



Media News
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1 Scoop: Mozambican academic degree in journalism

News

By Barbara Bosma

For the first time, Mozambicans are offered an opportunity to obtain an academic degree in journalism. The Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo has initiated the study as of this academic year. “We want to educate students into gaining a new outlook on journalism.”



Eduardo Namburete

The new School of Communication and Arts (*Escola de Comunicação e Artes*) of Mozambique’s Eduardo Mondlane University offers a four-year training.

The course has attracted overwhelming interest, according to the school’s principal, Eduardo Namburete. No less than 1,100 students applied, while there was only room for 65 in the first year. Next year the school will start courses in Arts. Eventually Namburete hopes to be able to accommodate 1,500 students.

Up until now there was no place where Mozambicans could follow quality and affordable courses in journalism. The existing Mozambican School of Journalism offers no academic degree and the quality of its teaching is considered rather poor.

There is also a private university (Instituto Superior Politécnico e Universitário) offering courses, but it does not attract that many applicants. Eduardo Namburete: “As a journalist you’re not going to earn a lot of money, so you can’t afford expensive education.”

Cultural awareness

The principal, who holds several degrees in journalism and a Masters in communication, said he wanted to use the first year primarily to provide students with general knowledge in economics, sociology and information science. For this, Namburete will be calling on the services of teachers from other branches.

In the second and third year there will allow for growing specialisation, with subjects such as mass communication, the history of journalism and media ethics. The fourth year is reserved for practical training.

The school co-operates with other institutions, including the University of North Texas (US) and the University of São Paulo (Brazil). Computer and library facilities will have to be shared with other departments on the campus. However, the school plans to have its own radio station.

Namburete explains: "Together with our students we want to make community radio programmes that will inform listeners on, for instance, cholera and aids, as a contribution to society and a means that will enable prospective journalists to gain practical experience."

Namburete said getting attention and funds for media development in Mozambique was rather difficult. 'It doesn't fit in with the international organisations' perception of development work.

These organisations tend to focus on improving the economy. However, if you consider development from another angle, journalism is valuable. It contributes to the development of democracy and national and cultural awareness."

Nothing but the truth

Namburete believes that little interest in the development of independent media can be found on the part of international organisations. And apparently the same goes for the Mozambican government. "The government keeps regarding independent media as a threat", he says.

Even now that the freedom of expression is incorporated in the Constitution, the government tries to control the media, e.g. by controlling printing presses, raising newsprint prices and refusing to subsidise newspaper transports to other provinces, said Namburete.

The principal denounced the entanglement of politics and the media. He said newspapers were biased: "Many journalists serve their bosses, not their readers. In order to make stories out to be better than they really are, for the benefit of the parties they support, they distort the facts. Thus a news item can be a completely different story in different papers. Of course, there should be room for various perspectives in news reporting. But what every journalist should report in the first place is the facts, not her or his opinion."

The most important lesson he wants to convey to the students is therefore that they should be committed to "the truth and nothing but the truth. In four years' time I want to turn out journalists that are proud of their profession. Those that view themselves as being committed to their country and people, not to politicians or editorial boards. That regard it their duty to provide their readers with information about their country, thus enabling people to judge for themselves."

Barbara Bosma (barrazulu@tvcabo.co.mz) works in Mozambique as an independent journalist.

Universidade Eduardo Mondlane: www.uem.mz

2 Southern Sun, a fixture in southern Namibia

By Raymond Joseph

Within two years the Southern Sun has grown into a vibrant publication. It is filling an important news gap in the south of Namibia and also ensures that elected officials are being held accountable for their actions.



'the paper for all the people of the south'

When the Southern Sun, a community newsletter in the south of Namibia, was launched in January 2002, few people gave it much chance of survival.

Their pessimism was based on the fact that the Namibian printed media landscape is littered with a history of failed publications. An earlier publication in the area, the Keetmanshoop Newsletter, had closed down after just over a year of erratic publishing. The reasons for the failure were varied; a dependence on the local municipality to fund their printing and a lack of any real journalism experience – or access to training.

The Keetmanshoop Newsletter finally folded after it angered the local council when it published a story about municipal corruption. With no other sources of revenue to cover basic printing and distribution costs the outcome was inevitable. That the story resulted in an inquiry and fraud charges against some officials involved was the ultimate irony.

Award

But, a new group of locals approached the Polytechnic of Namibia, which negotiated with NiZA for help in sourcing journalism training for its staff and drawing up a sustainable business plan.

Of the initial ten trainees only two had some journalism experience. The rest consisted mainly of graduated but unemployed youths. Their lack of experience and training was more than made up by enthusiasm and commitment to learn the craft of journalism.

Even more importantly, the publication has given the communities it serves a powerful channel of communication to the local, regional and national government officials.

The Southern Sun's achievements were recognised late last year when the (then) editor, Anwar Thomas won the prestigious Misa (Media Institute of Southern Africa) award of Community Journalist of the Year. The judges also praised the publication for the quality of its content and the role it has played in empowering the communities it serves. Thomas accepted a job in the mainstream media earlier this year. Luqman Cloete, the financial and administrative manager, is currently filling in as acting editor.

Print on demand

From the beginning it was important that the Southern Sun develop a variety of revenue streams to ensure that they did not become dependent only on donor funding and advertising.

Niza funds ongoing missions by the author, who assists with training and putting in place advertising and financial structures and strategies. The paper also receives a small monthly amount from the Namibian Institute for Democracy. Other donors have assisted with funding to acquire three computers.

A key to the publication's financial model was to use appropriate technology that suited their situation. Rather than having to pay huge monthly print bills, the Southern Sun is designed and laid out using Microsoft Publisher and then copies are produced by Photostatting. This makes printing affordable, but the newspaper is also able to print on demand, and so avoiding costly unsold copies.

Because of budgetary restrictions the Southern Sun currently prints around 1000 copies a month, which are distributed in towns throughout the area. Research shows that there is an average of five readers per copy and copies are passed around among friends and families.

Wedding programmes

Although the paper continues to struggle financially, a large part of its income is earned through advertising sales, a minimal cover price and a news agency that supplies copy and pictures to mainstream papers without correspondents in the region. Not only does this last aspect bring in much needed income and help pay minimal allowances to the staff, but it has also meant that the issues from the region are placed on the national agenda.

Another important revenue stream is producing affordable newsletters, brochures, pamphlets and wedding and funeral programmes to local non-profit organisations, schools, residents and privately-owned businesses.

Income has grown steadily and the publication is slowly moving towards long-term sustainability and, ultimately, survival.

Poaching

However, the greatest challenge facing the Southern Sun is the ongoing poaching by mainstream media – print, radio and TV – of its staff, who are lured away with well paid job offers. Already four of the best trainees, including the editor, have been poached, but the ongoing training of new staff has ensured that the paper continues to survive.

Gabes Shihepo, deputy minister of Information and Broadcasting, paid tribute to the Southern Sun at its first anniversary: “Over the past twelve months this publication has become a fixture in the towns and villages of southern Namibia and has played an important role in stimulating debate around issues affecting the people of this region.”

Raymond Joseph is a freelance journalist and media trainer, specialising in community media and start-ups of new publications. He is based in Cape Town, but works throughout the Southern African region. rayjoe@iafrica.com

3 'Access to media has increased'

10 years freedom of expression in South Africa

By Daphne Hafkamp

The end of apartheid ten years ago was the start of freedom of expression in South Africa. Censorship laws were repealed and media diversity increased. The access to media of historically disadvantaged, ethnical and social-economic groups has expanded. This goes for access in the form of ownership as well as the ability to consume media. Three organisations make some observations in hindsight.

These organisations - use the improved media situation to the benefit of historically disadvantaged groups: certain ethnic groups, women and gays and lesbians. They have varying degrees of satisfaction about the way media are covering 'their issue'.

Mediaworks: 'Community media'

Still there are some inequities. The director of the Cape Town based NGO Mediaworks Karen Thorne explains: "The problem is that mainstream media are not meeting the information needs of communities anywhere outside Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. They predominantly serve a rapidly emerging new non-racial elite. Most of the media are not distributed towards rural areas."

Thorne argues that the gap is filled by the work of community media. These are owned by communities and they represent communities. "Within the past ten years, hundred community radio stations have been licensed in South Africa, eighty percent of them has gone on air. There are at least hundred enterprises of print media that are serving small communities. They report on many relevant subjects, like land issues and HIV / Aids", says Thorne.

SAMGI: 'Gender sensitivity'

Judith Smith, director of the Cape Town based Southern African Media and Gender Institute (SAMGI) is critical about the way mainstream media are using the freedoms they've acquired to improve the position of women in South Africa: "Often, journalists and media practitioners are not sensitised towards gender issues. They do not see how gender crosscuts all aspects of society, including economy, housing, health, education."

Smith has different explanations for the lack of gender sensitivity among some South African media: "There is a lack of sensitivity training among journalists and media practitioners. Also, the fact that newsrooms are male-dominated has an impact on the way women's issues and presence in society is presented".

Smith states that it is of vital importance that media address women's issues with more depth: "The opinions and understanding of the world of media consumers are shaped by what the media convey to them. The media are an extremely powerful tool that can assist to bring about social change. When media continue to silence voices on issues of women, imbalance between men and women will continue to exist. Then, we will

continue to see men as the breadwinner and being powerful and women as powerless and the property of men.”

Behind the Mask: 'Social debate'

Media seem to be doing a better job in addressing gay issues. This is the impression one gets from talking to Bart Luirink, the founder of Behind the Mask, a Johannesburg-based communication organisation that defends the rights of gays and lesbians. “South African media that were formerly the parrots of apartheid, are now an arena for discussion. Homosexuality is a frequently chosen subject for talkshows and every soap has adopted a gay character”, says Luirink.

“It is now important that people stop having pre-judgements and a social debate takes place. Media are of crucial importance in such a debate.” According to Luirink, there is a change in thinking about homosexuality taking place in South Africa: “Although gay people are still dealing with a none gay-friendly environment, South Africa is a lightning example for the rest of Africa, where gays are either heavily discriminated or their existence is denied.”

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www.samgi.org

www.mediawks.co.za

www.mask.org.za

Also: background Behind the Mask

4 What's Behind the Mask?

Background

By Musa Ngubane

Behind the Mask is a website that reports on lesbian and gay affairs in Africa. "We do that through collecting and researching stories", says Musa Ngubane. "We cannot rely on mainstream media resources and have had to build our own network of correspondents and contacts to generate our own information." Ngabane reports what's Behind the Mask.



Unmasked

"Our daily routine consists of research and preparation of articles for the site using ICT (Information Communication Technology). We also keep in touch with other LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered) organisations in Africa and extend our services to them. We mainstream LGBT issues and respond to the negative media coverage.

At the same time, we serve as a referral service for other institutions and individuals and liaise with our correspondents. Each member of the editorial team supervises a section of the site but also a number of African countries. We advise Human Rights organisations on how to take a stand regarding the negativity that's often encountered by gay people (hate crimes and stigmatisation). We also have networking alliances with them. We furthermore assist researchers with projects associated with media, law and society. Most importantly our focus is on Africa and we cover a lot of news that mainstream media does not look into.

We run empowerment programmes like computer and journalism training. We have close relationships with other organisations like FEW (Forum for the Empowerment of Women) and their anti-hate crimes campaign The Rose Has Thorns, as well as the IAJ (Institute for Advancement of Journalism).

A computer for Sierra Leone

The main obstacles we face in our work is a lack of LGBT data in Africa because of homophobia, religious and state-sponsored prejudice; a general lack of resources and communication technology on the continent and the sparse existence of LGBT groups.

We counter the lack of infrastructure and computer literacy through our work, our training programmes and through initiating groups on the Net like the Ethiopian group and the Link. Recently we donated a computer and printer to the Sierra Leone Lesbian and Gay Association.

Online activism

We will conduct writing and media workshops during 2004 in Namibia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania, as well as assist the TRP (The Rainbow Project, Namibia) in setting up their own website. This will not only help the groups and individuals involved with these issues, but will also help to strengthen our access to information in those countries.

Our influence in Africa is widespread, we have encouraged groups in various countries to organise themselves. Through our stories people have managed to get funding for their organisations. We encourage online activism; we provide information for activists, service providers and asylum seekers.

We also have influence in the media and have ensured that there is some reporting about the hate crime issue in South Africa. TV directors have contacted us for guidance on how they should portray gay characters and we highlight queer artists.

Tanzania

Recently we hosted The All Africa Symposium on hiv/aids and Human Rights. The conference was supposed to be held in Tanzania but because of the state of affairs in Tanzania regarding homosexuals the mainstream providers of Tanzania didn't like to deal with LGBT issues. During the outbreak of the war in Iraq, the Muslim fundamentalists had some kind of control over the domestic affairs in Tanzania. Almost at the same time, Zanzibar legislation had forbidden homosexuality. Also the mainstream providers dealing with hiv/aids didn't want to link themselves to anything that had to do with homosexuals. In that homophobic atmosphere it proved to be impossible to hold a symposium.

At a later stage it was identified that it would be cheaper too to have the conference in South Africa. About 70 participants from seventeen African states attended the conference and a few others from outside Africa.

The symposium was on strengthening groups, addressing the issue of hiv/aids in the African LGBT community, developing advocacy and lobbying structures for hiv/aids. For example, most hiv/aids organisations are home care based and counselling organisations. The idea behind the symposium was to highlight issues, share ideas, mobilise the groups, educate African LGBT communities on hiv/aids, and strengthen relationships with other NGO's that deal with related matters.

Galz ('Gays and lesbians of Zimbabwe') prepared a manual on how to operate in a hostile environment, which was presented at the conference.

One voice

The response was highly positive, at the end of the conference twelve people were elected to the AARI (All Africa Rights Initiative) committee; they're bound to work in the committee for the next two years, preparing the relevant documents in aiding the formalisation of AARI.

The committee of AARI has representatives from African countries that were present at the All Africa symposium. This committee is to put together ideas, issues and group work that was done by the delegates into one list of issues and solutions for the LGBT community in the African region. One view one voice.”

Musa Ngubane is an editorial assistant for Behind the Mask currently living in South Africa, Gauteng. “I write about most things that concern the African LGBT community but mostly the lesbians.” musa@mask.org.za

Four-year old Behind the Mask attracts many visitors; 12.000 hits each day and 2500 à 3000 pageviews a day. Especially the latter is significant. Of all the identified hits, 15 to 20% are from Africa.

Behind the Mask: <http://www.mask.org.za>

Ethiopian group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gayethiopians>

Hate crime

In September 2002, a press briefing by Behind the Mask on hate crimes against black lesbians in South African townships resulted in articles, interviews, radio interviews and tv talkshows. The issue is on the agenda of the local and provincial governments as well as human rights and gender organisations. Behind the Mask facilitated meetings between victims and the South African Police Service.

Blackmail

'You cannot imagine how relieved I am just because I had an opportunity to share my story with you', a Zambian subscriber wrote to Behind the Mask. Subsequently, the organisation was instrumental in connecting the visitor and GALZ. As a result of that the subscriber successfully countered efforts to blackmail him by a local policeman.

On the run

Soon after its launch in May 2000, Behind the Mask was informed about police raids targeting a gay/lesbian organisation in Kampala, Uganda. The exposure of the arrest, detention and torture of five activists and their subsequent flight into a neighbouring country alarmed other African lgbt-groups, international media, politicians and human rights organisations.

5 A gathering storm?

By Jeanette Minnie

South Africa is celebrating ten years of democracy. As the former liberation movement and the government for the past decade - it's really the ANC's party. It is an election year and only the ANC is truly at liberty to criticize and assess itself. When anyone else does it, even independent commentators, they are suspected of being a closet supporter of one of the opposition parties, or worse, of harbouring a longing for the apartheid era. Which corner you are painted into depends on your race.



The Daily News: off the street

Were we naive to believe the rhetoric of the liberation struggle - the struggle for a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa? Or is it simply too soon to expect that a country oppressed by three and half centuries of racism would be able to overcome it in ten short years?

I want to celebrate ten years of democracy - but now my press freedom comrades and I in South Africa are having to go back in time to engage in some of the most basic press freedom arguments imaginable – arguments we thought had been settled ten years ago.

Ill at ease

Zimbabwe looms over us like a gathering cloud. Have you experienced a savannah thunderstorm? A sudden fury of wind bends the trees. The first lightning clap tears the sky apart. The earth shakes in a lion's roar. The heaven's break and a deluge of rain slashes the earth. Will we too have to suffer the storm to experience that liquid amber radiance of light that follows these outbursts in the sinking late afternoon sun?

Why should a press freedom activist in the tenth year of our democracy feel so ill at ease? South Africa's Foreign Minister, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, recently said she did not see how a Zimbabwe Supreme Court judgement sanctioning state registration of the media was a media freedom issue.

At a press briefing she said she did not understand how the requirement that journalists register with a state-appointed commission would interfere with their professional duties. "I don't see how that would in itself translate to control of the media, unless we could say here, here and here the government has refused a legal application," the Minister said.

State licencing of media

Well, the Zimbabwe government's Media and Information Commission has refused to register the Daily News and has refused to accredit dozens of journalists. As a consequence the only independent daily newspaper in the country cannot publish and the journalists in question may no longer work as journalists in their country - not even as freelancers for other local or international media.

State licensing of the media is a straightforward violation of the right to freedom of expression. Many international declarations and legal precedents say so.

'Scholarly debate'

Not long after Zuma's remarks, South Africa's Minister of Justice, Penuel Maduna, delivered a keynote speech at a conference in Pretoria on Freedom of Expression in Africa. He invited South African journalists, in the light of recent developments 'in the region', to conduct a 'scholarly' debate on whether media registration automatically constitutes a violation of the right to freedom of expression.

Would journalists in Ghana and Kenya entertain such a debate? Would Dutch journalists entertain such a debate?

At the conference Maduna said South Africa had repealed its earlier repressive anti-media freedom legislation simply as a reaction against the laws and policies of the former apartheid government. He is wrong. Those reforms were underpinned by extensive international research and reflection on human rights by some of our country's finest legal and constitutional experts, and by the Constitutional Assembly that crafted our democratic constitution.

Until now I was one of those who dismissed the theory that South Africa could follow the path of Zimbabwe. I am no longer so sure. Many analysts point out that the first signs of Zimbabwe's slide into tyranny began in the second ten years of the ZANU-PF government's rule.

Jeanette Minnie is an advisor to NiZA on the issue of freedom of expression. She has been a director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI), South Africa.

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6 A Congolese Media Congress puts in place a Media Observatory

By Tshivis Tshivuadi

We've been right to place our bets on the Congolese press! Fourteen years after the N'Sele Congress gave birth to the Congolese Press Union (UPC), a recent major gathering of Congolese media professionals, only the third of its kind, served to reestablish a foundation for a free, democratic and responsible media by creating the "National Union for the Congolese Press" (UNPC).

The National Congress for the Press in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which took place in early March 2004 at the Nganda Catholic Center in Kinshasa, was both a historic and decisive turning point in the structuring of the Congolese media during this postwar era and in the run up to the May 2005 elections, the first the country has experienced in 40 years.

New foundations, new structures

During five days, approximately 200 Congolese journalists from all of the country's provinces gathered together, finally as one unified body. They were joined by foreign experts to assess the media landscape in the DRC. Among other topics, discussions were held on the legal framework for media, the status of journalists, and the economic viability of media outlets.

Participants also discussed the role of media in a post conflict and pre-electoral situation. They exchanged views on the possible mandate of professional media organizations before deciding on new structures and assigning individuals to preside over the destiny of the profession that has been characterized for so long as having "gone to the dogs" and as having been tainted by "black sheep."

Observatory for the Congolese Media

The UNPC, a non-profit organization now headed by Kabeya Pindi Pasi, director of information for "Channel Tropical TV," and several other autonomous structures were established in order to train journalists, to promote unity within the sector and respect for a professional code of ethics.

The new structures also include a UNPC disciplinary commission; a Press Center which will serve as a meeting point for journalists to exchange ideas and information; a training center for journalists with a special focus on the use of Information and Communication Technologies; and a Commission in charge of granting and allocating professional accreditation.

The most important achievement of the Nganda Congress was, without a doubt, the establishment of an Observatory for the Congolese Media (OMEC) and the nomination of its President, Polydor Muboyayi, the Director and Editor of the daily newspaper "Le Phare". OMEC will strive to be a professional and autonomous agency by having its

own legal status and being led by representatives of civil society. The Observatory's main function is to ensure that the media respects a code of ethics by monitoring abuses and recommending penalties to the disciplinary commission or acting as a mediator between the public and the media.

Decriminalizing defamation

The establishment of OMEC is also a significant step in the efforts to decriminalize defamation laws and comes at a key moment in the campaign that has been led on this issue by *Journaliste en Danger* since December 2003.

During the closing banquet presided by President Joseph Kabila, Modeste Mutinga, the President of the High Authority for the Media (an institution established by the transitional government) congratulated participants for setting up of this self-regulatory body destined to limit the much deplored performance of the Congolese media.

Vital Kamerhe, the Minister for Information and Press, went on to congratulate participants for organising the conference and holding elections in a spirit of national unity in order to establish structures and identify its leaders in a transparent manner. "You have set the example for reunification, harmony and tolerance for our politicians," he said.

President Kabila was last to address the congress participants. He expressed his wish to see the resolutions of this meeting applied in an effective way so as to truly rebuild the Congolese press and to support the efforts of the Institutions of the Transitional Government in its goals to achieve peace, reunification and to organise free and democratic elections in the DRC. "Beyond the need to rebuild the media, it is the whole Congolese nation that needs rebuilding", concluded the President.

New fervor

The Congress will go down in history as the meeting that dissolved the original UPC in exchange for a federal framework bringing together journalists and professional media organizations with the ultimate goal of returning legitimacy, value and dignity to a tarnished profession.

The new UNPC president promised to do everything in his power to raise Congolese journalists out of their misery. His achievements will be judged at the next congress expected to take place in four years.

Meanwhile, congratulations go out to Stéphane Kitutu Oléontwa, former president of the UPC and president of the preparatory commission of the Congress, for providing leadership to the deliberations. It will be remembered that he kept the ship from being steered off course by sectarian politics, the ignorance of some participants, and by politicians and foreign partners that also had much at stake on the outcomes of this Congress.

Tshivis Tshivuadi is General secretary of 'Journaliste en Danger' (Link naar eerder verhaal JED)