last revised? Any plans to revise it?

2. What is the position of journalism within the mass communication course?

3. How does this position affect the development of journalism training in Makerere? In other words, how does the teaching of journalism under mass communication affect the general instruction of prospective journalists?

4. What are the standards of the theoretical and practical training offered at MUK?

5. What perceptions do you have about the programme in general?

6. Do you keep truck of the performance of your former students when they finish school? Where are they now? How many of them end up as journalists? And what positions do they hold in the media?

7. How are the various journalism courses taught? In other words, what teaching and assessment methods are used?

8. How much time is dedicated to teaching of core journalism courses?

9. What gaps exist within the teaching of journalism courses in Mass communication?

10. How can the programme be tailored to produce journalists that meet the demands of the journalistic field?

11. What is the quality and background of students admitted to the programme?

12. How does the department keep up with the ever-changing new media technologies? What challenges does the department face in its quest for administering quality training to would be journalists?

13. What mechanisms are in place to ensure quality journalism education is offered at the department?

14. What are the strength and weaknesses of the mass communication course?
15. Is there something in this programme that you would want to see and why? How available are teaching materials?

16. How is the working atmosphere at the department? How much cooperation among the lecturers and how does that cooperation affect the quality of teaching?

17. What is the relationship between the lecturers and students? And what kind of supervision exists? Is it just teaching or supervision or both?

18. What cooperation exists in planning courses?

19. What courses would you want to be included in the curriculum?

THANK YOU
Appendix iii: Guide for Former Students

1. What kind of work are you doing in the media?

2. What were you first experiences in the newsroom?

3. Were you prepared for that work at the university?

4. What did you concretely miss in class?

5. How do you gauge what you acquired from the course in relation to your experience in the newsroom?

6. What are your perceptions of the programme in general?

7. Now that you are in the field, what would you recommend to be done differently in terms of teaching the course?

THANK YOU
Appendix iv: Guide for Focus Group Discussion

1. How much time do you spend in class and on assignments?

2. What problems do you face in getting reading materials?

3. How is the teaching like?

4. What were your expectations when you applied for admission?

5. To what extent has the course met your expectations?

6. What are your experiences with the course, the department and the lecturers?

7. How would you rate the quality of the course?

8. What are your perceptions of the course in general?

THANK YOU
Appendix v: Guide for Editors and Senior Journalists

1. How would you rate the performance/quality of graduates of mass communication from Makerere University?

2. What is the extent of contact between the media and the department? Are the media consulted about what goes on at the department?

3. What skills does journalistic practice require of the graduates?

4. What media-related courses are relevant for undergraduates seeking for entry level jobs in the journalism?

5. What is the (education) background of well performing journalists in terms of by-lines and prominent positions in the media?

6. What should the media industry do (what are they doing) to improve journalism education standards?

THANK YOU
Appendix vi: Guide for Journalism Union Officials in Uganda

1. What is your opinion about the education of journalists (members of the union) offered at Makerere University through the mass communication programme?

2. Any contact between the union and the department?

3. What is the policy of the union in regard to the education of journalists?

4. What is your perception of the education for the journalism profession in general?

5. Is there anything you would want to see changed about the training? What and why?

THANK YOU
Appendix vii: Guide for Journalism Lecturers at Oslo University College

1. What is the appropriate way of teaching future journalists?

2. How does one strike a balance between research productivity expected at the university level and professional skills instruction expected by media organisations?

3. How can a journalism programme be admitted to meet both the academic and professional demands of the journalism field?

4. What should the background of students admitted to a journalism programme be? How is it done at the college?

5. What can be done regarding admission of students? Should students sit exams before admission?

6. What ICT courses are relevant to journalism? How about optional subjects relevant to journalism?

7. What books are called for in a journalism department?

8. What is the appropriate way of teaching future journalists?

9. How does one strike a balance between theory expected at the university level and professional skills instruction expected by media organisations?

10. How can a journalism programme be administered to meet both the academic and professional demands of the journalism field?

THANK YOU
Appendix viii: Introductory Letter Given to Students for Internship

Department of Mass Communication

July 16, 2010

Dear Sir/ Madam,

RE: INTERNSHIP PLACEMENT FOR………………………………………………

Students in the Department of Mass Communication are required as part of their degree programme to undertake and complete industrial training in the areas of Print, Broadcasting, Photojournalism or Public Relations and Advertising. This exercise is intended to help them become familiar with the rigors of communication related work and to help prospective employers mould students into suitable professionals for the job market.

The Department therefore requests you to allow the above named student to work with your organisation for a period of at least four (4) weeks and to judge her/him objectively on the account of enthusiasm, skills, talent, flexibility and ability to work in a communication environment.

The student will bring an assessment form, which we request you to complete at the end of the internship period. The student will then return this form bearing your signature and official stamp together with a report that she/ he has compiled about the experience as well as samples of the work undertaken during the internship period.

Your organisation is advised that before the student is allowed to take up the placement she or he should present a valid identity card from Makerere University.

Yours Sincerely,

Harriet Sebanya
Lecturer/Internship Coordinator,
Department of Mass Communication
Appendix ix: Form for Evaluating Students on Internship

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +266-0414-543919
Fax: +266-0414-531138
Email: head@masscom.mak.ac.ug
Web: www.masscom.mak.ac.ug / www.makerere.mak.ac.ug

INTERNSHIP EVALUATION FORM
To be completed by the intern’s supervisor at the workplace. This is a confidential evaluation. Please return the form in a sealed envelope and sign across the seal.

Name of Intern: ____________________________
Start Date: ____________________________ End Date: ____________________________
Name of Company or Organization: ____________________________
Name of Supervisor: ____________________________
Supervisor’s Designation or Official Title: ____________________________

ATTENDANCE:
Was the intern excessively absent? __________
Was the intern occasionally absent? __________
Was the intern rarely or never absent? __________
The intern notified me of his/her absence on all occasions. __________
The intern notified me of his/her absence on some occasions. __________
The intern never notified me of his/her absence. __________

ATTITUDE:
The intern performed his/her assigned tasks grudgingly. __________
The intern performed his/her assigned tasks indifferently. __________

UNESCO Potential Centre of Excellence in Journalism Training in Africa
The intern performed his/her assigned tasks **willingly.**

The intern performed his/her assigned tasks **enthusiastically.**

Did the intern seek opportunities to be of assistance?

Did the intern always wait to be told what to do?

Did the intern resent criticism?

Did the intern accept criticism gracefully?

Did the intern have a know-it-all attitude?

Was the intern eager to learn?

**PERSONALITY:**
How did the intern relate with others?
Very well __________
Reasonably well __________
Poorly __________

**PERFORMANCE:**
Did the intern need consistent direction? ________________
Did the intern have initiative? ________________
How do you rate the intern’s judgment? ________________
Was he/she motivated for work? ________________
How do you rate the quality of his/her work? ________________
In what area(s) does he/she need to improve? ________________
Does the intern have any outstanding weaknesses or shortcomings?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Does the intern have any outstanding strengths or abilities?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Would you recommend this intern for future employment in your company/organization?

________________________________________________________________________________________

GENERAL REMARKS (If any):

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
### Appendix x: Example of Term Plan Used at Oslo University College

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<th>Oversikt over vårsemesteret, journalistikk</th>
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#### UKE 2:
**Mandag 10.1–fredag 14.1**
Nyhetsreportasjen og bruk av feature i nyhetene. Nyhetsjournalistikk

**Sensur for hjemmeeksamen JBDEL1 2010 faller torsdag 13. januar**

#### UKE 3:
**Mandag 17.1-21.1**
Offentlighetsloven og journaljakt. Kildekritikk

#### UKE 4 og 5:
**Mandag 24.1–fredag 4.2**

**Oppgave 1**

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<th>Gruppe D</th>
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<td>Radio</td>
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<td>TV</td>
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Mandag–torsdag:

Fredag:

**Språk på fredag og Medier og samfunn**

#### UKE 6:
**Mandag 7.2–fredag 11.2**
Journalistrollen i møte med helse- og sosialpolitikk. Barneverndag. Nyhetsjournalistikk

Fredag:

**Språk på fredag og Medier og samfunn**

#### UKE 7 og 8:
**Mandag 14.2–fredag 25.2**

**Oppgave 2**

**Oppgave 3, språk, gis**

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Mandag–torsdag:

Fredag:

**Språk på fredag og Medier og samfunn**
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130
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<th>Tirsdag 26.4–fredag 29.4</th>
<th>Gruppe A Radio</th>
<th>Gruppe B Nett</th>
<th>Gruppe C TV</th>
<th>Gruppe D Avis</th>
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</table>

Sensur for hjemmeeksamen JBDEL2 2011 faller torsdag 30. juni.

_Semesterplanen kan bli endret, og så følge
med i Fronter og i TimeEdit!_

**MØTETID:** Så langt det er mulig prøver vi å holde onsdager mellom klokka 14.30 og 16.00 åpen for møtevirksomhet. Av planen vil dere se at det ikke alltid er så lett, men hensikten er å skape rom for møter onsdag ettermiddag.
Appendix xi: First Sample of Story Written by Students at MAK

Climate Change Is Still a Big Threat to East Africa

By Nabawanga Evah
28/June/2010

Climate change is still a big threat to east Africa. Governments have not paid serious attention towards the recovery of the climate, according to the Copenhagen climate change regional conference hosted by the department of Mass Communication at Makerere University. According the various personalities who attended this conference, climate change has got a lot of threats of which we are all to blame for these threats.

Professor Basalirwa the panel member of the Intergovernmental Pan Climate Change (IPCC) also a head of the Geography Department in Makerere University said that Uganda has so many climate change groups which are supposed to use a watchdog managed by the government, but most of these climate change issues are rather under political elements not the technical experts yet the experts are even limited. He came up with away forward that there should be organized workshops to teach Ugandans more about climate change and that the media should start buying weather information other than downloading it freely from the internet.

The Information Education, Communications Officer, National Environment Management Authority(NEMA) Mr. Mugambwa Everest Kizito said that he has been challenged by the high poverty levels, limited funding and limited personnel to work with. He continued to say that; “As NEMA and the environmental watchers look at as environmental threats, the government looks at voters.” He came up with away forward that there should be organized workshops to teach Ugandans more about climate change and that the media should start buying weather information other than downloading it freely from the internet.

The Information Education, Communications Officer, National Environment Management Authority(NEMA) Mr. Mugambwa Everest Kizito said that he has been challenged by the high poverty levels, limited funding and limited personnel to work with. He continued to say that; “As NEMA and the environmental watchers look at as environmental threats, the government looks at voters.” Nasisi Nsabyimana a lecture from the National University of Rwanda said that the environmental information is not yet sufficient since journalists focus on certain topics and leave out the other. More to that the editors who are the gatekeepers are not trained thus though a journalist may have a good story, they will refuse it and even the fact that its poor people who directly interact with the environment. He thus called for training and incentives for environment communication. “The little information that the needy people know and can use is far much better than the documents and books, rotting in the libraries.” Thus, all people should be trained and they get to know how to reserve the environment.
Appendix xii: Second Sample of Story Written by Student at MAK

Private Media Blamed For Poor Coverage On Environmental Issues

By Seguya A. Rashid

29 June 2010

Privately owned media has been blamed for giving little time and space for issues related to environmental awareness programmes aimed at averting problems of climate change as a result of human activities on the environment that has led to persistent misuse of the environment.

Presenting a paper at a Post Copenhagen Climate Change Conference under the theme Post Copenhagen Climate Change Conference and 'The Responsibility to Protect': What Role for the Media? held at Women and Gender conference hall, organised by the Mass communication Department-Makerere University, Mr. Tharcisse Musabyimana of National University of Rwanda said the media especially under private ownership has not given key consideration to environmental information programmes meant for public consumption.

"Environmental information is not yet well covered by media privately owned and if they do some coverage, they only center around tree-planting" Musabyimana said adding that "environment is not only about tree-planting, there are many it entails."

He also said that the media does not involve audience participation when dealing with environmental matters which in turn give a poor understanding of environmental conservation approaches.

Meanwhile, the Ugandan practicing journalists from different media houses who attended the conference promised to work closely with high institutions of learning to enhance environmental reforms through thorough media environmental awareness programmes.

The conference was attended by Professors and other trainers from the National University of Rwanda, Daystar University, Makerere University, NEMA, journalists and others.