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Journalism Education is the journal of the Association for Journalism Education, a body representing educators in HE in the UK and Ireland. The aim of the journal is to promote and develop analysis and understanding of journalism education and of journalism, particularly when that is related to journalism education.

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Articles

All papers in the Articles section are peer reviewed and discuss the latest research in journalism and journalism education. These are intended to inform, educate and spark debate and discussion. Please join in this debate by going to www.journalism-education.org to have your say and find out what others think.

The intolerant other: representations of the racist in *The Sun* newspaper

Alec Charles

Abstract

The term 'racist' is increasingly being used by certain sections of the popular press not only to brand particular perspectives as morally otherly or untouchable but also to promote the argument that by comparison those publications' own anti-immigration, hyper-nationalist or xenophobic positions are not in themselves racist. These publications have deployed the 'racist' label against any groups whose positions they wish to dismiss and exclude: from ultra-right-wing extremists to leftist liber-

als, from the politically correct to the socio-economically dispossessed. This strategy may be seen as bearing some of the structural attributes of racism itself. Yet this othering of one's ideological opponents is ironically a rhetorical strategy which is also demonstrated by those leftist-liberals most opposed to the tabloid positions on these issues. This article explores the uses of the term 'racist' in *The Sun* newspaper (the UK's top-selling daily news title) during 2013 in an attempt to illuminate these contradictions in ways which may help both journalists and journalism educators to come to a more effective understanding of this area of ongoing controversy. This paper is not in itself about whether or not *The Sun* is racist: it is about how that publication addresses the subject of racism itself, and about how journalism education might develop a more constructive and inclusive engagement with the issue than the rhetorical strategy that currently dominates the discourse.

Introduction

There is a danger that arguments against discriminatory perspectives and practices may themselves assume the strategies of exclusion and anathematization characterized by such perspectives and practices. This is a problem for liberal academia as it is for the populist press. The most effective way to avoid this discursive slippage is to maintain a continuing consciousness and scrutiny of the complexities and ambiguities which this slippage offers to eschew. When liberal academia brands a certain publication racist, it may be useful to explore the discriminatory fashion in which that publication itself deploys that term and its simultaneous denunciations of such branding – lest liberal academia itself might fall prey to similar hypocrisies.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites seven examples of usage to accompany its definition of the noun *racist*. Its earliest citation comes from *The Manchester Guardian* (22 September 1926): a reference to German racists. Another of its examples refers similarly to "classic German racists." Its definition of the adjective *racist* also gives two (out of five) examples which use the term to describe Germans. Even in this most authoritative publication the use of the word *racist* is not without its own xenophobic implications. Given the problematic nature of this word, this paper will explore its uses in a publication

which has not only often been depicted as racist itself, but which also exhibits a similarly problematic relationship with that term – to call into question the ways in which both that publication and a progressive journalism education might use that term.

Anderson (1991, pp. 35-36) has witnessed through the development of the news industry the evolution of the notion of nationhood itself. It is, as Wodak et al. (2009, p. 22) have suggested, through such “narratives of national culture” that nationhood is constructed. Wodak (1989, p. xiv) has argued for the need to make discursive mechanisms of societal construction and discrimination “explicit and transparent.” Toolan (1988, p. 236) has also emphasized the need to unpick the ways in which discourses function “so as to see what a particular narrative version of events is tacitly committed to.” This stance aligns closely with liberal ideals of both journalism and education as arenas for the interrogation of presumption and power. It seems incumbent upon journalism education on occasion to remind journalism of such ideals; just as it is sometimes the duty of journalism to challenge the failings of education. This paper attempts not only to question a particular set of assumptions relating to the issue of racism, but more broadly to remind journalism educators of the need to expose and question assumptions implicit in popular, journalistic and academic discourses (such knee-jerk responses as those which invalidate and ostracize the ideologically alien) – and to observe that such assumptions are the province not only of the reactionary Right but also, crucially, of the liberal Left.

Literature review: racism in the news

Bennett (2009, p. 199) recounts how in 1976 U.S. Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz informed reporters that “what coloreds want” was “a tight pussy [...] loose shoes and [...] a warm place to shit” and how “not one major news outlet” published the story. Bennett (2009, p. 200) notes that today such remarks would be spread across the internet in a matter of minutes. Might the popular press’s increasing willingness to expose and anathematize racists then represent a delayed response to a culture of citizen scrutineers who are already doing this? If so, the press may be missing key opportunities to address issues of disparity by raising awareness of its own conditions of practice.

Campbell et al. (2012, p. 6) have noted the persistence of discriminatory perspectives in newsmaking. LeDuff (2012, p. 61) has proposed that the media should better address those issues which underpin the “unfair treatment of minorities.” Jenkins and Padgett (2012, p. 247) argue that “the demands of diversity” suggest a need to overhaul “traditional journalistic values”. In order to ensure the contemporary relevance of its values, the news industry must understand their contexts and impacts. Entman and Rojecki (2000, pp. 77, 93) suggest that “the news does not reflect “any conscious effort by journalists to cultivate their audiences’ accurate understanding of racial matters” but instead follows “cultural patterns of which journalists are only imperfectly aware” and thus argue that changing the ways in which journalists represent race is “no easy task” insofar as “thinking stereotypically” has become their “normal way of thinking.”

Ross (1996, p. xx) observes that the mainstream media’s “underlying values and norms are transmitted as an unselfconscious truth.” It is therefore the role of journalism education to bring these assumptions and values into the light of conscious scrutiny. There may

however be some professional resistance to such challenges to the industry’s normative perspectives and practices. Downing and Husband (2005, p. 152) observe that “the shared values [...] of media professionals’ community of practice can serve to isolate them from accountability.” This isolation may lead to a situation envisaged by (Downing and Husband 2005, p. 183) in which – although “critiques of media performance in relation to the representation of ethnic diversity and the reporting of racism are known to virtually all media professionals” – this academic challenge is commonly disregarded as “a low-level professional tinnitus generated by outsiders who can be discounted.” Philo and Berry (2006, p. 209) argue that there remains resistance to opportunities for journalism to “radically transform” audience perspectives, and thus the challenge “is to develop innovative forms of news in which this can be done.” Such forms should – as Bailey and Harindranath (2005, p. 284) emphasize – specifically address the need for “journalism as a practice to transcend the rhetoric of nationalism.”

Might journalism transcend such rhetoric through processes of education and reflection informed by empirically grounded research? In the early 1990s Dickson (1993, p. 28) argued that “journalism education itself fosters the attitudes that result in media bias and stereotyping of minorities.” This paper suggests that a clearer understanding of the representation of racism in the popular press may itself promote more effective and educational practices in relation to that issue.

Background: a brief history of *The Sun*

Following its acquisition by Rupert Murdoch in 1969 *The Sun* grew in both popularity and populism. Conboy (2010, pp. 135, 128) observes that this populist discourse is framed “by a set of narratives which are nationalistically and even chauvinistically based” and emphasizes “the ability of the *Sun* to transform the language of popular appeal [...] to a new articulation of the sentiments and policies of the right.” “No passive reporter of politics” (McNair 2000, p. 20), *The Sun* has adopted an active role in the development of such an agenda.

A *Sun* report of 4 May 1976 – denouncing the “scandal of £600-a-week immigrants” – led to the formation of the Campaign against Racism in the Media (Sheridan 1982, pp. 1-2). Within a few years, the election of Margaret Thatcher and a consequent resurgence in right-wing sentiment would entrench *The Sun*’s perspectives on ethnicity and immigration. During the 1980s, in the wake of Thatcher’s reclamation of the Falkland Islands, *The Sun* grew more explicit in its right-wing sympathies. As Sheridan (1982, p. 1) has noted, “the Falklands war brought to the fore a putrid concoction of jingoism and racism” in the tabloid press.

Such attitudes are not exclusive to *The Sun*. Yet though Richardson (2004, p. xx) has exposed the “frequency of the negative ‘Muslim Other’ in broadsheet reporting” Poole observes that such discriminatory perspectives are more explicitly articulated in the tabloid press. Her analysis reveals that in *The Sun* “the Other was at all times clearly delineated as ‘foreign’ and subject to ridicule” (Poole 2009, p. 249). Ferguson (1998, p. 130) has observed *The Sun* became notorious during the 1980s for such slurs. Van Dijk (2008, pp. 139-140) demonstrates how a series of *Sun* editorials from 1985 – one commending Brit-

ish “tolerance” (14 August), another condemning “black racism” (24 October), another representing anti-racists as “the true racists” (30 November) – depict those opposed to racism themselves as “the ones who are intolerant.” Solomos (2003, p. 202) recalls that *The Sun*’s coverage of the 1987 election announced that BME candidates were “holders of loony Left ideas.” Van Dijk (2000, p. 48) critiques a *Sun* report from 2 February 1989 – “Britain invaded by an army of illegals” – to show how the “systematic negative portrayal of the Others [...] contributed to [...] the enactment and reproduction of racism.” O’Malley and Soley (2000, p. 150) give an account of a *Sun* attack against a “human tide” of immigration from 4 April 1992 which “reprised the racist themes for which the *Sun* was well known” – a story they describe as “inaccurate and inflammatory, designed to stimulate racially motivated sentiment.” Conboy (2002, p. 160) shows how an anti-immigration campaign launched by *The Sun* on 9 March 2000 – under the banner “Britain has had enough” – exploited “populist sentiments”. Matthews and Brown’s account of *The Sun*’s 2003 campaign against immigration observes references to asylum seekers as “either economic migrants or dangerous enemies within the UK” (2012, p. 813).

As a consequence of a particularly notorious report – described by Greenslade (2005, p. 25) as “a fabrication in which asylum seekers were both scapegoated and stereotyped as barbarians” – on 6 December 2003 *The Sun* was obliged to publish the following clarification: “While numerous members of the public alleged that the swans were being killed and eaten by people they believed to be Eastern European, nobody has been arrested in relation to these offences and we accept that it is not therefore possible to conclude yet whether or not the suspects were indeed asylum-seekers.” Richardson (2007, pp. 65-66) identifies a similar example of a *Sun* editorial from 2 March 2005 which “reconfigures a traffic accident into an immigration story” to demonstrate the persistence of such “racist hyperbole”.

For liberal academia to suggest that this is simply a matter of unrepentant racism would be to brand such discourse as otherly or untouchable in a way which echoes that intolerance. There are ambiguities, complexities and contradictions in *The Sun*’s perspectives on such issues. On 30 January 2007, in response to the *Celebrity Big Brother* victory of a Bollywood performer who had been subjected to racist taunts from other contestants, *The Sun*’s front page showed children holding up placards bearing self-targeted discriminatory labels. The paper argued that though these children had “encountered racism in this country [...] they are also all British.” Racism, it said, had re-emerged “like a monster from the deep.” It would be churlish to disregard the sincerity of this sentiment; and Temple (2010) has argued that the positive impact of such expressions can be significant. The newspaper noted that the *Big Brother* triumph of the Indian actress demonstrated that “most Brits accept other cultures and are tolerant of them.” If, however, as Mutman (2013: 2395) has suggested, an “everyday” racism is always present, a progressive response to the ubiquity of subliminal prejudice would be to drag it into the light of conscious scrutiny rather than to deny (and therefore to sustain) it with such comforting moral complacency.

On 30 January 2007 *Guardian* blogger Steve Busfield suggested that *The Sun*’s anti-racist stance was mere cant. The following day *The Guardian*’s Jon Henley posited that the newspaper had run this image in an attempt to spoil a rival’s exclusive interview with the *Big Brother* winner, and noted that this publication had recently complained of “the low-

life scum infesting our country.” On 5 February *The Guardian*’s John Plunkett added that “the *Mirror* had the exclusive interview [...] so it had to come up with something.” Plunkett reminded *Guardian* readers that *The Sun* had four years earlier “provoked accusations of racism with its spoof series of Mr Men characters [...] Mr Yardie, a black gun-toting Rastafarian smoking a joint, Mr Asylum, a toothless vagabond who wants everything for free, and Mr Albanian Gangster, who carries a knife and invites men to meet his friends’ sisters.”

The Sun’s leader column on 30 January 2007 had exhibited a conflicted perspective upon this controversy. It noted that terms of racial abuse may be “intended as light-hearted playground stuff” but that the *Celebrity Big Brother* case demonstrated “that teasing can all too easily turn into ugly racist bullying.” It nevertheless reassured its readers that the fact that the viewing public had voted for the victim of the abuse proved that “we are a nation that hates racism.” Racism was monstrous and otherly; racists were alien to our society. (As Plunkett pointed out, the chief abuser had been “branded” by *The Sun* both a “yob” and a “chav”.) The tabloid adopted a position which disavowed itself from such discriminatory perspectives, while using similarly discriminatory terms to abuse the abuser. Having employed abusive tactics to distance itself from such abuse, the paper was then able (from this moral high ground) in the very same leader column to reiterate its own anti-immigration stance: “Tory leader David Cameron rightly blames multiculturalism and unchecked immigration for stoking the flames.”

Is this mere hypocrisy? In a similar case, on 15 July 2004 the front page of *The Sun* newspaper had berated the British National Party as a “vile racist party” of “Bloody Nasty People.” Four days later a reader’s letter added that the BNP was a “party of evil bigoted racists.” Roy Greenslade however argued in *The Guardian* that day that this was the same newspaper which also published “material, day after day, which feeds the prejudices of people who are recruited by, and increasingly vote for, the BNP.”

The Sun here displayed a bigotry against bigots not unknown amongst liberal academia – against those classes of people seen to propagate such bigotry. Those classes may include the socially excluded and the economically dispossessed (the *yobs* and the *chavs*), and foreigners and immigrants themselves, as well as those who espouse political positions radically different from those of the hegemony. It is all too easy (for the liberal academic as for the tabloid reporter) to dismiss such positions rather than confronting and interrogating them. As Frost (2011, p. 178) observes, “it is bigotry we should be concerned about and not the presentation of views that are opposed to our own.”

In an interview conducted for this paper in February 2014, Roy Greenslade has argued that “there has been a change” in recent years in the *The Sun*’s perspectives on race: it “is not as full-heartedly or overtly racist as it was ten years ago.” Greenslade has added that *The Sun* is “noticeably conflicted over two issues. The first is migration: it’s well known that Rupert Murdoch favours migration. *The Sun* has changed tack several times on that: the xenophobia of its old message has been toned down. The second is the UK Independence Party: *The Sun* clearly espouses many of the values that underpin UKIP – it is anti-Europe and against the things that Europe provides – such as Schengen. You can see the difference between the editorial position in the leaders and that of, say, Trevor Kavanagh [*Sun* columnist, and the paper’s former political editor]. There’s a tension at the heart of

the editorial line.” This tension is exemplified in the divergence between the positions taken on 29 April 2013 by *The Sun*’s leader column and “the urbane and sensible Trevor Kavanagh” (Greenslade 2004, p. 421). While Kavanagh suggested that UKIP was “an irresponsible party of protest with nothing serious to say” the paper’s leader simultaneously praised UKIP leader “Nigel Farage’s common sense” and admitted that a “worrying number” of the party’s candidates were “extremist oddballs.”

While its success at May 2014’s European elections softened *The Sun*’s position on UKIP, the paper remains uncompromising in its hostility to the BNP. During 2013 the BNP was mentioned 32 times in *The Sun*. Only two stories focussed directly on the party and both comprised *ad hominem* criticisms of that “despicable bigot” BNP leader Nick Griffin for his “disgusting” conduct on Twitter. In a year in which the BNP performed better at one by-election than the lesser partner in the extant coalition government, *The Sun* did not directly dispute the ideas advanced by that party – but stigmatized and derided it. Its allusions to the BNP during 2013 included a recollection that Russell Brand had called Griffin a “nitwit”; a suggestion by Frankie Boyle that the BNP might outsource their operations to India; a reminder to the “fascist BNP” that “their side lost” the Second World War (while another piece described its HQ as a “Nazi bunker”); and an observation that 12 times more people had taken part in a protest against killing badgers than had joined a BNP march. Four stories concerning the May 2013 murder of Drummer Lee Rigby alluded to the BNP’s attempts to “exploit” that tragedy. A number of other stories compared or associated other far-right groups with the BNP: the English Defence League (twice), the Scottish Defence League (twice), the New British Union (three times), the National Front (twice), Ulster loyalist extremists, a Glaswegian “organisation not worthy of being named” and Greece’s Golden Dawn. In six stories UKIP was associated with the BNP: although “the party once derided as the BNP in Blazers” (2 March 2013) had now “kicked out unsavoury BNP sympathisers and other racists” (29 April) it still appeared to resemble the BNP “dressed in Alan Partridge-style sports casuals” (9 August) – as its former leader depicted Nigel Farage as “the only party leader ever photographed with leading members of the BNP” (23 September) – a party whose members “are repeatedly exposed as ex-BNP” (13 October).

The BNP represented a rhetorical weapon against more legitimate parties – whether it be that UKIP “dinosaur” Godfrey Bloom (9 August) or those Labour “dinosaurs” David Blunkett and Jack Straw (14 November), or the assorted “clowns” of UKIP or the Liberal Democrats (7 May). Former Labour Home Secretaries Blunkett and Straw were blamed for liberal European immigration policies giving the BNP a foothold in British politics (14 and 17 November). On 24 November Gordon Brown’s liberal Euro-immigration policies were blamed for giving ammunition to the BNP, although on 19 May Brown was blamed for promoting an illiberal anti-immigration agenda adopted by the BNP. On 4 May 2013 the paper observed that the Liberal Democrats were “reeling from a by-election which ranked them less popular than the racist fanatics of the BNP.” Three days later one reader’s letter added that “it was a joy to see Nick Clegg’s Lib Dem clowns got half the votes of the BNP.”

There remain essential contradictions in the positions on racism taken by *The Sun*. Harcup (2007, pp. 60-61) commends *The Sun*’s 2007 coverage of the killing of Anthony Walker

for its attempt to “remind readers of the murderous results of racism.” Like Greenslade, Halliday (2006, p. 30) observes that “the changing coverage by the *Sun* of black [...] issues over the past three decades” shows “how things do get better.”

The targets of *The Sun*’s crusades against immigration do not necessarily share this optimism. Philo et al. (2013, p. 150) report views of refugees who cite *The Sun*’s uses of negative language to depict asylum seekers – through modes of representation which, as Leudar et al. (2008, p. 215) suggest, “deny the refugee aspects of common humanity.” It is perhaps therefore premature to believe we are witnessing the extinction of what Bates (2011, p. 21) has called the “inflammatory rhetoric” of *The Sun*’s coverage of immigration. It is nevertheless crucial that we maintain a constructive engagement with the tabloid’s perspectives rather than merely deny their rationality or validity.

Methodology

The research informing this study was initiated through a quantitative content analysis of every article and letter in *The Sun* newspaper which used the term *racist* during 2013. This analysis differentiated between the uses of the term as an adjective and a noun, and categorized the different contexts of these uses, with particular reference to the types of nouns the adjectival form qualified. It followed the model of such quantitative analyses as those performed by Elizabeth Poole’s *Reporting Islam*. This study has similarly selected for its analysis a 100 per cent sample of articles from the period and periodical under scrutiny: in order, as Poole (2006, p. 89; 2009, p. 25) explains, “to ensure that the sample was representative.” Given this study’s focus of enquiry (one word in one newspaper in one year) this appears to be a case in which, in the words of Gunter (2002, p. 221), “the universe may be small enough to sample in its entirety.”

An initial quantitative approach has been chosen in order to provide an evidential basis upon which more symptomatic modes of interpretation can be developed: a foundation which is intended to be “unobtrusive” (Berger 2011, p. 213) and “systematic and objective” (Davies and Mosdell 2006, p. 98). This method offers a foundation designed to be *as objective as possible* (and also transparent about its capacity for subjectivity): inasmuch as “a truly ‘objective’, value-free perspective” is not possible, not even in the most reified modes of quantitative analysis (Deacon et al. 2010, p. 132). That objectivity may be impossible does not mean that it should be discarded as an irrelevant ideal (Calcutt and Hammond 2014). Objectivity offers a valid direction of travel even if it remains an ultimately unobtainable object.

The parameters of investigation selected were *The Sun* newspaper and the year 2013. This publication was chosen because it is Britain’s best-selling daily newspaper; the year was chosen because it was the most recent full calendar year available for analysis at the time of the study. An entire calendar year was chosen in order to avoid the possibility of any seasonal variations (for example, related to sports coverage). The sample selected for this unit of analysis comprised the totality of content in *The Sun* newspaper in that year, in order to avoid subjective selectivity. As that newspaper has so often been dubbed *racist* over the past several decades, it was decided to examine that publication’s own uses of the term *racist* in the ideationally fertile variety of its grammatical functions and semantic

contexts, both to explore that newspaper's ambiguous and problematic perspectives on racism and thereby to reflect upon the similarly ambiguous and problematic nature of such branding at the hands of liberal academia.

Research was conducted via the Lexis Nexis newspaper archive. The portal listed an initial total of 1002 items (news, editorial or opinion articles or readers' letters) in *The Sun* during 2013 which included the word *racist*. These items were filtered to remove duplicates: this left 799 instances of the word. These were divided into nouns and adjectives; the latter were then sub-coded as adjectives qualifying animate nouns (people, groups or animals) and adjectives qualifying inanimate (concrete and abstract) nouns (things, ideas and expressions). A catalogue was created of all the nouns for which the adjectival form of this term was used as a qualifier. This paper details every such noun which appeared on more than one occasion.

The results of this research are detailed in the following section of this paper. This data demonstrates the ways in which *The Sun* newspaper employs the term *racist* as an overwhelmingly negative designation, one which is generally deployed to denigrate those branded therewith. The subsequent discussion section explores *The Sun*'s own problematization of this strategy in its own reflections upon such branding processes. In this section, this paper therefore moves towards a more interpretative mode of symptomatic textual analysis.

Various researchers have commended strategies which promote symptomatic readings of media discourses elaborated upon a foundation of quantitative analysis to set the terms and themes for such speculative engagements: to determine the conditions of which particular examples are posited as specific symptoms. Downing and Husband (2005, p. 27) propose that one is not obliged to choose between content analysis and symptomatic textual readings but that one might usefully instead attempt "appropriate combinations of both approaches." Priest (2010, p. 92) proposes that quantitative analysis is a "limited tool" most useful when combined with "other forms of research." Gunter (2000, p. 92) also supposes that "although it may be important to establish, through quantitative techniques, whether certain entities outnumber others" the interpretation of the meanings of those entities may require other modes of analysis. Bertrand and Hughes (2005, p. 216) commend "a combination of data gathering and analysis" which might afford space for "interpretation through a framework of understanding" based upon, for example, the possibilities of symptomatic readings of the text as a manifestation of discourse pregnant with ideology. Thus they argue, for example, that "those concerned to identify the workings of ideology might seek evidence of the representation of nation/race [...] using content analysis [...] or discourse analysis" – or, one might add, a combination of both.

Arguing for "discourse analysis of content" Tuchmann (1991, p. 88-89) shows how such analysis may expose the ways in which "news is ideological" – and that such analysis, by exposing these ideological structures, affords the possibility that "journalists need not passively accept these frames." Gray (2013, pp. 254-256) suggests that academic critiques of media representations of race might usefully develop a set of strategies designed to measure the "affective and emotional intensities that sustain practices of inequality, social advantage, and disadvantage" and thereby to rethink "the work of representation." This study then is focused primarily upon on way in which such nuances of journalistic discourse establish their ideological frames.

Findings: the 'R' word

On 30 September 2013 Naomi Campbell told *The Sun* of those fashion houses which shun BME models: "we're not calling them racists, it's a racist act that they're committing." Campbell's distinction between criticizing actions as racist and stigmatizing individuals with that label is illuminating; it exposes the conflicted nature of much coverage of the issue.

One common characteristic of discriminatory discourse is the shift in the usage of a qualifier to become an identifier: when an adjective becomes a noun, when an attribute becomes a name. To refer to a black person as *a black*, or a gay person as *a gay*, is to dismiss the other factors that inform their status as an individual – it is to see them as a monolithic object defined by the lens of the speaker's prejudice, part of an objectified, dehumanized, homogeneous mass. This study examines the uses of the word *racist* as an adjective and a noun, and further distinguishes between its adjectival application to objects, statements or actions and its deployment as a tool to anathematize individuals or groups (i.e. the difference between 'that statement/opinion/action is racist' and 'he is racist / a racist').

During 2013 *The Sun* used the term *racist* on 790 occasions and the term *anti-racist* on nine further occasions. The former term appeared: 144 times as a noun applied to individuals or groups, as in "what a racist she is" (3 July) and "kick out racists" (30 July); 190 times as an adjective applied to individuals or groups, as in "racist thugs" (31 July) and "my family are racist" (5 January); and twice as an adjective applied to a dog – both in the same story: a woman "claimed that a dog that bit her daughter is racist" (1 March 2013). The remaining 454 uses of the term *racist* functioned adjectivally in relation to objects, actions, modes of discourse or perspectives.

The object most commonly qualified by the adjective *racist* was the word *abuse* (89 occasions). There were 13 racist slurs, 11 racist rants, six insults and six taunts, five jibes, four outbursts, two tirades and two examples of bile. The term was also applied to *murder* on 12 occasions, to 28 attacks and one assault, to *killing*, *crime* and *threat* each twice, and four times to bullying. It seems significant that more than 40 per cent of the occasions on which the term racist qualified an object-noun included emotive or morally loaded terms (such as abuse, slur, rant, taunt, bullying, attack or murder). More emotionally or morally neutral nouns qualified by the term included *comment* (30 instances), *incident* (19), *remark* (18), *behaviour* (13), *language* (11), *act* (6) and *nature* (4). These more neutral terms were often applied to sports-related instances. There were also a total of 30 examples of racist chanting (all related to football fans), 15 cases of racist tweets and five racist jokes. Racist posters, adverts, comedies, conduct, songs, salutes, words and names each appeared on three occasions. Racist graffiti, tones, overtones, ways, gestures, messages, references and terms each featured twice. *The Guardian* newspaper was described as racist three times (in the same article) and *Star Wars* Lego toys were called racist twice (also in the one article). The remaining 69 object-nouns qualified by the term *racist* appeared in that context only once each.

The term *racist* was used in 33 stories relating to the UK Independence Party. Only twice was it used in relation to the BNP. (This may be explained by the fact that UKIP were in the news rather more than the BNP.) The term was employed five times in relation to the

EDL, three times in relation to the SDL and once in relation to the NBU.

During the course of the year a number of different groups trended as the most often labelled racist. April commemorated the tenth anniversary of the murder of Stephen Lawrence by a “gang of racists” (23 April) – of “racist yobs” (20 April). A series of comments by UKIP’s Godfrey Bloom between July and September prompted a resurgence in allegations of his party’s racist attitudes. From August to November various groups of football fans from post-Communist countries (Macedonia, Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan), as well as a Ukrainian student who had murdered a British Muslim, were most commonly dubbed racist. In December, following the death of Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s former apartheid regime garnered the racist crown – as it had during March and June, at times when Mr Mandela’s health had also been perceived as at serious risk.

Discussion: resistance to branding

Racists were, for the most part, represented as members of a socially excluded underclass of gang members, as political extremists or as foreign footballers (including Luis Suarez and Nicolas Anelka) and foreign football fans (including Romanians, Czechs, Slovaks and Italians: “Inter’s banana-waving racists” – 15 March), foreign golfers (Sergio Garcia) and foreign governments. Racists (the paper seemed to be implying) are *others*: what they are not is us.

Foreign football bosses (Paolo Di Canio, as well as those eastern Europeans who defended their fans’ racist conduct) were also accused of racism – while, closer to home, the likes of Ron Atkinson, Roy Hodgson and Charles Green experienced similar censure. There was something of a comedic cliché about the latter disapprobation: on 2 January comedian Russell Howard suggested he had racially abused a doctor while under an anaesthetic which had turned him into a “racist footie boss [...] a racist football manager.” The racist football manager is thereby trivialized and naturalized: the censure is conventional and tokenistic. It is a cartoon racism which is not taken seriously, which is patronized and tolerated, and which the rest of society (those who are not stereotypical football managers) are unlikely to share. The casual recognition of racist attitudes in the higher echelons of UK football (often portrayed as a soft racism of *remarks* and *comments* rather than of *abuse* and *attacks*) is perhaps an almost inevitable corollary of a situation in which “sports journalism and whiteness in the UK press have traditionally gone hand in hand” (Farrington et al. 2012, p. 150) while “the percentage of [...] ethnic minorities who work in the sport media tends to be much smaller than in other types of journalism” (Claringbould et al. 2004, p. 709).

The appellation was applied to dogs, Lego toys, football managers and even *The Guardian* newspaper: “a posh newspaper was branded racist yesterday – for suggesting Scotland should ‘go and f*** itself’” (1 February). *The Sun* might be seen as trivializing the term; but this seems to be part of a more complex discursive strategy whereby: (1) the newspaper denigrates racists by using emotive and derisory terminology and therefore treats racists as desubjectified objects of hatred (thus adopting a discursive strategy which mirrors that of racism itself); and (2) the newspaper and its readers explicitly criticize those (thrill to the cowardice of political correctness) who denigrate those opposed to immigration

as racist – even while it repeatedly reminds its readers that such senior Conservatives as David Cameron and Kenneth Clarke have accused UKIP of harbouring racists, in an oddly ambivalent strategy which at once challenges and reinforces the idea that UKIP is a racist party. The paper thereby paradoxically performs a process of branding and a simultaneous resistance to such branding.

Fowler (1991, p. 111) has observed how such terms of abuse as *scum* and *louts* and *thugs* have become “common in the popular press” and are “consistently focused on certain classes of person, notably soccer hooligans, vandals, blacks [...] ‘the loony Left’ [...] and foreigners.” In addition to its focus upon footballers and foreigners, during 2013 *The Sun* used the term *yob* in relation to racist incidents on 34 occasions and the word *thug* on 50 occasions. On 27 January the paper featured an interview with a student complaining of racism in her native Glasgow which offered an illuminating example of the denigration of the racist as less-than-human: “I heard a ned being racist to a taxi driver.” A *ned* – which may be glossed as a non-educated delinquent – is a derisory term for a member of a socio-economic underclass. This dehumanization of racists represents a strategy which bears structural similarities to racism itself, one which journalism’s practitioners and educators might both do well to avoid. There is something deceptively righteous in this mode of discrimination, insofar as “dehumanization allows us to re-cast cruelty and violence as something else” (Steuter and Wills 2009, p. 40).

Sun columnist Rod Liddle sparked controversy in December 2009 when (in his blog for *The Spectator*) he described as “human filth” two black teenagers jailed for conspiracy to murder. Liddle was later censured by the Press Complaints Commission for these comments. As *The Guardian* noted on 10 March 2010, this was the first time that the PCC had “upheld a complaint against a newspaper or magazine over the content of a blog by a journalist.” Liddle’s writings in *The Sun* are no less inflammatory. Millwall fan Liddle has denounced the notion that his team’s supporters are “a bunch of bigoted, racist, baby-munching psychos” (24 January 2013) but has also supposed that “football clubs cannot guarantee that each one of their supporters is a true anti-racist, has memorised every one of Martin Luther King’s speeches and has a collection of Lenny Henry DVDs at home” (14 February). He has repeatedly condemned a political correctness which brands as racist anyone who opposes immigration (2 May), complaining on 7 March of the politically correct’s “massed bleat of: ‘RRRRRAAAAAAAAAACCCIST.’”

The Sun’s most common response to racism is to belittle it. This is sometimes to trivialize it, sometimes to denigrate those perceived as racist, and sometimes to diminish perceptions of its impact. Liddle wrote on 7 March 2013 of “an Asian lady who received vile, hate-filled, racist abuse.” The woman in question had responded that “hopefully it was just someone having a bad day and that’s the end of it.” Liddle concluded: “Now there’s dignity for you.” Liddle’s implication seems to be that any greater reaction to racism is an over-reaction.

On 27 May *The Sun* ran a pair of pieces ridiculing claims made in an academic book that the TV series *Doctor Who* was racist: “only an idiot could describe *Doctor Who* as ‘thunderingly racist’.” Those who run around screaming ‘racist’ at any excuse do huge damage to the fight against real racism.” (These pieces were followed by a pair of similarly outraged letters from readers three days later.) The paper thus reinforced notions that such

allegations of racism are spurious: indeed it has habitually rejected as “ludicrous” claims that television programmes are racist (van Dijk 1991, p. 103).

Van Dijk (1991, p.79) notes that British tabloids are more often troubled by anti-racist arguments than by racism itself. He has shown how *The Sun* has presented itself as a “defender of freedom of speech” against a tyranny of political correctness represented by “black racists” (1991, p. 101). The “barely veiled racism of the British [...] tabloids” has crafted proponents of anti-racist positions as “the new enemy within” (van Dijk, 1988, pp. 184-185). The tabloids’ attempts to reverse this stigmatization (*we aren’t racist, they are*) fosters a “systematic denial of structural racism” which allows that “some people have prejudices, and some people discriminate, but racism can only be found in small right-wing groups outside of the broad consensus” (van Dijk 1988, p. 184). Thus the tabloid may conclude that “allegations of racism [against the paper and its protégés] are simply the exaggerations of radicals or a few hypersensitive minority group members” (van Dijk 1988, p. 184). It is thus that, as van Dijk (1995, p. 30) observes, the populist press is able to exclude from its discourse discussion of “everyday racism” – especially that of its own socio-political elites.

Wilson (1996, p. 60, pp. 252-253) notes that a growth in hostility towards political correctness has “helped racism” and has been “reflected in shows of exasperation in some of the right-wing British tabloids.” Those who trot out the cliché of ‘political correctness gone mad’ tend to believe that political correctness was less than rational in the first place. On 5 April *The Sun* had, for example, parodied anti-racist arguments when it had cited red-headed musician Mick Hucknall’s attempt to compare “people making fun of his hair to racism.” On 14 March it mocked an MP for “accusing the BBC of racism” – when he had misread a news tweet in relation to the election of Pope Francis which had asked “Will smoke be black or white?” (The MP had misread the BBC tweet as asking whether the new *Pope* would be black or white.)

On 23 November *The Sun* reported that a school had “sparked fury after warning eight-year-olds will be branded as racist if they do not attend a workshop on Islam.” This image of *branding* recurred four days later when a *Sun* reader repeated that “eight-year-olds would be branded racist if they didn’t attend a workshop on Islam.” On 21 May the paper reported the case of “a patriotic ex-squaddie” whose landlord had asked him to paint over a St George’s Cross he had daubed on his front door. The former serviceman stated: “I’m not a racist.” A similar example of rabid political correctness came on 30 August when the paper told the tale of another homely hero, a chip shop owner who had been “branded racist” for erecting a sign which announced his business had “English owners” and commenting that “people want to be served fish and chips by somebody English.” Four days later, one indignant letter-writer suggested that if the small businessman was to be considered racist for his belief that “people want to be served fish and chips by somebody English” then we should consider “Asian Bride magazine” and the “Black Police Association” racist too. On 10 October another outraged reader wrote similarly that the Society of Black Lawyers “is surely a racist label.” Ethnic minority identification was thus racist in itself; and calling someone racist was a racist act.

On 22 May the columnist Jane Moore suggested that the liberal belief that “poor little Muslims are so naive and downtrodden that they need savvy, powerful white people to

speak up for them” was itself a “racist assumption”. On 24 March George Galloway MP was called racist for refusing to engage in debate with someone he himself viewed as a racist. Despite the paper’s own predilection for branding so many members of a perceived underclass as *racist yobs*, it supposed that those who brand others racist are themselves “a bunch of screaming numpty yobs” (20 May) or “imbecile[s]” (10 October).

During 2013 the paper continued its crusade against political correctness with reports of gypsies who had “moaned” about racism (5 November), a *Sun* journalist accused of racism while attempting to “catch a suspected terrorist” (11 November), a “bungling council” which took Eastern European children away from their UKIP-supporting foster parents on the grounds that “UKIP have racist policies” (21 May), and the University of Birmingham’s alleged declaration that “wearing a sombrero is now a racist act” (7 November).

On 26 November Romania’s Foreign Minister was said to have “branded” British MPs as racist. On 27 December a United Nations official’s criticism of the UK Immigration Bill was deemed a “tirade” (a word also applied to racist abuse) against “racist Britain”. On 26 and 30 December the paper suggested that Liberal Democrat concerns over immigration controls were tantamount to denouncing their advocates as “Enoch Powell-style racists” – who “like Enoch Powell, probably wear a pointy white hat and robes.”

The opposition to racism has become a discourse of branding, tirades and hyperbole. To brand is to de-humanize: to violate the other as an animal-object (it is the epitome of racism; it is the tactic of slavers and the functionaries of the Final Solution). Racism and anti-racism have become confused in absurd parodies of their own positions, taking such discourse to the point at which (as *The Sun* reported on 2 November) “a Nazi fanatic booted out of Asda for wearing a full SS uniform said [...] ‘I’m disgusted – they’re a bunch of racists [...] Asda are a bunch of racists.’” If prejudice can only be challenged by a discourse which reveals prejudice for what it is, then this blurring of terms to the point of absurdity excludes the possibility of rational resistance.

This then is the topsy-turvy environment in which UKIP MEP Godfrey Bloom responded to a journalist who had accused UKIP of racism by calling that journalist racist himself. *The Sun* (8 August) described Bloom’s “crass outburst” as “a gift to those on the Left who delight in portraying anyone who opposes their open-door and open-wallet policies as racist.” The paper added that “it allows a serious debate about the wisdom of giving billions in aid to unstable nations to be smothered under a blanket of name-calling.” This is perhaps a strangely common argument for a publication which has itself pursued similar tactics: strategies of name-calling, stigmatization and *ad hominem* attacks which prevent the possibility of radical, rational dialogue.

The letters pages of *The Sun* give the impression that its readers are more extreme in their intolerance than the paper’s own editorial line, although “newspapers frequently use letters’ pages to include but rhetorically distance themselves from racist [...] comment” (Richardson 2009, p. 374). During 2013 the paper’s letter-writers repeatedly expressed their distaste at having been “branded as racists” (28 November) or “classed as a racist” (10 April) for their views on immigration: “we were racists” (8 March); “we need more Brits employed, or is that racist?” (18 April); “it is not racist to expect people to show their face in public” (19 September). Other readers denounced the double-standards of their ideological opponents (thereby implying that political, social and economic capital

was already ethnically symmetrical): “is he of the opinion that only white people can be racist?” (5 November); “why is it no one takes a stand against racist bullies unless they are white?” (27 February); “two men on a sponsored walk for charity are attacked in Birmingham for being white and non-Muslim and we don’t hear a peep from the equality-obsessed anti-racist chaps” (13 August); “if this was a British person being racist against Muslims, he would be arrested” (6 June). Such letter-writers echo the paper’s own editorial position in speaking out against the way in which the nation has been “ripped off for years by foreigners” and in laying the blame at the doors of those who “are too afraid of being called racist to speak the truth” (19 February). On 28 November one reader argued that the word *racist* was “grossly overused” and iterated the quasi-Voltairean dictum that one might “disagree with what you say but [...] fight to the death for your right to say it.” On 10 September another reader argued that “it’s all too easy to use the words ‘racist’ and ‘racism’ to bully others into keeping quiet.” This could be considered both the paper’s editorial line and its editorial strategy: (1) it is wrong to use such dehumanizing branding to silence one’s ideological opponents; (2) it is, however, highly effective to do so (which is why we do it).

The Sun argues that the former government “used to smear as racist anyone daring to question their disastrous open-door policy on immigration” (4 July), that people “are frightened to be thought of as [...] appearing to be racist” (23 November) and that “terrified of sounding like racists, we have been too timid to say British beliefs are as deeply held as anybody else’s beliefs” (22 September). At the same time, however, it accuses its ‘others’ (foreigners and the societally dispossessed) of racist thuggery, and deploys an ideological assurance born of its refutation of political correctness to legitimize extreme positions by pre-empting accusations of extremism. This phenomenon is witnessed in the following columns from 30 January, 16 February and 18 February:

Migrants [...] can create their own ghetto [...] untroubled by a neutered police force running scared from being branded ‘institutionally racist’.

A London council has [made] spitting and urinating in the street illegal [...] How long before someone brands this ‘racist’? In various Middle Eastern countries, shoppers produce an even greater number of docker’s oysters than Wayne Rooney. And in France, urinating in the street is almost a sport.

Bulgarian and Romanian migrants [...] are seen, at best, as skivers. Before anyone shouts ‘racist’, look at some facts. Romania and Bulgaria are so corrupt they were barred from EU membership after reports from Europol showed they are virtually mafia states. [Note: Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in January 2007.]

The discourse of *The Sun* suggests that *racists* comprise a category of *yobs* and other subhuman *scum* as well as foreigners and such other risible stereotypes as football fans and football managers. It argues that those who brand more normative perspectives as racist are themselves racists attempting to silence open debate. The producers and consumers of *The Sun*’s discourse cannot therefore be accused of racism: the rationality of

their position thus assured, such assertions as those above could hardly be considered racist – indeed could hardly be considered anything other than *natural truths*. Yet to expose this discursive strategy does not mean that we should automatically disregard the validity of its discourse.

Conclusion

The knee-jerk denigration of racists may itself promote the very suppressions of dialogue, knowledge and reason upon which racism itself thrives. This is a problem for liberal academia as much as for *The Sun*. The anti-racist agenda shared by a range of journalists and journalism educators might easily transform into an ‘anti-racists’ perspective which singles out bigots as a dehumanized underclass, rather than one which attempts to engage and challenge those who hold such opinions in rational and informed dialogues. This shift might undermine the potential for journalism and journalism education to promote socially progressive discourses; it might also undermine anti-racist arguments by providing ammunition for those entrenched interests which have sought for decades to demonstrate the risible irrelevance of the politically correct. This is something that journalism education might learn from *The Sun*.

There is no simple strategy in response to this situation. The most effective position for journalism education would be to recognize, illuminate and scrutinize the moral complexities of this situation: to acknowledge that the problem is a matter of endemic and often unconscious prejudice rather than a case of a few bad apples, of a despised minority of racist individuals (gang members, footballers, politicians or journalists) whose presence in our society we might seek to purge; to realize that we are all (including liberal academics) part of the problem and are all (including tabloid journalists) part of any possible solution.

DeMott and Adams (1984, pp. 50-51) have argued that there is nothing more useful for a “student of journalism than a sound understanding of racism” and announced the need for a “massive effort” to promote journalistic “education concerning racism.” Charles (2013, p. 48) has pointed out that it is important not only that journalism students engage in complex ethical debates, but also that, in doing so, they are able to “contribute to a potential formulation of alternative journalistic practice.” The contentious and complex nature of such issues is precisely why they should be brought into the classroom: not only because they are clearly important in themselves, but also because they provide opportunities to challenge the assumptions of journalistic practice and of journalism education. Such challenges not only offer students the possibility of active participation in the development of alternative practices and perspectives; they also allow students to rehearse and hone their professional skills as journalists – to challenge entrenched power: the entrenched assumptions not only of their industry and society but also of their educators themselves.

Jacobs (2003, p. 140) argues that “because communication takes place within an environment of plural and partial publics, it cannot be considered solely in terms of its ability to produce a shared commitment to a singular vision of the good, or to some ‘rational’ consensus; it must also be evaluated in terms of its ability to keep a conversation going, and to protect the possibility of opening up this dialogue to new narratives and to new

points of difference.” Those working in journalism education might usefully eschew the strategies of those (such as *The Sun*) which would dismiss radically oppositional perspectives as the province of irrational extremists and socio-political pariahs, but may instead endeavour to include all positions (including those of *The Sun*) in such dialogues in order to allow them progress. This is not about the synthesis of a liberal consensus; it is not about the triumph of a political correctness which excludes all other possible positions; on the contrary, it is about maintaining an openness to a multiplicity of perspectives, one which actively seeks to engage all perspectives (including those most alien and most ‘offensive’) in meaningful and unbiased dialogue. *The Sun* may employ the exclusionary tactics of racism against those it dubs racists (including foreigners and the political correct); but if journalism educators are to engage constructively with these arguments then they should avoid such visceral responses.

Alemán (2014, p. 72) argues that “the teaching of various newsgathering routines and values” may be determined by racially hegemonic perspectives – so that “distorted” representations of racism may themselves result in a misunderstanding of “systemic racism” and thus “uphold white supremacy.” She argues that it is only by challenging the presumed normativity of such dominant paradigms that progressive dialogues may emerge. A mode of media literacy critically conscious of the problematic nuances, complexities and ambiguities of populist representations of race and racism might therefore not only benefit the development of journalists as enquiring, reflective practitioners, but also, as Yosso (2002, p. 60) argues, offer broader cross-disciplinary opportunities “to utilize media as a pedagogical tool in the struggle to raise social consciousness and work toward social justice.”

Journalism education should not then denounce racism or racist coverage as the province of an ideologically untouchable other. It should not suggest that those who oppose its own positions are themselves racist or otherwise morally monstrous; it should not assume its own ethical supremacy; it should not suggest that racism is somebody else’s problem, and that those who advocate politically offensive positions are themselves unworthy of engagement in rational dialogue. What journalism education might learn from *The Sun* is that it is unproductive to follow that publication’s own discursive strategies – especially in engagements with those strategies. We need, in short, to stop ridiculing and reviling *The Sun* but to start engaging with it not on its own terms but in a language we can all understand.

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Conference proceedings

All papers in the conference proceedings section were presented at the AJE's annual meeting and conference in June 2014 at Liverpool John Moores University on the topic of the place of work in journalism education. They sparked discussion and debate and are published here to widen that discussion. Please join the conversation by going to www.journalism-education.org.

The coding challenge: an exploration of the increasing role of computing skills in journalism education

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Abstract:

With nearly all developing platforms of news journalism being digital, skills in manipulating such spaces have become essential

for budding journalists. Added to this, the future for serious investigative journalism is identified with being able to understand and interrogate large amounts of public data released online. US institutions have been leading the way in offering courses with a large component of computer science for journalists.

In June 2014, *The Irish Times*, a respected Dublin broadsheet, published an advertisement for a staff member. This person was to study and analyse company reports, press releases, and other business-related information, and write reports and analyses for the newspaper (and its website, of course). Not so long ago this all would have come under the rubric of “Business News Reporter”.

But in fact, the ad was headed “Digital Analyst”.

I quote this as an indication of the change that has occurred in the requirements and definition of a journalist in the online era of the 21st century. As I will argue, the responsibilities of journalism educators who wish to preserve the integrity and feasibility of journalism as a career include a thorough education in digital skills and use of sophisticated data interrogation software.

This is more than a scare-mongering exercise, bemoaning the triumph of the technologically literate. Skye Doherty of the University of Queensland, asks, in a recent paper, “Will the geeks inherit the newsroom?”

Part of the answer is that the “geeks” (defined as people especially skilled and interested in computing) will be essential to the workings of the newsroom, and the leading practitioners in that newsroom will have to understand the language of the technical experts, even if they are not fluent themselves.

This paper examines competing models for the formation of a viable 21st century journalist. How much do educators need to teach the skills of putting the story together, and how much the techniques for getting that story out to a digital audience? And, furthermore, what techniques should routinely be taught on syllabi for measuring audience reaction?

The outlook for tomorrow’s journalists, it increasingly appears, is a combined computer science and journalism degree. It’s an unpleasant vista for those of us to whom changing a typewriter ribbon was a challenge. But if the upcoming generations are to be switched on to the value of good journalism, of sacred facts as well as free comment, the people behind professional journalism, educators and editors alike, must deal with the realities of working the new platforms.

Since news journalism emerged several hundred years ago, these characteristics have distinguished the best practitioners: a quick wit; an eye for significant developments in the society around them; a thirst to make sure the information was accurate; a desire to hold the powerful to account; and considerable writing skill. Or, if you prefer, in the famous words of Nicholas Tomalin, “rat-like cunning, a plausible manner, and a little literary ability” (Randall 2007).

But, as Bell, Shirky and Anderson (2012) make clear, these prescriptions alone are becoming obsolete. In their place, arises the need for a confection of coding skill, engi-

neering aptitude, self-publicising skill, marketing ruthlessness – and a small dose of that “literary ability”.

Change, as Alvin Toffler observed, can produce a “Future Shock” when past certainties and supports are eroded, or seem to be in a constant state of flux. News journalism in the 21st century is a prime example of this. Huge changes have taken place in 40 years – from when, I sadly confess, my career started – and accelerated almost unbearably in the past 10, with the rise of social media and the casual tyranny of the Tweet. Broadly, the underlying transformation has been from one reporter to many, to many voices to many other voices. Everyone can take part in the conversation that answers the question “What’s happening?”, with subject matter that ranges from tasty pizza to the wholesale death and destruction of Gaza. There is a low bar to entry, and not much editing.

With this change came the fear that has stalked ‘legacy’ newsrooms for the past decade: apart from the fear of going broke, it’s the fear of looking digitally illiterate, as described by Arthur Gregg Sulzberger, scion of *The New York Times* publishing dynasty:

“we ... are at risk of becoming known as a place that does not fully understand, reward, and celebrate digital skills”. (2014)

The august *New York Times* is still a repository of some of the world’s finest journalism. But it is losing money hand over fist as it tries, like all traditional news organisations, to navigate the world wherein news is increasingly regarded as something that comes for free. It, and countless other newspapers, radio networks and television stations, want to “surf” the net and the network of links which the young consumer of news uses. These organisations have to develop genuine online presences, especially those that work on mobile phones. It is not just a matter of forcing editorial staff on to Twitter and Facebook, so that their every waking moment is charged with the responsibility to communicate to the ‘audience’. It is a matter of being professional and advanced in use of online material, and the production of explanations of events – or stories, as we used to call them.

Practically, the skills needed to stay on top of the rapid technical evolution of digital are of concern to educators because they have to be given a serious weighting, and not just a nod to ‘social media use’ or a few sessions on the open data websites beginning to be provided by government and other authorities.

Is it more important to teach a student to code, or to write a clear and compelling account of white-collar fraud? Should educators make sure students have paramount regard for accuracy, or are completely comfortable with the latest picture apps? Can we do both- with the same staff and the same students?

We can’t keep going blindly into the future doing the same thing as educators– that famous definition of madness, attributed to Albert Einstein, is of doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. It is acknowledged that some educational institutions are already moving in this direction, as described below, but more needs to be done, more quickly.

Emily Bell studied jurisprudence at university. But she has been a very successful editor of digital content at *The Guardian*, and now heads the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism at Columbia. According to Bell, and co-authors Shirky and Anderson in their essay on Post-Industrial Journalism, journalists should learn to code. Not all must do it an advanced level, but they must, these experts say, be able to communicate with people who can.

“Journalists should learn to code. It’s true that to be fluent and useful in many programming languages requires very highly developed skills; not every journalist will be able to

do this, and not every journalist should do this. But every journalist needs to understand at a basic literacy level what code is, what it can do, and how to communicate with those who are more proficient.”

Bell herself, in a 2013 article, was quoted as saying: “There is something about not just being able to think and act like a programmer but also to be able to think and act like a journalist, which is quite demanding. It’s an unusual skill set. Newsrooms are crying out for these skills.”

If journalists are not to be comprehensively skilled in programming skills, they must now at least comprehend them. The analogy strikes me of liaising with the page designers when I worked at *The Sunday Times* – I didn’t have their talents, but we could talk about the aim of the page, and how to achieve that stylistically. But there is a problem with this collegial arrangement, and it’s the body count: in the dear departed times, there were specialist layout people and designers. There were even compositors and printers. And photographers.

But in the cash-strapped 21st century, that is too many people. News organisations are cutting back on staff. This is a comment in the US Pew Research Centre’s comprehensive report, *State of the Media 2014*:

“...the growth in new digital full-time journalism jobs seems to have compensated for only a modest percentage of the lost legacy jobs in newspaper newsrooms alone in the past decade. From 2003 to 2012, the American Society of News Editors documented a loss of 16,200 full-time newspaper newsroom jobs while Ad Age recorded a decline of 38,000 magazine jobs.”

Bradley Johnson of AdAge told the *International Business Times* in October 2012 that “...old-line media is losing jobs faster than digital media is gaining them”.

The sacred place that many journalism educators, especially those with a background in print or “serious” documentary, accord to writing skill, to grammar, syntax, word choice, is also under attack. Sarah Cohen, former database editor of *the Washington Post*, and now a professor at Duke University, says: “There’s a problem with the way things are organized in newsrooms...” [and that problem is...] “Editors are word people and until that changes it will be hard to get reporters to focus on anything but words.”

At the Polis journalism conference in London in March 2014, Eric Newton of the US Knight Foundation, spoke of the necessity for journalists to know coding, be happy with algorithms, and the ‘newbots’ of the application world. The following attitude, he said, has to change: “My God, we’re word people, we can’t possibly know anything about math.”

The birth pangs of a brave new world appear to be piecemeal and jerky. The US is embracing the hybrid education model the most but then it also has the most universities and, in some areas at least, the money.

Columbia in New York appears to be the first major institution to offer a composite masters’ course combining journalism and computer science, which started in 2011. With no lack of ambition, the course literature proclaims: “Our goal is to educate a new generation of people who can refine and create news-gathering and digital media technologies and redefine journalism as we know it.”

Major components of the Columbia course are coding, data visualization, data mining, and mastery of applications for automated or device-driven journalism.

The course is offered jointly by the journalism faculty and the Fu engineering school. So far there have been two graduating classes – the first consisted of just four people, the

second had an enrolment of seven, as has the current crop.

According to media reports the course initially had trouble attracting candidates. That could provide justification for the belief that the techy, scientific, machine-oriented mind is still different from the curious, discursive, word-loving journalistic intellect.

Northeastern in Boston and Creighton in Nebraska are among other US universities which offer similar programs, with varying balances of emphasis on the scientific or the journalistic side. At Creighton, for example, the journalism, media and computing major comprises studies in “computers and scientific thinking”, web design, and information concepts, as well as professional, or what is termed “media writing”.

The Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Illinois offers a Master of Science in Journalism to graduates in computer science. (It also has a combined course in which computer science students from the engineering school work with journalism students on projects.) Both started in the past five years. Medill is also the place which gave birth to Narrative Science, the company providing an application to machine-write news stories from statistics, such as those underlying sports stories and business reports. The Medill approach mirrors a belief, in the words of news applications creator Brian Boyer, that it is easier to teach journalism to programmers than programming to journalists.

Online learning, the bane or blessing for educators, offers many options. One American example is Walden University’s Bachelor of Science in Communication – New Media. This, it says, “allows students to learn strategies for employing social networks, wikis, blogs, podcasts, Web conferencing, and other technological tools in organizational communications”. It might be argued that young people – in the 15-25 cohort - know these things anyway in the 21st century, through normal life experience. However, that is a bit of a myth.

As the digital world becomes more sophisticated, some things get easier, but others stay hard for “normal” people, or even for the digital natives, as those who grew up with the internet, apps, Facebook, digital 24/7, have been called.

However, the “ask a young person” solution of older groups has often been shown to be no answer – a young person will know only what they need to know for their daily or professional life. Social media and a bit of Survey Monkey is OK. But beyond – it’s like asking an ordinary motorist to tune up the engine on a Formula One car. Jennifer Smith of the University of Florida’s technology teaching department confirmed to the author (May 2014) that the technical skills of students, with regard to online platforms, are often over-stated.

To return to a quick course survey, around the world there are these emergent courses which recognize the essential part that computer science knowledge will play in journalism education.

In Madrid, the Rey Juan Carlos university has since 2012 offered a combined data use and journalism masters. In the Netherlands, Tilburg University has been running data journalism undergraduate and masters courses for several years. Their course info describes data journalism as:

a journalistic process based on analyzing and filtering large data sets for the purpose of creating a new story.

Tilburg lists these as possible careers for those who progress and take the master’s qualification: data journalist, research journalist, data consultant, data researcher, interaction designer, multimedia storyteller, innovation officer, project manager new media, data sci-

entist, researcher.

Note the category “journalist” appears only twice in 10 suggested jobs.

Tilburg’s graduates had been very successful in gaining employment, according to the course director in an email to the author.

In the Philippines, Renalyn Valdez has described a major programme to equip journalism students with advanced skills, but specifically in a range of Mac applications, educating them thoroughly in “...digital technology and design, desktop publishing design for industry, experimental design, advertising and competitive design”.

Note, this is a very design-heavy approach.

In the United Kingdom, where there are at least 90 journalism courses to choose from, these options or similar show some movement towards greater literacy in digital technology: [see version A]

A Bachelor of *Science* (my italics) with communication and media studies at Brunel University, west London.

Multimedia journalism at London South Bank, which acknowledges: “*Journalists today are required to be a little bit of a writer, a photographer, a video maker and a sound person, as well as being able to cut, edit and assemble media in a multimedia environment such as the Web.*”

“Multi-platform journalism”, a BA course at the Grimsby Institute, which concentrates on the skills needed to migrate around different digital environments with news articles and packages.

And all courses endorsed by the Broadcast Journalism Training Council adhere to the slogan “setting the standards for multi-platform journalism training”.

But mostly, the offerings are for traditional journalism or media or communications courses, often twinned with politics, a language, a topic specialty such as health or environment – all are marvellous and sound very interesting, but still remain firmly within the bailiwick of the humanities.

In Ireland, where I am based, there have been patches of change, but educational institutions, beholden to government, are not fast on their feet.

Where I teach in Dublin, Dublin Institute of Technology, the new head of the School of Media, and his deputy, don’t have experience in journalism or traditional content creation. Gaming and digital manipulation are their areas of expertise, not news stories or feature articles. Is this the future? Journalism seems to be being relegated to a lesser role in the media superset. Although an experienced journalist is running the department of journalism itself at DIT – but you can see here that journalism is not the big sell to students.

There is of course, the view that the games industry is on the up-and-up, while “legacy” journalism is in its death throes – so it’s much more responsible to educate people for games design careers.

Elsewhere in Ireland, setting aside numerous small journalism courses which have set up offering certificates rather than degrees, we find some movement.

At Dublin City University, the basic journalism BA course information says: “The technologies of journalism change, but the need for it does not.” DCU also offers a Bachelor of Science in MultiMedia, with heavy emphasis on equipment skills. The journalism bachelor’s course is also about to include web-page design and coding as compulsory elements.

Dublin Institute of Technology offers gaming and mobile technology training, with journalism still set in the classic mould with language and politics options. However, a school review is under way at the moment and will no doubt yield changes.

University of Limerick has a well-regarded course in journalism and new media, but nothing bridging the worlds of the computer scientist and the journalist.

It might be argued that the newest thing about many “new” media courses is their use of the adjective. And even that becomes increasingly redundant, as new media grows older and yields less novelty.

The term multimedia storyteller appears in the Tilburg job options list, and is a description seen widely these days. Steven King is assistant professor of multimedia and interactive journalism at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. He is described, among other things, as a multimedia storyteller, and also the possessor of a Masters in Computer Science. Interactive has to be a key word in journalism education, as the once-distinct professional roles of print, radio or television specialists are now all concentrated in one digital journalist. But King, as the avatar, also possesses a computer science masters, so he can both understand ways to put his story across, and the mechanisms which allow him to do so.

To pursue a slightly different point, the key word for news journalists in particular, is the ‘d’ word, data – as in big data, open data, data mining, data visualisation, and so on. Tilburg University suggested three professions with data as an integral part of the description.

In our context, what data means is information and statistics gathered by government, or private corporations, that relates to the whole population of a society. For example, data on health, on traffic patterns, on buying habits. Data can be text, figure, visuals. It tells a lot about the society, but for professional news disseminators it must be analysed and handled properly.

Consider the Wikileaks cable dump at the end of 2010. Something like 250,000 cables had been extracted from Chelsea, formerly Bradley, Manning’s cache of US military and diplomatic messages. To extract the relevant news out of these – to make sense of them at all – it was imperative that Julian Assange linked up as he did with The Guardian, The New York Times and Der Spiegel for journalistic sifting and recognition of stories.

Without this sort of skill, there can be floods of open data pouring into newsrooms every day, but without the ability to extract it, and the ability to place it in context, it is not going to be much advantage to news organisations. However raw data, on spreadsheets, Excel presentations, other computerized lists, can be just so many haystacks in which journalists, if their contribution is to be at all timely, must find the needles. The term “data mining” is a good analogy, and today’s journalists must be learning to operate the equipment to mine effectively. The “news angle” is rarely going to be presented in a press release, when it is negative news fulfilling the traditional definition that “news is what someone, somewhere, doesn’t want you to know”.

As Cohen et al noted in 2011, computing technology could become the “saviour of journalism’s watchdog tradition” [p148].

And to quote Narrative Science, the company formed to machine-write stories at Medill:

“The promise of big data has yet to be fulfilled. There is a clear and immediate opportunity to bridge the gap between data and the people who need to understand it and act on it.”

There's little doubt that loads of more freely-available data will be a boon to journalists, but it will also pose a huge challenge to traditional newsrooms.

The UK, with its open data site, is a world leader in this – or so Francis Maude, the former Cabinet secretary, claimed in Dublin at an open government meeting earlier this year.

Computer Assisted Reporting – CAR - is a term that's been around for about 20 years. In the US, the National Institute for CAR offers itself as a contractor to do tricky data analysis jobs, even down to cleaning up documents which are uploaded in an unwieldy format, to transform them into the more usable .xls or .txt versions.

NICAR also works with the University of Missouri to provide a five-year programme consisting of a journalism undergrad and a masters in the computer assisted techniques.

“Computational journalism” is yet another term that has been applied in discourse on the new digital framework for news production, as discussed to good effect by Terry Flew et al in 2012. This concludes that the skills to handle and analyse data, with sophisticated modern tools, are a *sine qua non* for the aspiring journalist. Flew and co describe their topic thus:

“Computational journalism is not about getting journalists to think or act like computers, but enabling them to use computing devices to tackle problems beyond the scope of everyday action prior to the age of computing.”

They explain further: “Computational journalism demands not only a certain level of new ICT skills, capacities and literacies of journalists, but a new understanding of how journalists can work with, and in, the new economies of distributed and co-creative production.”

MOOCS, Massive Online Open Courses, are the hottish latest thing in further education. In May 2014, the European Journalism Centre in Maastricht started its own data journalism MOOC, with a claimed enrolment of 14,000. This indicates the breadth of interest from those both hoping to join the profession, and current members who feel the need to update their skills.

Educators have been turning out lots of fine young 20th century journalists, but this is the 21st century. Where are tomorrow's journalists going to work? Tilburg gives some suggestions. According to business magazine *Forbes*, in a December 2013 article, the top five jobs for this year, 2014, are:

Software developers;

Market research analysts;

Training and development specialists;

Financial analysts;

Physical therapists.

And looking ahead to numbers 6 and 7, they were also computer-linked, with web developer at 6 and logisticians at 7.

By sticking to those basics, a wide and fair approach to sources, and a strict adherence to spelling and presentation, we're giving the journalists of 2050 a head start in keeping their society in their thrall.

But that is not enough: imagine trying to have black-balled typewriters, back at the start of the last century. The white heat of technology will burn us all if we don't allow its light to shine on our practices. We don't have to run headlong into the fire. We have to know how to control it. And that is our responsibility to the next generation.

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Journalism skills and work-based learning

Claire Wolfe, University of Worcester

Abstract:

This paper explores how higher education providers can support journalism students to secure work placements in the media sphere. It considers the increasing importance of preparing graduates for work, not only in journalism but also in related fields like marketing and PR, Social Media Management and Copywriting. The research provides an insight, from a student perspective, into what skills they found most helpful in securing placements, during the experiential learning and subsequently in seeking paid work. The research also assesses methods of alerting students to work opportunities. The survey was distributed to years 2 and 3 students and a sample of graduates at the University of Worcester. It concludes that the multi-skilled approach to journalism teaching is seen to be effective at securing placements and ultimately work by the students. One to-one support from tutors in seeking work is valued highly while the use of social media is increasing. Students make recommendations as to how staff can further assist them in their careers.

Key words: journalism skills; experiential learning; social media; cross-transferable skills; employability

The demands upon academic institutions to help students make the transition from study into work have steadily grown as society and the higher education environment have evolved.

Students, paying substantial amounts of money to study at degree level, are becoming more discriminating about which universities to select, which courses to pick and what careers to embark upon. "You want to do a vocational course," Susan Young (2012) wrote in the *Guardian*, "because if you are going to rack up debts you need to have a job at the

end.” This cash for investment mentality influences decision making from the onset of A-levels or their equivalents. A future with prospects and with knowledge and skills to enable a smooth transition from university into the world of work has become the central goal for many students. “This change has led to descriptions, sometimes pejorative, of universities now primarily being involved in ‘higher vocational education’” (Billett, 2009). With this shift in focus to more occupationally specific courses have also come expectations that graduates will enjoy smooth transitions from their university studies into professional practice (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills 2008 in Billett, 2009). Graduates are expected to have the capacities to engage immediately and effectively in the professional setting where they secure employment.

In the UK, the government have looked to universities to bridge this gap for a number of years and there is an increasing pressure to provide courses with ‘transferable’ skills and to be transparent about the number of students entering graduate-level employment. “‘Key skills’ and ‘employability’ are seen-and promoted-by governments as desirable components of first-cycle higher education curricula” (Knight and Yorke, 2003, p.vii, preface).

Commenting on the 2001 Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) report on teaching practices in Higher Education, which found fault with assessments linked to ‘off-campus learning’ and transferable ‘key’ or ‘core’ skills, Knight and Yorke (2003, pvii, preface) say there was almost complete silence from the 23 learning institutions over employment. Demands to address this have been ‘sharpened’ they argue by:

“increasing expectations of higher education, not least that it should contribute explicitly to the employability of new graduates and, by extension, to countries’ economic well being in times when ‘knowledge economies’ are seen as prime sources of wealth” (cited in Leadbetter, 2000 ,p.iv, preface).

But this is not a new concept. “The idea that learning should be linked to work has a noble educational ancestry. Its philosophical roots can be traced to John Dewey, and still earlier to John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau” (Boud, Solomon and Symes, 2001, p.9). Dewey argued that the theme of work could be an organising principle of the curriculum. As stated in the Robbins Report of 1963, few would enter higher education without an eye to subsequent employment (Knight and Yorke, 2003,p.1).

The notion of enterprise within higher education was embraced by the Employment Department’s Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) initiative of the late 1980s (p.1). Then the Dearing Report on higher education (NCIHE 1997) went further, stating “Education and Training [should] enable people in an advanced society to compete with the best in the world” (NCIHE, 1997:para1: 11 in Knight & Yorke, 2003, p.1). The Dearing Report urged the HE sector to focus on ‘key skills’ (communication, numeracy, information technology and ‘learning how to learn’) (p.6). These skills can be used to underpin a range of actions in employment and, debatably, can also be transferable from one type of experience to another (p.4).

This has necessitated a gradual shift in approach from academics that are no longer able to focus solely on educational provision and the pastoral care of their students. Work-based learning is one of the innovations “attempting to engage seriously with the economic, social and educational demands of our era” (Boud, Solomon and Symes 2001, p.3). They describe work experience as “a class of university programmes that bring together universities and work organisations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces”

(p.4). Partnerships are one important element with work placed learning modules where frameworks for recognising prior learning and “capstones”, or the achievement of benchmarks are considered to be critical (pp.4-7).

But not all opportunities are generated through partnerships. Many students are encouraged while at universities to seek their own placements within industry to help improve their CVs. Hence there is a difference between the types of work experience being taken up by the students. The partnership arrangements tend to be more organised with a clearer structure. The ad-hoc placements secured independently by students tend to generate mixed feedback, with some providers clearly not being aware of the students prior learning and not offering them opportunities to develop their skills while being of use to the organisation.

“For the employer they create an ongoing relationship with an educational institution that comes to understand the needs of the organisation itself. For the educational institution they create links with new areas of educational need and diversify their sources of income” (Boud, Solomon and Symes 2001p.5).

These partnerships tend to have a contractual arrangement or memorandum agreement. Employability can be defined in different ways - as graduates actually gaining jobs, through the student being developed by the extra curricula activity and, lastly, in terms of their personal achievements and the potential it generates (p4).

Graduate employment is measured through the ‘first destination statistics’ in which graduates employment status six months after graduating is indexed (p.209). But as Knight and Yorke state: “the true value of employability can only be ascertained over a considerable length of time” (p. 209), thus making the “softer” concept of employability more useful.

Clearly there is a role for some reflection over work-based learning, a concept described as metacognition by Knight and Yorke (2002) with their USEM model (p7-8). With work placements taken without attached assessment there is no formal way to assess the experience, other than through a rudimentary method as I have adopted.

Employment Prospects for Journalism Graduates

Some subjects, including journalism, are more easily identifiable as providing potential routes into employment.

“Across many advanced industrial economies, there is a shift in the emphasis within university programs towards those that are primarily concerned with the preparation for specific occupations, and away from the liberal arts” (Lomas 1997 in Billett, 2009).

Those that combine practical skills development offer scope, not only for direct employment in the industry, but in related sphere like Public Relations, Communications, Social Media Management and Publishing. A Labour Force Survey (ONS 2014) indicates that the number of journalists has actually increased from 57,000 in 2007 to 70,000 in 2013 (Ponsford, 2014). Those in full time employment have risen from 30,000 to 37,000 over the same period with another 5,000 in part time employment. The others are working as freelancers, either full or part time. Ponsford (2014) argues:

“Many of the jobs in journalism that have gone over the last five years have been people on local papers...(while)...Many of the new jobs which have been created involve

creating 'content' for 'brands'."

A National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) report also noted that over a 10-year period (2002–2012) the number of journalists had remained roughly constant (Spilsbury, 2014).

However, it is clear that the traditional newspaper industry has retracted with a stark picture being painted in a 2013 National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Report: "According to Press Gazette, 242 local papers shut between 2005 and the start of 2012" (NUJ, 2013). Johnston Press's annual reports from the five years from 2007 to 2012 revealed that the number of full-time journalists was down by 44 per cent from 2,774 to 1,558. Mail General Trust admitted that half of its 4,200 staff in the Northcliffe regional newspaper division had been cut since 2008" (NUJ, 2013).

However, there has been a steady increase in the number of graduates entering the workplace. High Fliers research (2014,p.10) based on surveys with top employers, states the outlook is "significantly more upbeat with the UK's leading employers expecting to hire 8.7% more graduates than were recruited during 2013– the highest annual increase in vacancies for four years." However, they expected media recruitment to be down 6.4% on 2013. The ONS report on graduates found that people with a degree in medicine or dentistry had the highest employment rate of all graduates, at 95%, followed by those with media and information studies degrees at 93%" (Allen 2013). Furthermore 72% of journalism graduates are in employment six months after graduating with 27% of these going on to work in arts, design, culture and sports and a further 14% work in marketing, sales and advertising (Allen, 2013). The proportion of recent graduates working in jobs not usually requiring a higher educational qualification, however, rose to 47% from pre-recession levels of 39%, ONS figures show (Allen 2013).

With fewer openings into the print industry it has become more important for course tutors to help students identify other suitable career paths whether in broadcasting - where substantial cuts have also taken place- or in the burgeoning, but uncertain, digital media sphere. James Harding, the BBC's head of news (2014), said despite their own plans to make "hundreds of job losses" due to cuts in news programming, digital jobs were increasing. "While BuzzFeed and the Daily Beast have been hiring outstanding journalists from The Times and The Guardian, those papers have been learning the arts of list-making and viral video," he said. He was optimistic about the future of journalism as digital opportunities for employment were created (Harding, 2014). David Montgomery (2013), chief executive of Local World, talks of the need for multi-skilled recruits:

"After training, the journalist will assume control of a segment or segments of content. He will singly be responsible for sourcing this content, collecting it and publishing it across all platforms.

"The journalist will embody all the traditional skills of reporter, sub-editor, editor-in-chief, as well as online agility and basic design ability, achieved partly in training but in the case of on-screen capability this is expected as a basic entry qualification as it is now generally present in most 12-year-olds"

Spilsbury's (2014) "Emerging Skills for Journalists' report for the National Council for the Training of Journalists (2014, p.5) recognised that a wider range of abilities were required of those entering the media industries.

"Journalists are increasingly working across a range of platforms and need to have

the skills to produce output specifically tailored to each of these different platforms. It could be argued that digital skills have become one of the core journalism skills. New entrants to journalism will have to be 'digital natives' and be completely at home with social media" (Spilsbury, 2014, p.5).

He highlights some of these skills stating:

"New and enhanced skills are needed in the areas of (i) ethics, (ii) quality control and fact checking, (iii) IT and digital skills, (iv) PR and communication strategy skills, (v) entrepreneurialism and freelancing, (vi) time management and managing workload skills and (vii) communication and 'audience relationship' skills" (Spilsbury, 2014, p.5).

The introduction of course fees and the increase to around £9,000 a year has so far failed to have a significant impact on university enrolments. "The highest level of entrants was recorded in 2013 with almost 496,000 students beginning full-time undergraduate courses" (Coughlan, 2013).

This makes it imperative to ensure that the learning undertaken on journalism courses positions graduates in the best possible way to secure graduate media related employment. The trend for an increasingly aging population with projections that number of over 65s will nearly double to 19 million by 2050 (Cracknell, 2010). A pattern of increased freelance usage (Jacobs 2013) makes it even more essential to equip journalism undergraduates with transferable knowledge and skills that will enable them to develop and make work transitions as necessary.

Employers consider experiential learning important and many actively look for on-the-job learning experiences on CVs. This is valued in the media industries as recruits are expected to work efficiently, to high standards and to tight deadlines from the minute they join the company. High Fliers (2014) highlighted that more than half of the top graduate recruiters state that due to the very obvious benefits of work experience to an individual's skillset, graduates with work experience are prioritised in their selection processes. They predicted that 37% of vacancies in 2014 would be filled by graduates who had already worked for the employer (p.13), but did not see that as a significant factor in the media industry. The proportion of new graduates recruited directly through employers' work experience programmes had jumped from 26% in 2010 to a record 37% in 2014 (p.36).

"Over half the recruiters who took part in the research repeated their warnings from previous years – that graduates who have had no previous work experience at all are unlikely to be successful during the selection process and have little or no chance of receiving a job offer for their organisations' graduate programmes" (High Fliers, p.38).

Research Aims and Methodology

Research was undertaken to determine how effective work placement and career support was in the journalism department at the University of Worcester in equipping students for their future. Initiatives for notifying students of work and work experience openings including social media messaging were assessed to gauge their usefulness. Another aim was to get some feedback from students about the perceived usefulness of skills and knowledge secured while undertaking the BA (Hons) Journalism degree. In particular it would be interesting to see which attributes they felt helped them to secure placements and or work and which were the most useful while undertaking the various tasks asked of them. They would also be able to identify anything they felt was missing from their

education that they felt would have helped them more. This would help to ensure they are prepared for the workplace and to consider any necessary changes to the course. There was a particular focus on year 3. The students were also asked to list any new skills and or experience they gained while on their placements. There were a number of other aims of the research. It was evident that many students were securing placements in addition to any required as mandatory for module assessment, and in many cases journalism staff were unaware of their activities. It was considered worthwhile finding out the level of engagement with work being undertaken by students to not only establish how they had secured it but to obtain information to enable the value of it to be determined. This would enable a wider range of work opportunities to be tracked and evaluated. These responses are not a major feature of this research paper. Finally the research would provide an opportunity for students to suggest ways in which the journalism team could further help them in securing placements and work.

The method used for this research was a questionnaire. It generated both quantitative and qualitative data to enable topics to be covered fully. It contained a series of closed questions with tick boxes and a number of questions consisted of lists requiring respondents to order them on a Likert numerical priority scale of 1-10. There were also a number of open questions asking for comment and views. There were 16 questions and students fell into three categories, year 2 students, year 3 students and recent graduates (up to one year). It was decided not to extend this to Year One, as some had not secured work placements at the time the research was undertaken. A few students were subsequently interviewed to obtain more in-depth information. Fifty responses were received from both single honours and joint honours students. It was decided to evaluate the responses not only across year groups but also depending on whether they had taken the single honours or joint journalism course.

Research Findings

Communicating with students

The methods used to advise students of work placement and employment opportunities were Twitter, the journalism course Facebook page, emails, journalism module sections of the university intranet, Blackboard, one to one discussions with journalism staff, talks and advice in work placement modules, talks and advice in other journalism modules and via industry speakers. Students were notified of the social media support verbally in classes and via emails.

The key points:

1. One to one support from staff in securing placements and work was rated the highest;
2. Many students were unaware of the social media alerts;
3. Those using the social media tip offs rated them highly;
4. Year 2 students used social media more than Year 3;

5. Single honours students secured 50% more placements than those on joint honours courses.

Overall the students ranked the 8 listed methods of communications as follows:

1. One to one discussion with journalism tutors
2. Talks/advice in general journalism classes
3. Industry speakers (highest for joints)
4. Email notifications
5. Blackboard notifications
6. Talks/advice in work placement modules
7. Facebook notifications
8. Twitter notifications

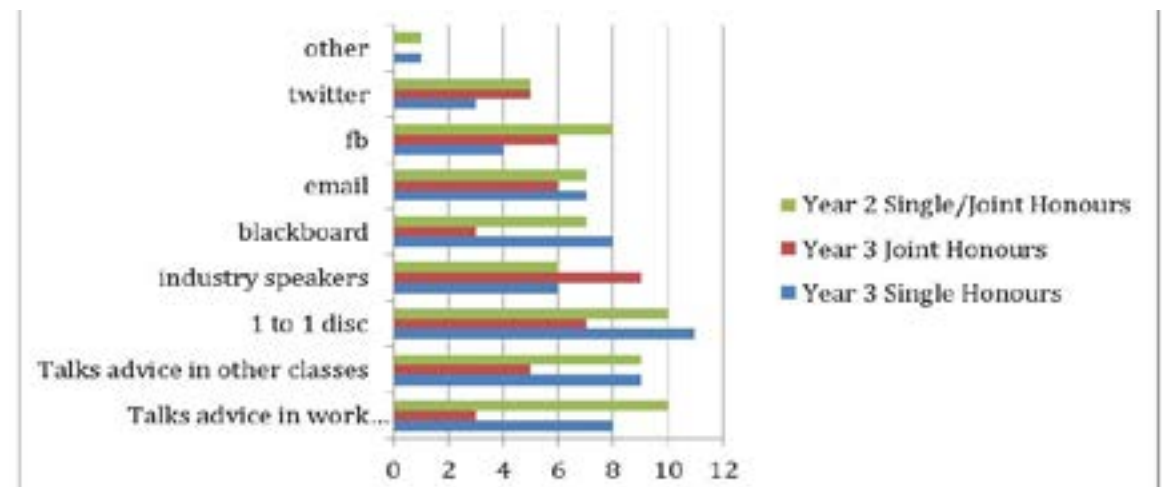
A breakdown of responses from single honours and joint honours students was also analysed. This showed that, as indicated above, the latter group placed a higher value on industry speakers. This is likely as they would have had less direct contact with journalism tutors and also not taken as many modules where opportunities had arisen for advice in securing placements and work.

It was surprising that social media was ranked the lowest with both groups and their comments indicated that a significant number of them were unaware of these outlets and felt that they needed to be disseminated more widely. The questionnaire actually served to raise awareness of these links. However, the year 2 group rated Facebook higher.

Year Three

The student results were analysed separately and key findings are summarised below:

- Most found work placements helpful with their career progression;



- The skills provided on the course were felt to be beneficial with career development;
- There was a correlation between those who used social media and the total number of placements secured (but this may be as they are using more methods for identifying

Skills and Knowledge

When asked to indicate the usefulness of skills and knowledge the students were presented with a list of 20. These included a range of skills involving print, broadcasting and Internet journalism together with knowledge of law and ethics and politics. They were asked to indicate which of these were acquired on the course and helped to secure a placement or to meet the challenges of the work experience. Again they were asked to rank them on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest score.

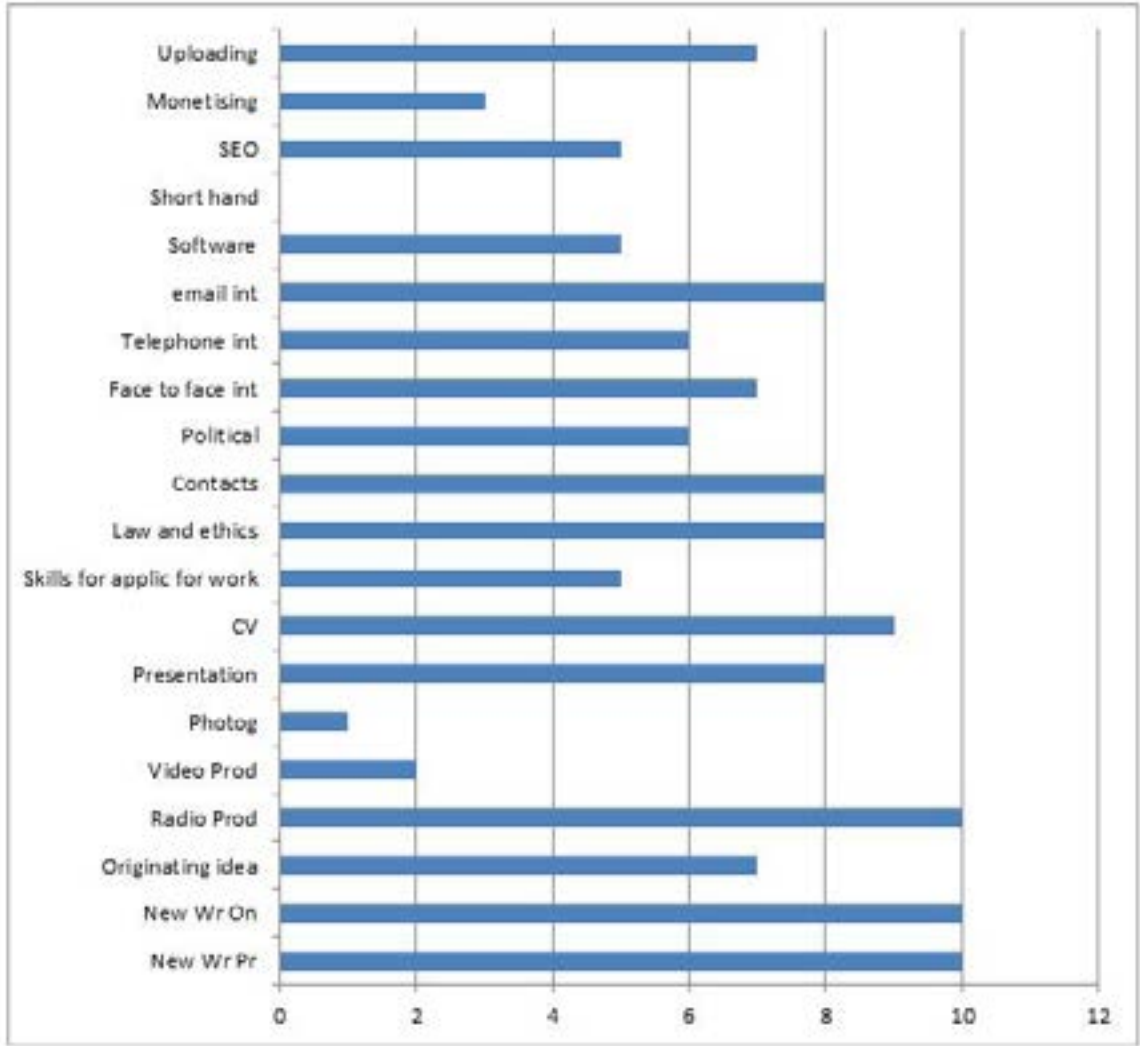
Nearly all Single Honours students rated all 20 skills and knowledge highly (5 - 10). The ones scoring the highest (8-10) are as follows:

- 1. News writing skills
- 2. Radio Production
- 3. Online writing
- 4. Developing CVs
- 5. Email interviews
- 6. Uploading & managing content on the web
- 7. Law & Ethics
- 8. Contacts building
- 9. Presentations

The graph opposite contains all the categories.

The scores differed slightly for the Joint Honour students, probably as they hadn't had the opportunity to take as many journalism classes and acquire as many skills, for instance video production. However, they rated shorthand, an optional module, higher, which is interesting and possibly reflects a focus more on print based work rather than broadcasting. Seven of them gained an 8-10 score.

- 1. News writing for print
- 2. Online news writing
- 3. Law & ethics
- 4. CV building
- 5. Presentation skills
- 6. Email interviewing skills
- 7. Contacts building
- 8. Knowledge of politics
- 9. Search Engine Optimisation awareness
- 10. Telephone interview techniques
- 11. Face-to-face interviewing techniques.

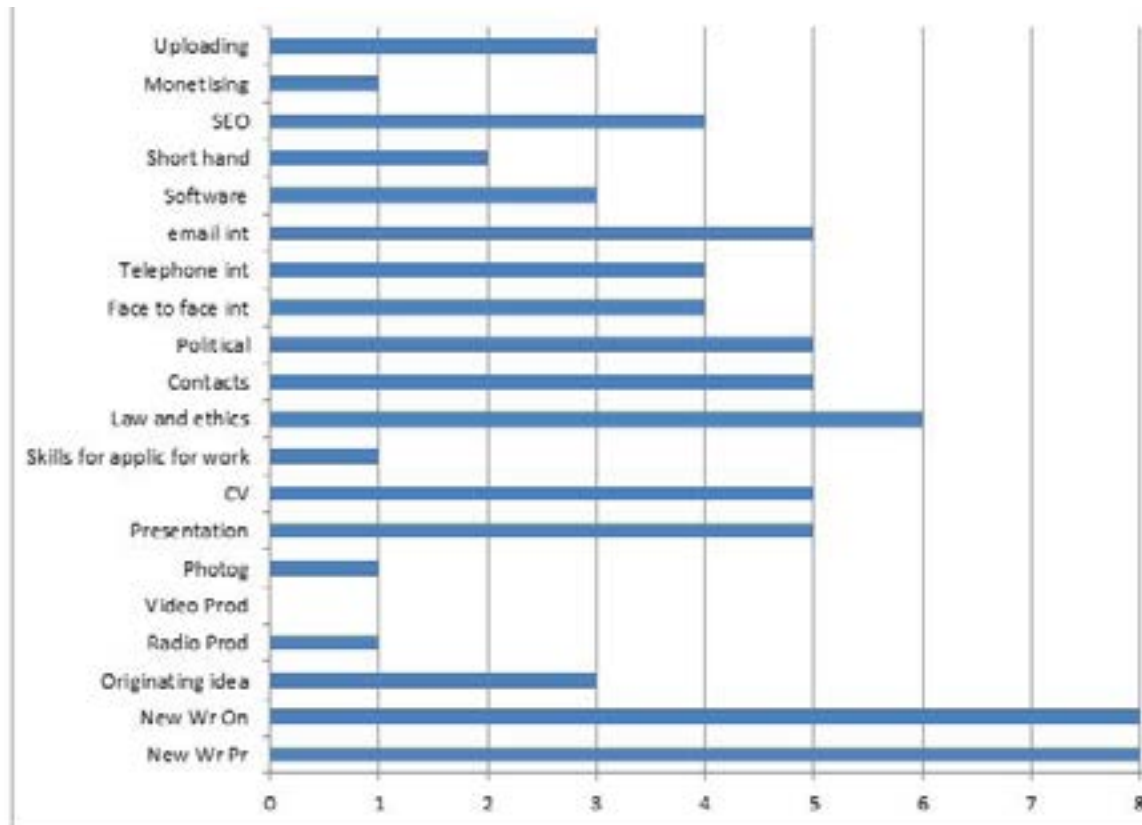


Year three single honours

Student Comments – Year 3

The students commented on the value of the placements and skill. A few of their observations are below:

- "I was notified by an agency recently that my knowledge and experience with Google analytics and SEO had gained me attention from graduate recruiters."
- "Time keeping, professionalism, gave a career focus and developed editorial skills like writing coherently for publication."
- "Being able to get my name within the publication (Gloucestershire Echo) helped, resulting in them calling me for the odd article to be published."
- "The more experience you have the more valuable you become."
- "Links and contacts-useful tips for the real-life journalism world."
- "Learned different skills and made connections in the PR world. I was advised to apply for their graduate scheme."



Year three joint honours

"Being able to be confident with interviews over the phone and with vox pops using the equipment."

"Learnt various camera settings; people placement in photographs."

"Better understanding of managing workloads; research skills; organisation; brain storming."

"Enabled me to understand the work ethics and understandings of sports broadcasting and interviewing."

"Although I most definitely will not now look into marketing and PR jobs I believe any experience is valuable."

"Learning to be professional and being taken seriously."

"Media writing relevant to personal interest (American Football)."

"Interviewing people abroad over Skype."

Year Two

The results for the Year 2 group differed and it was mainly noted that use of social media was higher for getting job alerts. This may have been due to a general increase in awareness of Twitter and or more students being aware of the journalism student Facebook page. The use of Twitter in the classroom has increased even over the one-year period

since the current year 3 group started their final year.

The key findings in the Year 2 group were:

- A higher percentage (about 75%) were using social media;
- More placements were gained per student than Year 3;
- Strong correlation between those who used social media and the total number of placements they had secured;
- Although there was a higher use of social media, overall the ranking of methods was very similar to the Year 3 group.

It is also worth pointing out that while the average number of placements was higher in year 2, one student secured 18 and this will have affected the result.

Year Two: Skills and Knowledge

In terms of the most helpful tuition the group had a significantly different rating.

Top 8 of 20 (most ranked 8-10)

1. News Writing (Print)
2. Contacts
3. Skills in making applications for work placements
4. Law & Ethics
5. CV
6. Face to face interviews
7. Radio production
8. Uploading content

Of significance, shorthand is rated higher by the Year 2 group along with analysing ways of monetising the web. Tuition in these areas has increased. Learning how to upload content to the web was higher than with the Year 3 group, most likely as the multi-platform approach has developed.

Student Comments – Year 2

The students commented on the value of the placements. A few of their observations are below:

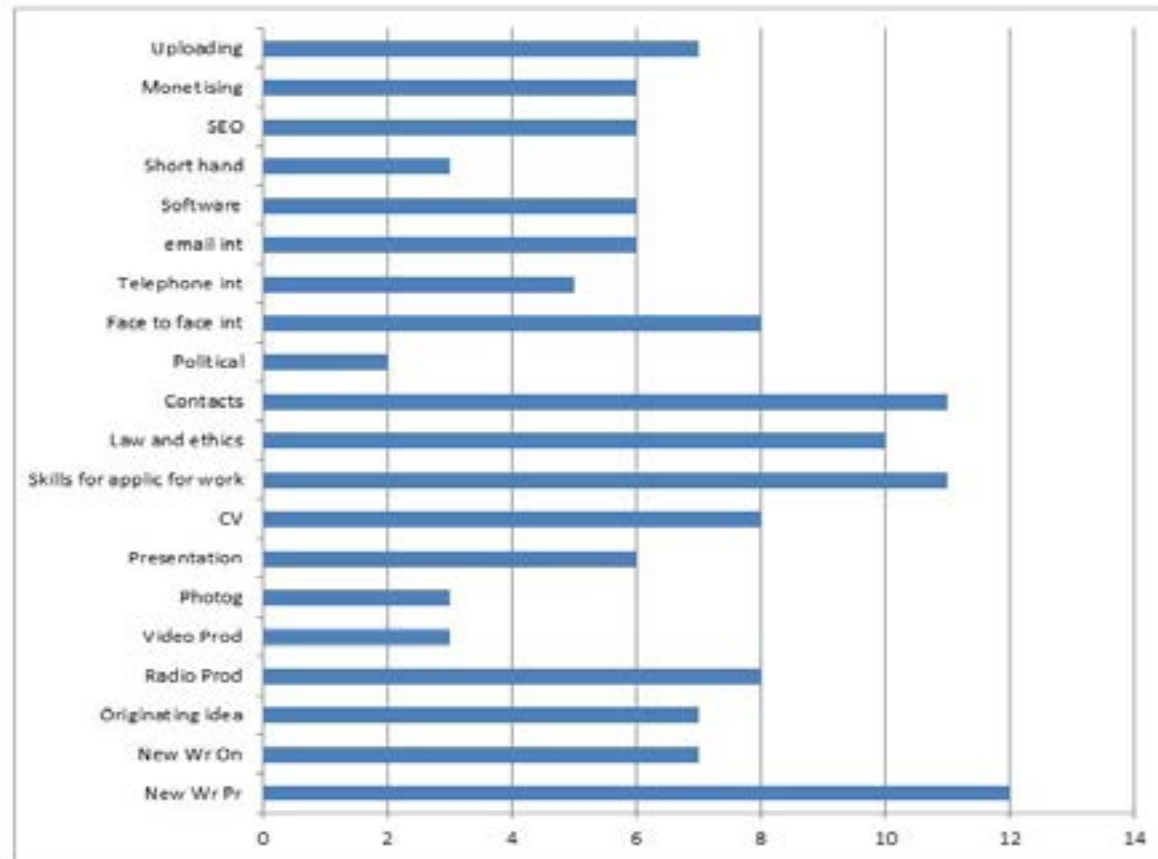
"I feel that I have learnt more about how a real working news room works and the requirements in which a prospective employee will need to fill the role of a multitasking journalists. These placements will continue to broaden my knowledge and understanding of how the world of journalism works."

"BBC Hereford-Worcester and the Birmingham Mail are the best regional organisations around and have helped me to make invaluable contacts."

"BBC Radio1/Extra have shown me what I need to do to get into radio broadcasting in the future."

"Writing for broadcasting; being precise and to the point; getting relevant information; putting interviewees at ease; asking more relevant questions to get the best answer."

"It gives you more confidence to come up with questions and improve your overall confidence."



Year two, skills and knowledge

"Research skills; confidence; independence."

"Developed skills at covering courts; note taking; knowledge of different courts."

"I have gained a new skill set which could prove useful."

"Further developing vox pop skills; production skills and bulletin reading/interpretation."

"Audio editing; bulletin organisation."

"I know more about how magazines are produced."

"Gained new contacts."

"If I apply for a job after three years with just a journalism degree and no experience they wouldn't employ me. They'd take the one who did something else in those three years."

Recent Graduates

The key findings in the graduate group were:

- All methods of support with work experience valued (5-10 & mainly 8-10);

Conference proceedings

- Having an up-to-date CV and contacts building seen as main strengths for securing employment and work placements.

Graduates: Skills and Knowledge

The skills they identified as being the most useful (rated 8-10)

1. Up-to-date CV
2. Contacts building
3. Skills in making applications for work/placements
4. Face to face interviewing skills
5. Email interviewing skills
6. Originating ideas
7. Radio production skills
8. Knowledge of law and ethics
9. Use of software
10. Uploading content to the web

The few scoring 4 and below were mostly skills that they didn't take up as they hadn't selected the modules.

Student Comments - Graduates

A few of their observations are below:

"All placements have been as valuable for working out what I didn't want to do and what I wanted to do. They gave me an insight into working life and the expectation of different media outlets."

"In order to win the apprenticeship competition I have been a part of this year, I had to do a final interview. The skills and confidence I gained from my work placements were completely invaluable and being able to call on anecdotes from previous placements definitely played a part in me winning the competition and getting the opportunity I've had over the last year" (a winner of the Midlands Apprentice of the Year 2013).

"Increased understanding of the needs of employers in the news room environment."

"Yes, the work placement provided experience and skills, but more crucially, they provided a platform for me to showcase my work and meet the people who can give jobs. I now work at the BBC."

Satisfaction Level with Skills and Experience

Overall, there was a high satisfaction level with the skills and experience provided on the course and the support provided by journalism staff to help students secure work placements and to be aware of job opportunities. It was noticeable that joint honours students commented on some skills that would have been helpful but were unable to acquire them due to being up to the limit with journalism modules or due to module clashes. A few students recommended other areas be included in the curriculum:

Conference proceedings

- “Modern commercially-orientated communications.”
- “Students should be taught that going into the industry will not be easy. I think that being in this university bubble students feel like it won’t be that bad so I think that they should be told all the bad and good in order for them to make the right choice in where they want to work and where they want to go after university.”

Satisfaction Level with Communication Methods

There were few suggestions for improving on ways of communicating work placements and jobs but those made were useful. They included further developing social media, the alumni network and links with professional organisations and setting up a dedicated website, newsletter and LinkedIn course jobs page. They were keen to have staff involvement via personal recommendations over the relative merits of various placements and more guidance over what to expect. Any initiatives to further develop their industry contacts, their links with local organisations and with PR and communications sections of the university were also recommended. There were a few rather hopeful suggestions, that there should always be a spare placement on hand and that the university pay expenses. However, these are issues born out of an increasingly pressurised work experience environment. It has become harder to source some traditional work experience openings for a variety of reasons and where placements do occur, more students are being expected to undertake them at their own cost.

New Skills Acquired

Students were able to identify specific skills and knowledge gained while on the placement. Some of those that weren’t being taught on the course are listed below and provide ideas for further development of the curriculum.

“Learning about Google Analytics; being left in charge of important details and fact files.”

“I learnt a lot about the advertising world; how to analyse spread sheets and looking at news adverts.”

“Doing a blog on someone else’s behalf; how to use corporate social networks; training on Adobe Elements; became involved in staff media training.”

“Learning a lot about investigative journalism.”

“Communicating with the press and radio stations to act as a go between in arranging interviews.”

“Marketing/‘business’ communications.”

“Perfecting my press releases.”

“Office etiquette.”

“Handling pressure and intimidation when dealing with peers and ‘famous people’- case in point Alistair Campbell and Ed Miliband.”

Stepping Stone into Work / Earn as You Learn

The students recognised the value of work experience in helping to secure permanent

work and it was surprising to find a number of students already earning money following placements. One student was freelancing on a motorsport website, Talkative Broadcasting, after work experience and went straight into full time work with them after finishing the course. For two consecutive years students completing a one-month university/BBC partnership internship went straight into employment with them. One of them had earlier turned down the offer of work with a PR firm where he had been on a placement. A third year student said she was offered work by the National Childbirth Trust after a placement, but decided “not to pursue a career in PR.” Another student was earning money as a freelance throughout Year 3 working as an accredited journalist for goal.com covering premier league games and interviewing top players and managers. One student secured paid work as a Publishing Assistant for the Sustainability Department at the University of Worcester while completing her studies and was taken on full time when she graduated. After work experience on a regional paper one student said she was hopeful it would ‘maybe’ lead to work. Other students were advised to apply for the companies’ graduate schemes after successful work experience. Another was told by the daily regional newspaper where she had a placement that once she had achieved her 100wpm shorthand they would like her “to come back for an interview.”

Nature of Student Placements

The students were asked to state which placements they had been on and to indicate whether or not they were secured through university partnerships and links, namely via a BBC Diversity Media Partnership, a partnership with local community youth radio station, YOUTHCOMM, or via BJTC opportunities. It was interesting to discover that many placements were secured by students who used the prompts and advice supplied to make individual requests and connections. One year two student turned out to be a complete surprise having secured 18 placements, none of them via the routes indicated above. This student was interviewed to establish how he had achieved so many. He said:

“I worked out where I could get to from home and Worcester and then worked out where I had friends that I could stay with. I mapped out when I could carry out work experience and then applied to all of these places and tried to fit it all in. It has meant working through all the times I have not been at university but it has been worth it.”

Rating Placement

The students’ feedback on the placements was analysed to see if there were variations between organised opportunities, namely the BBC partnership, Youthcomm and BJTC and self-organised work experience.

The feedback from their placements showed the following key points:

- A near 100% student satisfaction with the placement. Only a few negative comments were made, the vast majority all being favourable and recommending the organisation to future students;

- No distinction between level of student satisfaction with types of placement i.e. self generated or through a partnership arrangement;
- Students were often surprised by the level of responsibility they were given. This was well received and they enjoyed being able to operate with some independence;
- A feeling of being supported and of belonging with the team. This in turn seems to have lead to...;
- An increase in confidence and...
- A clearer view of future job direction.

This material has been collated separately and is not part of this research paper. However, it is worth pointing out that having this databank has proved useful for providing advice about placements to those students embarking on work experience. The information has a particularly high value as it comes from students who have real experiences, although the changing nature of work environments and the staff needs to be taken account of. A sample of the students' comments is below:

"My mentor was amazing! He literally treated me like a professional colleague and helped me report stories on air, share ideas for debates and help with future contacts etc."

"Had a well set out plan for the week I was there and were not afraid to call on me to help out when other, more experienced, members of the team were unavailable at short notice."

"Brilliant for blogging on sport and music. They sometimes pay for articles."

"Shadowing my mentor was inspiring. He has done so much as an investigative journalist and seen so much that his advice was very much appreciated"

"Excellent having work published. Sports desk are friendly."

"Open for articles and columns and easy to develop writing skills."

"Chances to cover actual events and to be able to experience the work that needs to be done. You get to know the life of a reporter by hanging out with them."

"I felt very much exploiting i.e. full time work for no pay and they tried to incorporate 'promotions' work into the role by wanting me to wear clothing with their logo on it."

"Very helpful and gave lots of feedback on the work that I did. I was allowed to go to court and take notes."

"A good place to do work experience being a renowned outlet with useful staff and hands on experience including voxs, writing cues, news software etc."

"Almost perfect for anyone who wants to go into broadcast and online journalism."

"Friendly colleagues and it was a well-structured two week placement which they arranged around big events in sport i.e. live reporting on match days."

"It's challenging with little support. Your work has to be of a good standard and you have to construct your own interviews"

"Flexible arrangement working for an online organisation with just two assignments a week making it easy to do."

"The staff are fun and lively" "I was involved in intense business meetings where I had

to take notes, write them up and feed back to the board. Along with this I was given a task to create a marketing strategy for the company itself. The feedback is great and the knowledge you walk about with is brilliant."

"Absolutely amazing. Small team so a sink or swim environment, but I was given unbelievable responsibility and shown nothing but trust. Supervision and training was fantastic and I, quite simply, can't fault my experience there."

Conclusion

It was clear from this research that the course content had helped the students to secure placements and was effective in bridging the educational-workplace divide. Students were enthusiastic about ways in which the course had helped to prepare them for employment, but also recognised the value of securing placements to fully equip them for that leap. It was also evident that the range of skills required has shifted along with digital developments and that a constant updating of the curriculum is needed to keep pace with these changes. The use of social media as a communications tool had increased within just one-year group.

The student feedback showed the range of work experience being undertaken and the breadth of knowledge required to meet employers' expectations. It was useful that students could identify specific skills they learnt during the placements and that they recognised the value they added to their skill set. Along with the more obvious developments, like data journalism and mobile news provision (both already underway at Worcester), there needs to be an awareness of the other technical skills that will assist graduates in gaining employment within the broader PR and marketing sphere. Interestingly, the research also shows that while social media have an increasingly important role to play in helping students to secure work placements and employment that they continue to place a high value on one to one support from journalism staff. It is important that those personal links are retained while further efforts can be made to further increase opportunities for young people studying journalism at university.

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Work placement learning: Journalism students' perceptions of its value

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Abstract

Today's journalism industry reflects a global society, and is characterised by relentless twenty-four hour news production to present the myriad of world events. Reporters wanting to enter the industry need to be multi-skilled, self-starters and able to work under the pressure of increasingly demanding deadlines. In this context, one way young journalism graduates may enhance their employment prospects is by gaining experience of professional working through work placements. The paper investigates the individual experience of work placements and learning of ten final-year undergraduate journalism students. It reveals surprising gender differences in the group following a range of work placements, in perceptions of self-efficacy and improvement in particular journalism and social skills.

Keywords: work placement learning, work related learning, professional identity, self-efficacy, and personal skills

Introduction

Work placements can change lives, sometimes being the turning point when trainee journalists decide whether and where their future lies within the industry.

Placement learning is an essential bridge between higher education, vocational training and the world of work, which allows students to demonstrate acquired skills in a professional workplace environment, and to clarify future career aspirations. However, journalism is a competitive graduate field, where young journalists hoping to work within

this industry face challenges and uncertainty. Today's reporters have to be multi-skilled, self-starters, and able to work under the pressure of increasingly demanding deadlines and employment insecurity. This study explored a small group of undergraduate journalism students learning from work placements (and thereby their sense of skills development) to explore whether this could be sustained on return to university. The data gathered demonstrated indicate work placements play a transformative role in students' personal sense of self-efficacy as journalists. However, the study also revealed an apparent gender difference in responses to these experiences, which may pose implications for future employment.

To date, research has seldom focused on the impact of undergraduate work placement learning on return to university. This study aims to explore student perceptions of placement learning; it does not involve any comparison or measurement of academic outcomes. Little and Harvey (2006: 2) argue studies of work placements cite skills development as an important feature of placement learning, but less is reported about the extent to which there is a positive transfer of learning from placement to subsequent stages of an individual's learning. My project focused on the development of *work-related learning* as opposed to *work-based learning*. The former is more comprehensive, and prioritises the development of the individual, rather than the work-based location of that learning. There is an argument that evidence linking work placement experience with academic outcomes is weak (Bullock, 2009: 482). Duignan (2003) claims many of the benefits from placements cannot be measured by conventional methods. The research argument is that a relatively short exposure to work placement would be expressed in terms of development of personal/ transferable skills, rather than specific improvement in journalism competencies. Moreland (2004: 5) argues work-related learning promotes self-knowledge, and moves towards self-managed learning that students' can build upon in their subsequent lives and careers.

The overarching research questions were: what are students' perceptions and experiences of work-related learning, and was the learning from this sustained on return to university in the final semester of the undergraduate programme?

Work placements are a small but important part of creating the journalists of the future. The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has produced student work experience guidelines. These argue students can benefit hugely from well-structured work experience placements that provide opportunities to practice newly learned skills, and experience journalism in a practical rather than theoretical environment. The guidelines suggest students get the best out of work experience by: being given a mix of roles and responsibilities; working on a range of jobs (i.e., court, political and news reporting, features, subbing and broadcast editing); by shadowing more experienced journalists; being able to work alone; and, by having their work supervised. The Union argues work placements should be a minimum of two weeks, in most cases; the firm offering the placement should identify a responsible individual to whom the student reports and feeds back; and that expectations of what the student will be able to do should not be set too high. However, with employment insecurity in the media industry, journalism work placements are competitive, and there is a perception that they may sometimes prove exploitative. Jeremy Dear, General Secretary of the NUJ, has argued would-be journalists are often required to do long stints of unpaid work experience at a variety of locations, incurring travel costs, without any promise of future employment. Despite this, journalism work experience can be seen as trade-off, offering free labour in exchange for an upgraded CV, enhanced job prospects,

and contacts which could lead to employment. However, placement learning is complex. For example, some students' self-knowledge could be enhanced in a professional setting, but confidence in skills could drop, with a greater awareness of professional requirements.

Educational context

Since 2000, several government initiatives have promoted work-related learning as a legitimate focus of higher-level study. These initiatives were set out in a number of key reports: HEFCE, 2000; The Future of Higher Education (DfES, 2003); and the Leitch Review of Skills, 2006. Findings from the government appointed Work Experience Group (2002), cited in Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), are relevant to this study's post placement research. The group found that employers value people who have had work experience, reflected on that experience, and then articulated and applied what they have learnt. The Pedagogy for Employability Group (2004: 5) provided a list of the generic or transferable skills that employers are looking for in graduates. Many of these are embraced by the World of Work development scheme introduced by my institution, Liverpool John Moores University. The 1997 Dearing Report recommended that all institutions should identify opportunities to increase the extent to which programmes help students to become familiar with work, and help them to reflect on such experience.

Work placement learning needs to be made meaningful for the individual concerned (Wenger 1998: 51). Theoretical perspectives for this study encompass concepts of personal development planning, career development learning, and employability. Work experience learning is a key element of vocational training and has underpinned a number of employability models (Knight and Yorke, 2004; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Bennett et al, 1999; see also Dacre-Pool and Sewell, 2007).

Of direct relevance to this study is research that suggests perceptions of capabilities help to determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they possess. Knight and Yorke's (2004) USEM model is based on an individual's understanding, skilful practices, efficacy beliefs, and meta-cognition. The USEM model is defined by the belief that personal qualities, such as self-theories and efficacy beliefs, colour everything else the student and subsequent graduate does. Bandura (1997: 2) introduced the concept of self-efficacy, and suggests that it influences how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act. In an earlier study, Bandura (1986) wrote that expectations of outcomes influence behaviour (see also Bandura, 1977). Individuals who expect success in a particular enterprise anticipate successful outcomes. A trainee journalists' sense of their own abilities is therefore key to their career progression. A range of research studies has established the validity of self-efficacy as a predictor of student motivation and learning, and may regulate whether a person will initiate and maintain certain career behaviours. Put simply, the higher the sense of self-efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence and resilience (Pajares, 1996). Self-perception of capabilities help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have (Pajares, 1987). Lucas and Wenberg (1997: 433) argue it may be difficult for strong interests to develop where self-efficacy is weak or neutral, or where negative outcome are foreseen. The view of self-belief as an enabling construct in human behaviour is a key part of work by a number of other scholars, including Dewey (1933), Maslow (1943) Pajares (1996) and Zimmerman (2000). However, it is also important

to recognise that all students are individuals and have different approaches to learning (Dweck, 1999).

Students' motivation to pursue opportunities on placement is related to the *proactive personality* construct. This is grounded in social interactionist theory (Bandura, 1977), which argues that people are not only influenced by their environment, but are capable of creating or enacting their environment (Bateman and Crant, 1993). Non-proactive or passive people do not take action when opportunities arise. They are more likely to adapt to environmental change, rather than enact it.

There is recognition of the proactive role of individuals in the world of work (Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004), personal initiative (Frese, Garst & Fay, 2007), and proactive personality (Thompson, 2005), which present individuals as active agents, who initiate improvement in their work situation. Students in this context will be defined as 'adults and young people seeking to position themselves with regard to the labour markets in which they wish to participate' (Moreland, 2004: 4). Universities need to reflect the challenging 'super-complexity' of the workplace, to allow individuals to live effectively in a chaotic world (Barnett, 2000). Mandilaras (2004) suggests placement students mature more rapidly in an often competitive and professional environment; their ambition is likely to be stimulated such that they return to university more focused and determined to do well. The same author argues workplace responsibilities may enhance students' reliability, so they may take coursework and exams more seriously, and work more effectively to deadlines. The project was based on the assumption that work-related learning has practical intentions and outcomes for students, underpinned by self-perceptions of employability.

Gender differences may prove especially relevant in the graduate search for employment. A Higher Education Policy Institute report published in July 2010 says male graduates in 2009 were far more likely to be unemployed than their female counterparts. Occupational psychologist Dr Robert McHenry, commenting on the report, argued women tend to be more hard-working and conscientious (*The Guardian*, 4 July, 2010: 5).

For journalism students, it could be argued that work experience can provide an opportunity to learn about another context (i.e., the workplace, economic and technological changes, etc.), as well as what skills may support their future employability, such as freelance working. In addition, there is recognition that work experience is more than a context in which students learn *about* work, it is also a context *through which* students can learn and develop. Beach and Vyas (1998) suggest three pertinent forms of learning with which students need to engage: 'learning on the fly' (i.e., making requests for help); 'learning by collaborating' (i.e., working, talking and undertaking low risk activities), and 'learning by observing.' Crebert et al (2004) argued the most important factors for effective learning at university, on work placement and in employment, appeared to be teamwork, being given responsibility and collaborative learning.

Little and Harvey (2006) found the majority of students interviewed following work placements reported improvements in their inter-personal skills, particularly oral communication and networking skills. Most reported improvements in personal skills, and centred around increased confidence, team-working, personal organisation, and, time management. Moreland (2004: 5) argues it is the degree-level processes of reflection that promote a critical stance, which are important for employability. Moon's (2004) research

supports the crucial role of reflection in the context of employability, namely to develop 'the three S's' – self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Moon further suggests these provide a crucial link between knowledge, understanding, skills, experience, and personal attributes and employability.

Professional identity: what is a journalist?

Professional identity is a multi-layered construct. Journalism students' perception and understanding of their skills, self-efficacy and professional identity, enhanced through work placements, is an equally complex matter. Willis (2010: 15) argues journalists' learn what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour from other journalists', who have themselves learnt it from other journalists'. Deuze (2005) suggests that journalists' occupational identity and ideology should be understood in the context of fast changing technology and society, which higher education journalism students are likely to experience for the first time on work placement. Duignan (2003) argues that the placement student is transient in the workplace, suspended between two worlds with distinctly different value and rewards systems, which can be manifested as de-motivation on return to studies, with a subsequent loss of learning transfer.

Methodology

This indicative, interpretative study was aligned to the research aims to explore the relationship between work experience and learning, in the light of individual student experience. The aim was to explore student perceptions of placement learning, and so does not involve any comparison or measurement of academic outcomes. The focus was to explore journalism undergraduate perceptions of a month of unpaid work placements in the media industry, and the impact of these on return to university. Twenty-eight undergraduates out of a potential research sample of sixty-one in the final year of the B.A. (Hons) Journalism and International Journalism programmes at Liverpool John Moores University volunteered to share their reflections on their placement experiences. The research aim was to explore the impact of placement on students' sense of self-efficacy and interpersonal skills, and whether this was sustained to the end of their undergraduate programme. Students' self-assessment and interviews was conducted at three stages: specifically, before placement, immediately after placement, and three months later, at the end of their degree. Ten were eventually selected from the volunteers to reflect a fifty/fifty gender split, and those who had decided to specialise in one of four journalism media (i.e., print, radio, television and online journalism) and two others, who were undecided about whether to pursue a career in journalism.

Participants were treated as one population in order to narrow the research focus. No distinction was made between placement experiences in Britain and those outside the UK. The work placements were predominantly with regional, national and international news organisations. These included newspapers (such as the *Liverpool Echo*, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, the *Independent on Sunday*, *Sunday People*), broadcast outlets (such as BBC Radio Merseyside, BBC Radio Shropshire, Radio Four's *You and Yours* programme, a CNN

office based in Munich, ITV's Tonight with Trevor MacDonald) as well as marketing and public relations companies.

Cognitivist learning theory is relevant here, where a person perceives stimuli and consciously interprets them in relation to his or her own mental frameworks (Dewey, 1934). Work-related learning takes many forms, occurs in many contexts and can have widely differing relationships to higher education (Brennan et al, 2006). It's important to note sites offering work placements differ in terms of their complexity, insularity, power relations, and the nature of boundaries. There's also a recognition that the length of the placements may determine the range and scope of activities that students will undertake, and the development of knowledge, skills and attributes that might be gained. As the work placements undertaken by the research participants were with a range of professional media outlets, some of the findings may be of interest to journalism and media educators in higher education, though not in a strictly 'scientific' way. Previous studies, as we have seen in our discussion above, suggest work-related learning is a complex, multi-faceted construct with both internal and external dimensions (Rothwell et al, 2007).

Pertinent research themes for this study include: What is the knowledge emanating from work-related learning? What are the complex characteristics and outcomes of work placement learning? Is the reality of work placement experiences a spur to further personal and professional learning?

The predominant research method was qualitative and involved face-to-face interviews to gain insight into the mind of the learner. A social constructivist approach was followed, enabling students to articulate their employability skills and experience (see also Nixon and Walker, 2009). Interviews were supported by students numerical grading of their own journalism and interpersonal skills at the three research stages using a 10 point Likert scale, with ten being the highest and zero, the lowest. Before their placement, students assessed their skills and completed a questionnaire to identify placement goals. Post-placement, they took part in face-to-face interviews and further skills assessment, and this was repeated at the end of their final semester, three months later. The intention was to reflect the complexity of work placement learning around the development of self-efficacy beliefs, because of the range of contributing factors to placement learning.

The approach to considering post-placement interview reflections was underpinned by previous research (Kolb, 1984; Little and Harvey, 2006; Schon, 1983, 1987). The interviews were arranged around three themes: *placement learning* in relation to personal development, *enhanced understanding*, and *approaches to learning*. Placement experiences may have shaped students' future intentions, previous ideas and plans could be confirmed, new areas of interest within the broad subject area might have been opened up, specific areas of work rejected, and, future career plans changed accordingly. Self-perceptions of skills and employability associated with work placements should be seen in the context of the 'widening participation' agenda (HEFCE, 2007a: Bennett, Eagle, Mousley, and Ali-Choudhury, 2008) because of the range of ethnicity, nationality and social class among the student sample.

The interviews were semi-structured (Drever, 1995) to add depth to the research; that is, to gain some 'thick' description in order to identify themes arising from the actual placement learning. At the end of the final semester, the same students were re-interviewed, to assess

any longer term impact of placement learning. The volunteers were selected according to gender, male (M1–5) and female (F1–5) specialising in the four media of print, radio, television and online journalism. Questions explored personal and professional learning from work placement experiences, as well as suggestions as to how that learning could be sustained in the final semester of the degree programme. There is recognition of the impact of power relations on the student-lecturer relationship, and its potential to distort questionnaire and interview findings. Care has been taken with the interpretation of their reflections. While not every student interviewed for this study presented experiences in the same way, their skills assessments were used to explore the value added by the placements, and to provide data to support findings from the subsequent face-to-face interviews. Participants were given the same skills assessment sheets at the three research stages regardless of their final undergraduate year journalism specialism and gender.

Findings: The journalism student experience of work placement

The pre-placement questionnaire revealed the reasons behind the choice of particular placements, ranging from gaining insight into the media industry; how acquired skills were applicable in the workplace; to supplement university learning with practical experience; and, to enhance their employability. However, there appeared to be wide variation in levels of participants' confidence in relation to workplace engagement.

Post-placement interviews

Participants were asked questions to explore personal and professional placement learning; their expectations versus placement reality; how students were received, what they were more or less confident about; any effect on career aspirations, semester goals on return to university, and, whether and how they intended to sustain that professional edge. In practice, there was a range of work students were asked to do on their placements. Many were used in supportive roles to help existing news teams. Just under half provided assistance to functional teams and carried out research for television programmes, newspaper articles and marketing and public relations campaigns. A smaller share, about one in five, were required to produce up to five news stories on a daily basis for regional newspapers; others had their articles published in national newspapers and lifestyle magazines. Others covered industrial tribunals, door-stepped celebrities, and one was in a photo-shoot that led to coverage in a national newspaper.

Personal development –reception and feedback

Encouragement, or lack of it, had more weight than might be expected on the placement experience as a whole. How students were received appeared vital to the students' emotional state and engagement, and whether the students had negative or positive work

placement experiences. About one in five decided not to pursue a career in journalism following their placement, but had discovered new strengths and personal skills they didn't know they had, which left them feeling, they said, 'liberated and empowered' by the confirmation that journalism was not for them.

Feedback about the quality of work the students produced on placement appeared to be of major importance to their sense of professional identity, motivation to pursue a career in journalism, and, being able to succeed as a professional journalist.

'For professionals say you're really good, and have got the talent to succeed, it blew me away. It was like thanks, I can do the job.' (F3)

Personal development - Team working

Participants worked in a range of teams on placement, which ranged from a small group of foreign correspondents, with reporters in regional newsrooms, small editorial groups in national and regional newspapers, magazines, an online entertainment website, police press office, and, working for clients in marketing and public relations companies.

Personal development -self-knowledge

Participants were asked what they had learnt about themselves on placement. Responses tended to revolve around a sense of gaining confidence, self-knowledge and confirmation of future career direction. Female 1 said she wanted to gain confidence in her abilities as a journalist. Post-placement, the same student said she had learnt she was a much better journalist than she thought she was. Placements appeared to make research participants more self-aware and self-critical, better able to take criticism, more aware of others, and how to work effectively in teams.

Enhanced understanding – mentoring and feedback

Having a workplace mentor and being given feedback on the quality of work produced appeared essential to the overall placement experience (see also Lent et al, 1994:16; Lucas and Wanberg, 1997: 433). Regular feedback appeared to contribute to the depth of students learning, sense of self-worth, and, journalistic identity. In most cases, participants said this led to developing relationships with staff, good placement references and offers to maintain contact beyond the placement period.

'I was looking forward to working for a hard task master; wanting to get hard feedback so I know what to do in the future. At the end of each week I had a meeting to be told what I had done well and what I needed to improve on.' (M3)

'The deputy editor of the Independent on Sunday was always giving me feedback. He was quite strict.... I was making ridiculous mistakes. From the feedback I got on work experience made me feel sure I'm capable' (F2)

Enhanced Understanding- the media industry

Participants appeared to be unanimous about the positive benefits of work placements, whether they had had good or bad experiences. Most believed in the benefits of professional

working, which had a motivating effect and made them more self-critical of the journalism they produced.

Approaches to learning: returning to university

The majority of participants said they had noticed a different attitude to their studies, and found greater confidence and motivation to work hard to get a good degree, to enhance their employment prospects. Others described how placement had given them greater clarity about their future career paths, and wanted to complete their studies as quickly as possible. One female (F1) student gained enormous confidence from her placement at a regional weekly newspaper. She said she was like a 'sheep' prior to placement, but work experience had changed that, giving her the confidence to work hard to achieve her career ambitions.

However, between the two worlds of university and work, most of the participants said they found coming back to university from placement disorientating, even de-motivating. They seemed disenchanted with the prospect of further time at university, with its accompanying academic and social pressures (see also Bullock et al, 2009: 488). About three-quarters of them felt returning to university was a step back, which took them away from 'real world' working, and the valuable contacts they had made. Placements increased female participants' work ethic in particular, making them more pro-active, driven, and organised.

'I think it's up to the individual now. It's about driving yourself. Now is the time to do it yourself. It's about pushing to the finishing line.' (F3)

Skills assessment

Journalism skills

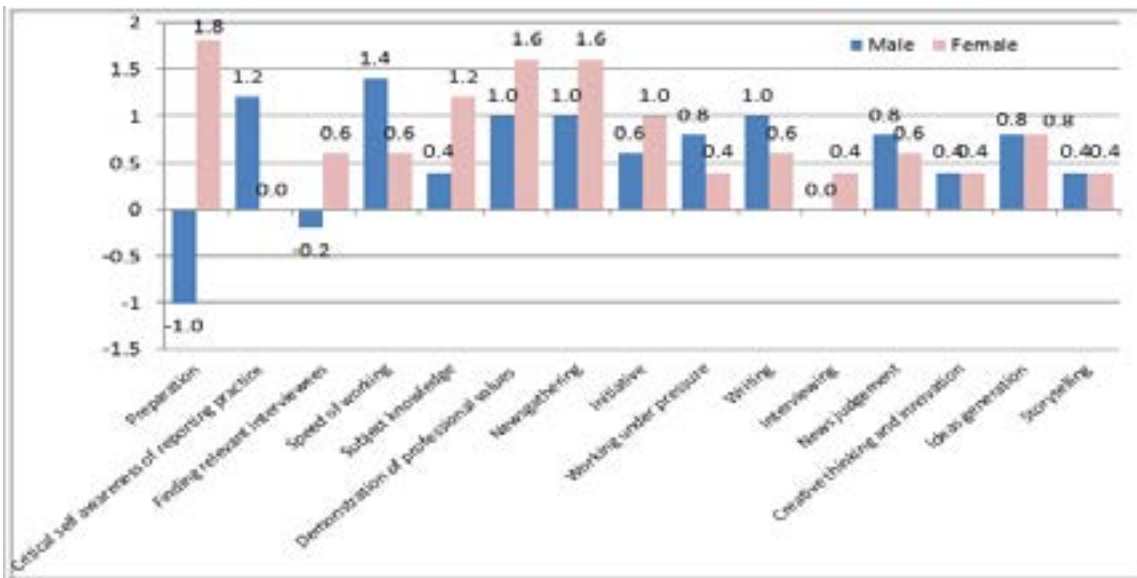
All of the participants said their journalism skills were improved on placement, but particularly newsgathering, demonstration of professional values, speed of working, idea generation, subject knowledge, writing and personal initiative.

Gender differences were apparent in perceptions of the most marked skills improvements. To clarify, post-placement males sensed notable improvements in what could be loosely described as 'assertive' journalism skills: speed of working, critical awareness of reporting practice, newsgathering, news writing, demonstration of professional values, ideas generation, news judgement, and working under pressure. Lesser improvements were perceived in initiative, storytelling, subject knowledge and creative thinking and innovation. Females as a group sensed improvements in what could be described loosely as mainly 'less assertive' journalism skills: preparation, demonstration of professional values, subject knowledge, initiative, and ideas generation. There was less improvement reported in relation to news judgement, speed of working, finding relevant interviewees, writing, storytelling, interviewing, working pressure and creative thinking and innovation.

Comparisons with the male group are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Journalism Skills: Males and females average point scores, before and after placement

Personal skills 'development'

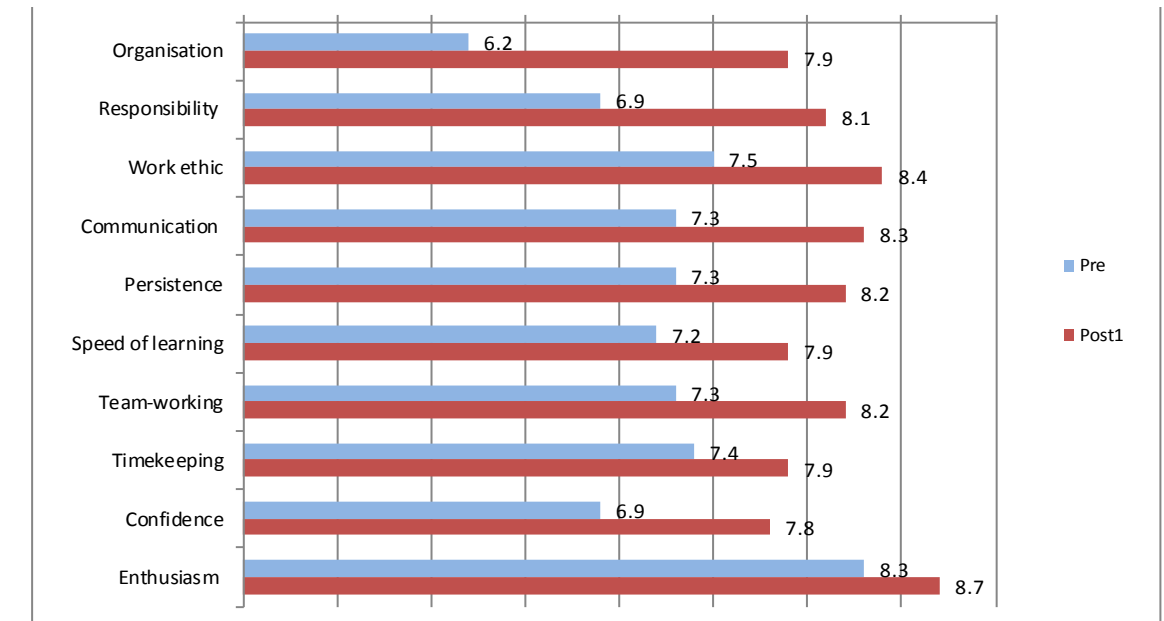


Personal development appears to be a major element of the placement experience (see also Little and Harvey, 2006). Participants expressed improved interpersonal, organisational and time management skills. Increased confidence seemed to derive from a range of experiences, including having sought and taken on more reporting tasks, acquitting themselves well, realisation that communication skills had developed to a level where they felt comfortable communicating with a range of people more effectively, and, through a more informed sense of how their skills could be employed in a variety of situations in the workplace.

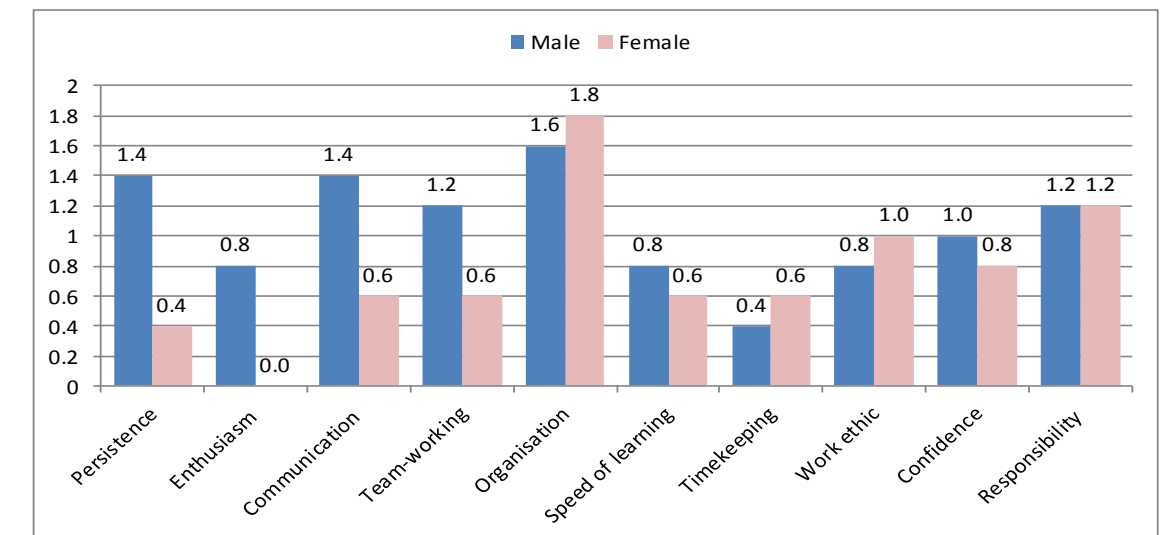
This learning was sustained on return to university, as many recognised that they had developed their capacity to plan and manage their university workload (Figure 2). There was a comparable sense of improvement in personal skills between the sexes, but again in different areas. Males believed there had been improvements in all attributes and especially organisation, communication, persistence, responsibility, team-working and confidence. Female participants meanwhile believed they had also improved in almost all of the assessed personal skills: organisation, work ethic, responsibility, speed of learning, team-working, timekeeping, communication, confidence and persistence.

Figure 2: Personal Skills: males & females average point scores before and after placement

Figure 3: Personal Skills: males and females, change in average point score between before and after placement, three months later



The third stage of the research process was designed to explore any longer term impact of placement learning, three months after the placement period. Final interviews were



again organised around any sense of personal development, any enhanced understanding and approaches to learning. The de-briefing and reflection sessions appeared to help participants realise the full benefits of the placements, and provided a boost to morale, in the post-placement slump on return to university (Wallace, Murray, and Overton, 2009). Participants were asked what the university could do to keep them professionally sharp in the final semester. About one third of them spontaneously suggested post-placement reflection, as experienced in this study, claiming it had helped them to realise what they had learnt on placement.

Participants said they felt more confident, improved in their journalism competence, self-knowledge, personal organisation, motivation, and maturity. Females, in particular, expressed the need to excel, because of the difficulties associated with getting the first

'It was the turning point, I think. I've been more enthusiastic, more confident, more outgoing. I'm more decisive, more assertive in getting stories....I just believed in myself more. I think work placements turned us from students into adults in a really short space of time.' (F1)

'It's made me more focused. I knew before where I wanted to go. Now I know where I want to be.' (F5)

'It comes back to my drive and it makes you realise you do have a place in the world, and there is somewhere you slot in. You have to find a way to fit into it full time, which can be the tricky bit.' (F3)

Enhanced understanding

Questions were designed to explore the relative depth of placement understanding for the students themselves. Responses ranged from greater commitment, persistence, focus, awareness of professional practice standards, and, clarity about future career aspirations. However, a number of male participants had developed a negative outlook.

'To be honest, I've found it really hard to be motivated. I realised early on that my confidence was going....When you're not in control of your own work, it's kind of hard having confidence, so one of my goals was to rise above this' (M5)

'I've learnt that it's really tough out there. It's a lot more tough than it was a few years ago. On placements be pro-active, not reactive. If you want to be a good journalist you have got to have lots of ideas. It's not easy. There are not many opportunities out there.' (M4).

"I knew work experience would be a real test. Everything you think about yourself will be tested because you'll be playing in a much bigger pool with much bigger fish.' (M1)

Approaches to Learning: returning to university

Again, participants said work experience appeared to lead to a stronger motivation for university studies, and increased work ethic. Many highlighted improved time-management, determination, organisation, routines, work ethic, goal setting, and confidence in personal capabilities. Students were asked whether they had been able to sustain their professional edge on return to university, with its academic and social pressures. Responses ranged from having a different approach to their university studies, greater maturity, motivation, determination, time management and responsible attitude, to 'being more relaxed.' However, some said being able to maintain a professional edge following placement was up to the individual's personal motivation. Almost half of female participants and about one in five of the men said they were more professional, better in their journalism, and working more quickly and efficiently.

'Because I believe more in my capabilities that is making me more determined. That probably drives me a bit more. I know I can do it now' (F2)

'I feel like a journalist now and it's not a practice anymore. I'm working a lot faster and now want to get the story online by tonight.' (M5)

Journalism skills 'development'

Three months after the placements, both sexes felt there had been considerable improvement in their journalism skills, particularly with regard to finding relevant interviewees, generating ideas, preparation, and interviewing. However, compared to pre-placement, males felt there had been a dramatic drop in their subject knowledge, creative thinking and innovation, and working under pressure. There were smaller 'improvements' in their sense of their news-judgement, newsgathering, storytelling, and interviewing, compared to female participants. In a pattern of continuing perceptions of journalism improvements, the 'changes' appear to have provided motivation that was sustained for three months to the end of the degree, to nearly *double that for males*. The female group showed more 'improvements' than males in the key journalism skills of newsgathering and news judgement. Seven areas seemed to improve: interview technique, idea generation, working under pressure, finding relevant interviewees, writing, storytelling, critical awareness of reporting practice. However, there was little or no improvement in three categories: preparation, subject knowledge, and initiative. There was a perceived drop in news judgement, speed of working and creative thinking and innovation. The complex pattern of gender differences in perceived personal skills in the final semester is shown in Figure 4

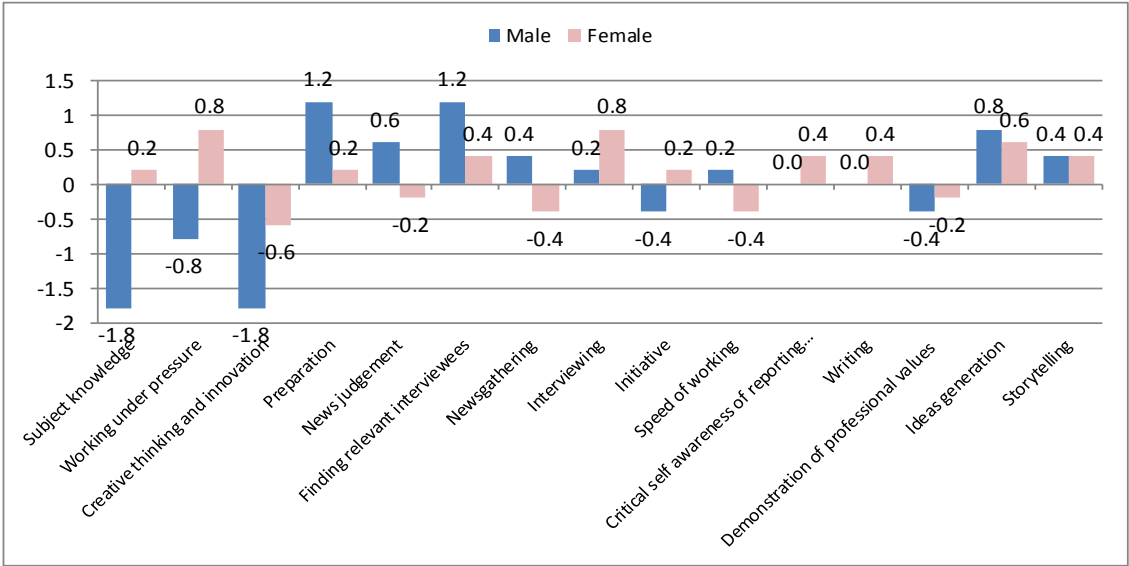


Figure 4: Journalism Skills: males and females change in average point scores after placement, and three months later

Personal skills

Perceptions of personal attributes had declined markedly by the end of the final semester for the entire research group, apart from work ethic and speed of learning. The same chart shows a drop in confidence and enthusiasm, particularly for male participants, although the assessments relate to individual research participants rather than specific gender characteristics. For females, it was a different picture, with a marked increase in their enthusiasm and speed of learning. However, there was a perceived drop in eight personal attributes: organisation, responsibility, confidence, communication, work ethic, timekeeping, team-working and persistence.

The overall motivating effect of work placement is revealed in Figures 5 and 6, in descending order. Placements appeared to sharpen both sexes' sense of their key reporting skills, including idea generation of story ideas, newsgathering, preparation, finding relevant interviewees, and writing. Enthusiasm, creative thinking and innovation seemed to fall dramatically over this period.

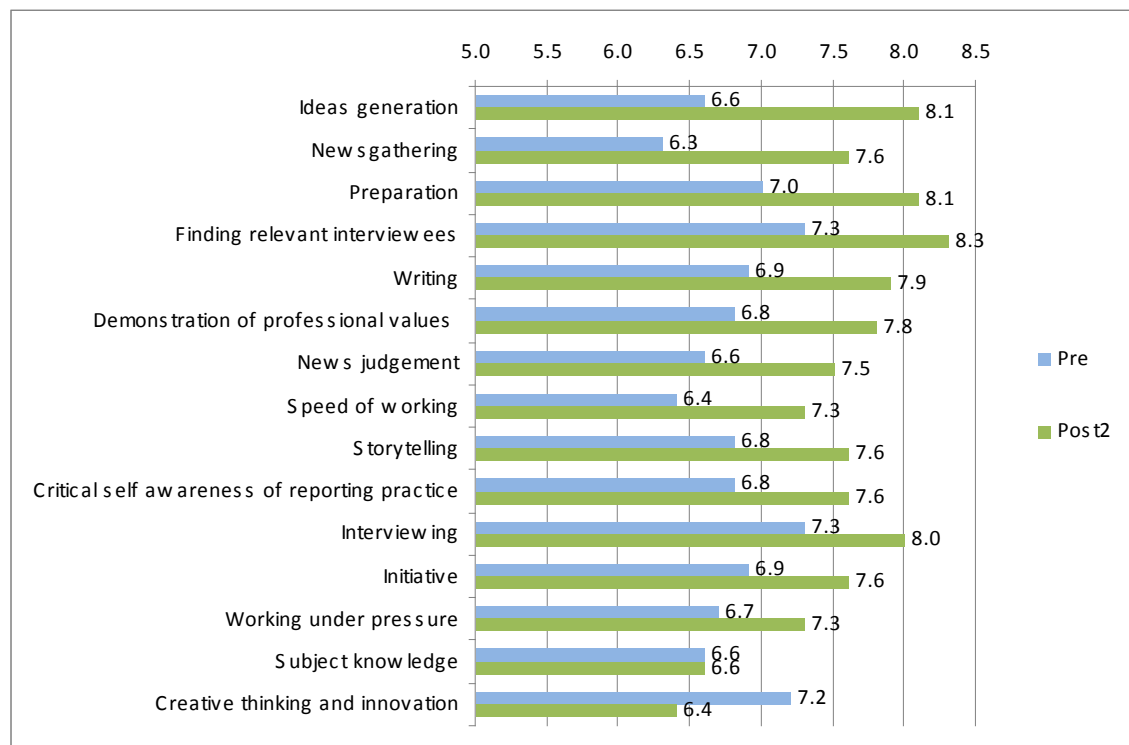


Figure 5: Journalism Skills: males & females, change in average point scores before placement and after, three months later

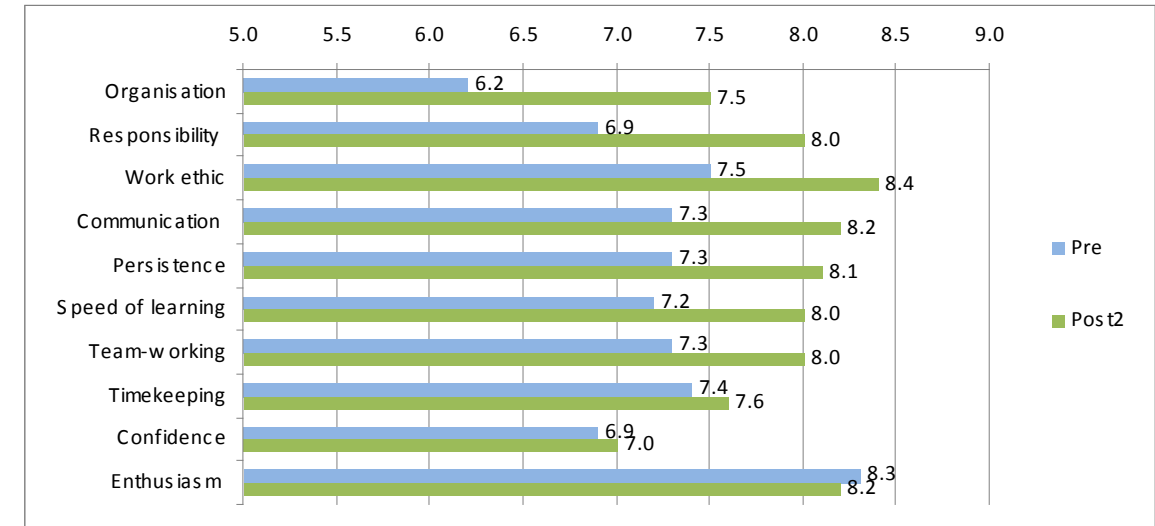


Figure 6: Personal Skills – males & females change in average point scores before placement, and after, three months later

Discussion and research outcomes

The study has highlighted the complexities surrounding student motivation to engage with the range of learning experiences typically made available via work placements (see also Maslow (1943) on self-actualisation theory). This could be interpreted as motivation to be a journalist, or, motivation to gain employment. Two participants', one male, one female, who could be described as lacking motivation to be news journalists, appeared to demonstrate strong motivation when on placement, namely to display their transferable skills to enhance their employability. Both found work experience highly motivating, which subsequently drove a new career focus and their commitment to their academic studies in the final semester. In addition, it may have been highly motivated students who volunteered to take part in this study. It has provided a deeper understanding of the benefits and challenges associated with work placements, and the complexity surrounding the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills. There is a realisation that perceptions surrounding self-efficacy and work placement learning, explored in post-placement interviews, are highly individualised, with both internal and external dimensions (Rothwell et al, 2008; Bandura, 1995: 2, cited in Pajares, 1996).

Gender-related differences were apparent in the participants' responses, but this study's sample was too small to sustain generalisations. That said, it uncovered evidence to suggest male and female students often experienced work placement learning in different ways, particularly with regard to their perceptions of their own development of journalism and personal skills, and changes to these on return to university. More specifically, the women in the study group came back motivated, hungry to apply their new found sense of confidence for news days and individual projects. The males meanwhile appeared to be more reluctant to be back at university, wanted to be back in industry, and their confidence and own self-perception of their skills had definitely taken a nosedive when back at university in the final semester of their undergraduate programme. This lack of confidence

This study has provided evidence that short workplace experiences can be hugely motivating for vocational students, in their perceptions of sense of self-belief and self-efficacy (as a journalist), transferable skills, and understanding of employment options. This research finding supports Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy concept and Knight and Yorke's (2004) USEM model, based on an individual's understanding, skilful practices, efficacy beliefs, and meta-cognition. Skills-assessment sheets post-placement support these views, and show this led to subsequent improvements in students' professional identity, time keeping and confidence, organisation, independence. Where the female participants were concerned, it appears to have led to increased motivation for their academic studies on return to university (see also Bandura, 1977; Bateman and Crant, 1993).

My overriding perception from the interviews conducted following this short period of work experience was that participants tended to focus on the benefits of their placement, rather than concentrating on specific skills development. Three months after the placement period, participants continued to express a holistic sense of development, rather than improvement in specific journalism and personal skills. This supports a previous studies (Duignan, 2003 and Little and Harvey, 2006: 1) where it has been argued that many of the benefits from placements cannot be measured by conventional academic methods. However, the data highlighted surprising gender differences in the research group, in perceptions of improvement of particular journalism and personal skills. Only females over the length of the research period sensed a marked increase in their journalism skills, greater than the males as a group. This supports previous research (Mandilaras, 2004), which showed female students in competitive environments often outperform their male counterparts, and go on to achieve higher degree classifications. Male participants anonymously sensed stronger *interpersonal* skills three month after placement compared to their female counterparts. It was therefore fascinating to discover females, as a group, sensed stronger development and confidence in their journalism skills, which were sustained on return to university. Female participants felt the greatest improvement in their perception of their own journalism skills. This challenges earlier research (Betz & Hackett, 1981) which suggested women lack strong expectations of personal efficacy in relation to many career related behaviours, and therefore fail to realise their capabilities and talents in career pursuits. Skills assessment data confirms a number of studies that the benefits of placements tend to be improvements in personal transferable skills valued by employers, such as team-working, communication and learning skills (Bullock et al, 2009; Little and Harvey, 2006; Lucas and Tang, 2007 and Bennett, 2008). Supporting Little and Harvey's (2006) study, in particular, the majority of students interviewed also reported improved confidence, motivation and personal organisation. However, differences between placement organisations and length of placements activities make comparisons between gender difficult. Measurements are unreliable because of the brevity of the placement period, number of placements within that time, and variety of placement tasks undertaken by both sexes. In addition, each research participant and their placement organisations would have had particular priorities in terms of the placement learning outcomes, and these would have been met differently in the contexts provided (see also Guile and Griffiths, 2001).

The degree to which any one placement will provide opportunities for a student to further develop a full range of personal and/or journalism attributes is questionable (Little, 2000: 124). However, the explicit identification of certain skills for this study could have served as a useful prompt to foster student reflection on placement learning. Analysis of how and whether placement learning was sustained was complex, because of varying student motivation for journalism as a career, and the variety and length of placements, which make simple comparisons unsafe. However, many participants said their placement

Males	Average scores by stage			Change					
	Pre	Post1	Post2	Pre- Post 1		Post 1 - Post 2		Pre- Post 2	
				No	%	No	%	No	%
Journalism Skills									
Newsgathering	6.4	7.4	7.8	1.0	15.63	0.4	5.41	1.4	21.88
Finding relevant interviewees	7.2	7.0	8.2	-0.2	-2.78	1.2	17.14	1.0	13.89
Preparation	7.6	6.6	7.8	-1.0	-13.16	1.2	18.18	0.2	2.63
Interviewing	7.4	7.4	7.6	0	0.00	0.2	2.70	0.2	2.70
Writing	6.6	7.6	7.6	1.0	15.15	0	0.00	1.0	15.15
Storytelling	6.6	7	7.4	0.4	6.06	0.4	5.71	0.8	12.12
Speed of working	6	7.4	7.6	1.4	23.33	0.2	2.70	1.6	26.67
News judgement	6.4	7.2	7.8	0.8	12.50	0.6	8.33	1.4	21.88
Creative thinking and innovation	7.2	7.6	5.8	0.4	5.56	-1.8	-23.68	-1.4	-19.44
Ideas generation	6.6	7.4	8.2	0.8	12.12	0.8	10.81	1.6	24.24
Demonstration of professional values	7.0	8.0	7.6	1.0	14.29	-0.4	-5.00	0.6	8.57
Subject knowledge	6.8	7.2	5.4	0.4	5.88	-1.8	-26.00	-1.4	-20.59
Working under pressure	7.2	8.0	7.2	0.8	11.11	-0.8	-10.00	0	0.00
Initiative	7.2	7.8	7.4	0.6	8.33	-0.4	-5.13	0.2	2.78
Critical self awareness of reporting practice	6.4	7.6	7.6	1.2	18.75	0	0.00	1.2	18.75
Average	6.84	7.41	7.40	0.57	8.38	-0.01	-0.18	0.56	8.19
Personal Skills									
Communication	6.8	8.2	8.4	1.4	20.59	0.2	2.44	1.6	23.53
Organisation	6.4	8.0	7.4	1.6	25.00	-0.6	-7.50	1.0	15.63
Team-working	7.0	8.2	8.4	1.2	17.14	0.2	2.44	1.4	20.00
Timekeeping	8.2	8.6	8.2	0.4	4.88	-0.4	-4.65	0	0.00
Confidence	7.2	8.2	7.2	1.0	13.89	-1.0	-12.20	0	0.00
Persistence	7.2	8.6	8.8	1.4	19.44	0.2	2.33	1.6	22.22
Responsibility	6.6	7.8	8.2	1.2	18.18	0.4	5.13	1.6	24.24
Speed of learning	7.2	8.0	7.8	0.8	11.11	-0.2	-2.50	0.6	8.33
Work ethic	7.8	8.6	8.8	0.8	10.26	0.2	2.33	1.0	12.82
Enthusiasm	8.2	9.0	7.4	0.8	9.76	-1.6	-17.78	-0.8	-9.76
Average	7.26	8.32	8.06	1.06	14.60	-0.26	-3.13	0.8	11.02

TABLE 1: males average skills scores and changes by placement stage

experiences largely depended on what they were prepared to put into them. At the same time, the research has shown that a month of work placements can have a marked effect on journalism students' sense of self and professional efficacy. Face-to-face interviews revealed the complexity surrounding the development of self-identity and self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997) and that students' have different learning needs on their various

Females	Average scores by stage			Change					
	Pre	Post1	Post2	Pre- Post1		Post 1 - Post 2		Pre- Post 2	
				No	%	No	%	No	%
Journalism Skills									
Newsgathering	6.2	7.0	7.4	1.6	25.01	-0.4	-5.13	1.2	19.35
Finding relevant interviewees	7.4	8.0	8.4	0.6	8.11	0.4	5.00	1.0	13.51
Preparation	6.4	8.2	8.4	1.8	28.13	0.2	2.44	2.0	31.25
Interviewing	7.2	7.6	8.4	0.4	5.56	0.8	10.53	1.2	16.67
Writing	7.2	7.8	8.2	0.6	8.33	0.4	5.13	1.0	13.89
Storytelling	7	7.4	7.8	0.4	5.71	0.4	5.41	0.8	11.43
Speed of working	6.0	7.4	7	0.6	0.02	-0.4	-5.41	0.2	2.94
News judgement	6.8	7.4	7.2	0.6	8.82	-0.2	-2.70	0.4	5.88
Creative thinking and innovation	7.2	7.6	7.0	0.4	5.56	-0.6	-7.89	-0.2	-2.78
Ideas generation	6.6	7.4	8.0	0.8	12.12	0.6	8.11	1.4	21.21
Demonstration of professional values	6.6	8.2	8.0	1.6	24.24	-0.2	-2.44	1.4	21.21
Subject knowledge	6.4	7.6	7.8	1.2	18.75	0.2	2.63	1.4	21.88
Working under pressure	6.2	6.6	7.4	0.4	6.45	0.8	12.12	1.2	19.35
Initiative	6.6	7.6	7.8	1.0	15.15	0.2	2.63	1.2	18.18
Critical self awareness of reporting practice	7.2	7.2	7.6	0	0.00	0.4	5.56	0.4	5.56
Average	6.79	7.59	7.76	0.80	11.79	0.17	2.28	0.97	14.34
Personal Skills									
Communication	7.8	8.4	8.0	0.6	7.60	-0.4	-4.76	0.2	2.56
Organisation	6	7.8	7.6	1.8	30.00	-0.2	-2.56	1.6	26.67
Team-working	7.6	8.2	7.6	0.6	7.89	-0.6	-7.32	0	0.00
Timekeeping	6.6	7.2	7.0	0.6	9.09	-0.2	-2.70	0.4	6.06
Confidence	6.6	7.4	6.8	0.8	12.12	-0.6	-8.11	0.2	3.03
Persistence	7.4	7.8	7.4	0.4	5.41	-0.4	-5.13	0	0.00
Responsibility	7.2	8.4	7.0	1.2	16.67	-0.6	-7.14	0.6	8.33
Speed of learning	7.2	7.8	8.2	0.6	8.33	0.4	5.13	1.0	13.89
Work ethic	7.2	8.2	8.0	1.0	13.89	0.2	2.44	0.8	11.11
Enthusiasm	8.4	8.4	9.0	0	0.00	0.6	7.14	0.6	7.14
Average	7.2	7.96	7.74	0.76	10.56	-0.22	-2.76	0.54	7.50

Table 2: Female average skill scores and changes in placement stage

paths to employment. The research argument that a short period of placement would reveal improvements to personal rather than journalism skills signalled a more complex pattern of change. Figures for females as a group in Table 2 reveal a range of improvements in a number of journalism skills, and that they had become better organised.

Post-placement interviews showed placements have strong potential to enhance students' professional identity and career aspirations, alongside their sense journalism and personal competencies.

'After Christmas, I thought I couldn't be a journalist, At work experience, I went out and really did it, and learnt I'm much better than I thought I was (F1).

'The placements have made me more confident about my news-writing, newsgathering, being able to conduct interesting interviews, and getting information out of people' (M4)

The findings appear to strongly support previous studies on the benefits of work placements for students in higher education (Little & Harvey, 2006; Lucas & Tang, 2007, Blackwell et al, 2001). Irrespective of whether participants had positive or negative work placement experiences, all participants believed time on placement had been personally significant. Overall, the study has provided evidence that short work placements can provide intense, complex and multidimensional learning experiences for individuals, aligned to social constructivist theory, in relation to the background and culture of the learner, and, sustaining the motivation to learn (Wertsch, 1997). However, there is awareness that any assessment and measurement of related self-efficacy beliefs is fraught with problems, not least their complex nature and range of contributing factors making accurate measurement difficult. Pajares (1996) argues that judgements of capability may vary across realms of activity, different levels of task demands within a given activity domain, and under different situational circumstances.

No clear conclusions can be drawn from these data because of the complexity surrounding the formation of self-identity and self-efficacy constructs. The findings relate to individual perceptions, and do not provide evidence of the development of specific skills per se. The research revealed the importance of pre- and post-placement preparation and reflection, to challenge and support students on undergraduate journalism programmes, to maximise their work related learning and employability regardless of their apparent confidence in relation to these.

The findings do not in any way identify, differentiate or describe the varying personalities or career motivations of the participants. Participants varied in the length and number of placements they experienced during the month long period (ranging from a month, a fortnight, and a week). For example, one spent an entire placement month with CNN in Munich. Gender comparisons are also unreliable, because of the internal and external dimensions associated with individualised self-identity and self-efficacy beliefs. As a footnote, almost one half of the research sample secured full-time paid employment during graduation month, which may have been a result of the newfound confidence and experiences gained from work placements. However, female research participants, it should be added, secured three-quarters of the new appointments. There could be another gender dynamic at play. Many gender differences in cognition, motivation, emotion, and social behaviour may be explained in terms of men's and women's different thinking,

feeling, and behaving. (see also Cross, S.E. & Madson, L, 1997). Females tend to be more self-critical, more honest about their need to improve, kept working hard and pushing on until they get the job they want. Is it this critical honesty about their perception of skills that drives women to get the jobs?

It must also be remembered the findings are specific to the research individuals, and reflect the small sample size of ten participants, so comparisons are unsafe. They are suggestive, rather than definitive. With the placement period just a month, the consistency of these observations would need to be tested over a longer period of time, ideally in a longitudinal study with a larger group of journalism students a year after graduation. However, findings from this study will be used to prepare journalism students for work placements, and to explore ways to consolidate placement learning on return to the university. Ultimately, the value of work placements may be beyond measurement, marks and grades, but interesting questions are raised regarding the research participants' motivation for their academic and practical studies on return to university, which highlight the relative advantages and disadvantages of applied placement learning. However, for the individuals concerned, differences in skills perceptions may well be of greater significance.

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Professional Perspectives: placing lived experience at the heart of journalism education

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Abstract:

This paper will consider the importance of the blend of theory and practice in journalism education. It posits that in order to be equipped for a lifetime in journalism, students need to operate as reflective practitioners, with a well-formed sense of professional and personal identity. Now more than ever, in a post-Leveson landscape, they need to know who they are, what they stand for and to have their own individual 'voice'. Drawing on the example set by the BBC College of Journalism and my own doctoral research, for context, I also use a case study from my own teaching to illustrate the point: *Professional Perspectives* operates a programme of visiting speakers from industry that provides students with differing perspectives on current and key issues in journalism, such as ethics, original storytelling, impartiality. In the final assignment, students address a key challenge, placing quotes and ideas from the practitioners into a theoretical context supported by wider reading. In addition, they reflect on their own sense of self as a journalist. The paper will conclude that active learning from the lived experiences of others can enhance the lifelong education of journalists, informing their self-understanding and encouraging an ethical approach to their craft.

Keywords: self-reflexive; good practice; 'lived experience'; challenge; identity; self; ethics

One learns about education from thinking about life and one learns about

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life from thinking about education (Clandinn and Connelly, 1998:154)

This paper explores how stories of 'lived experience' are used in journalism education and how, through active learning from the storied selves of others journalists can reflect on their own practice. My background as a journalist, now working as a journalism educator, has encouraged me to consider the role of personal stories in journalism education, since they are 'hard-wired' into journalism as a craft (Marr, 2004). This paper also aims to assess the utility of storytelling drawn biographically from personal experience in an educational context. It engages with the ways in which stories are told and re-told, so that both educator and students are involved in a learning process which is immersive and interactive. For many journalists, the relationship between professional and personal identity is one of symbiosis: this paper posits that in order to be equipped for a lifetime in journalism, students need to operate as reflective practitioners, with a well-formed sense of personal and professional 'self'.

This study is informed by the definition of self as core being. As Taylor (1989) reminds us, there is

a sense of the term where we speak of people as selves, meaning that they are beings of the requisite depth and complexity to have an identity

(Taylor, 1989:32)

A sense of self is constituted by our interpretations of ourselves, which are never fully explicit (Taylor, 1989). Identity is taken to mean what we make for ourselves out of that concept of self, whilst aware that 'identities can no longer be seen as rigid categories' (Clarke, 1996:195). It is located in 'social order, jointly maintained by organisms sharing a geographical-historical setting' (Erickson, 1975:46). Context and location are crucial to a sense of personal and professional identity.

Working lives and professional identity;

One by one and two by two, the sober responsible men emerged from the main door again to go out for lunch: The Foreign Editor, the Literary Editor, the Diplomatic Correspondent and the Rugby Football Correspondent made up a party to share a taxi to the Garrick

(Michael Frayn, *Towards the End of Morning*, 1967)

Frayn's (1967) witty observations of the male-dominated world of newspapers, with its long alcohol-fuelled lunches were mirrored in the working practices of broadcasting organisations at the time, where jobs for life were the norm. A life – long career in journalism often meant a lifetime in the same newsroom. Harold Evans uses the first instalment of his autobiography, *My Paper Chase*, to paint a picture of 'true stories of vanished times' (Evans, 2009). Visiting London from Manchester, where he was a regional newspaper editor, in the mid-1960s, he describes Fleet Street as a magical place:

Nearly all the national newspapers had their headquarters in the street or nearby, with their presses roaring in the basements, the press barons barking in their penthouses ... and enough watering holes for a thirsty newsman, gossip diarist or cameraman to run from one to another without getting wet (Evans, 2009: 269-70)

Conference proceedings

In this personal account, he also describes a male-dominated environment, akin to Frayn's (1967) parody and a system of professional promotion, which resided in arm-chair chats, with jobs handed out, without interview, over a whisky. It was a cosy, clubbable world.

Autobiographical writing by journalists can usefully illustrate how men and women construct stories about themselves, both in the newsroom and in the field. For many, like former war correspondent, now TV anchor, Jon Snow, professional and personal identities are intertwined – inextricably – so that his own campaigning zeal informs his craft. Often hailed as a modern day George Orwell, Snow's autobiography, *'Shooting History'* (2004) is infused with a desire to change the world, to challenge inequality and unfairness, whilst reporting impartially for Channel 4 News. If journalism is defined as a craft, or even a trade (Marr, 2004) rather than as a profession, these examples from journalists' autobiographical writing illustrate how individuals seek to place themselves within their working world, cognisant of the constraints imposed by working practices and the remit of impartiality, but where 'self' as individual, as storyteller is also central.

In a contemporary environment dominated by short-term contracts, freelance shifts and 'portfolio careers', a journalist's professional identity is shifting dramatically. The research conducted by Mishler (1999) on the narratives of identity of craft artists shows how, rather than romanticising their craft, potters and artisans 'were keenly aware of "how the world is made" and tried to find ways to continue with their work within that reality' (Mishler, 1999:161). The same could be said of journalists, keen to stay true to the craft of storytelling, but encouraged to diversify as a result of editorial constraints (deadline and the remit of impartiality) and economic imperatives (low pay and short-term employment in a digital age).

Changing perceptions of self-identity:

Autonomy of journalists on the individual or organisational level does not necessarily translate to autonomy on the societal level that is needed for democracy to function (Ornebring, 2010:574).

As artists often feel removed from the reality that they are trying to reflect and to change, so for journalists there is often a gap between the democratic and romantic 'vision' of changing the ways in which people see the world and the reality of hitting ceaseless deadlines. Arguably, for journalists feeding the 24/7 news cycle, operating in a workplace where fewer reporters are producing more news, a sense of self is more important than ever. Moreover the journalist's self – identity in the first decade of the 21st century is constructed against a backdrop of the intense scrutiny of critical friends from within the profession and, most recently, the fallout from the Leveson Inquiry and editorial failings at the BBC. In 2004, the political journalist, Andrew Marr (2004) depicted his 'trade' as affected by a crisis of trust and a tendency to exaggerate; Nick Davies' (2009) views on journalism's reliance on the churn of the PR industry are well-rehearsed. In addition, the digital landscape has led observers to question the viability of impartiality and objectivity:

Invented in an age of information scarcity, their relevance in an age of information abun-

dance is now being questioned. Does a neutral voice hold the same value today as it did a century ago? (Sambrook, 2012:3).

Even stalwarts of impartiality within the BBC such as its Director of Global News, Peter Horrocks, have subjected this key tenet of its journalism to critical scrutiny and called its relevance into question (Horrocks, 2012). After 2012, many observers feared that the double impact of the publication of the Leveson Report and the Savile crisis at the BBC could induce cowed and risk-averse journalism (Thomson, 2013; Laville, 2013). These fears are particularly pertinent within a media environment, where journalists operate across platforms and where movement between jobs and roles is more fluid than before. The cultures of the press and broadcasters could arguably become less distinctive as a result and a lifetime in journalism would lack colour as well as job-security. Post – Leveson, the spotlight is on journalism education, implying a heightened sense of responsibility (Frost *et al*, 2012; Greenslade, 2012). Now more than ever before, journalists need to know who they are, what they stand for and to have their own individual voice. For some observers, re-imagining journalism education is the priority:

Only by rethinking and re-invigorating journalism and journalism education will it be possible to institutionalise journalism as a profession that is equipped to fulfil its societal task (Donsbach, 2010:47)

They argue that journalism education should be seen as the standard bearer for good practice, as Roy Greenslade observed on his *Guardian* blog:

While the next generation of journalists may take ethics seriously, their bosses may not. That's the challenge for Leveson – to come up with a way to build a new ethical foundation for our journalism that overcomes the reality of newsroom pressures (Greenslade, 2012).

This acknowledges the roles that newsroom cultures and professional contexts play in an individual's life and, raising questions of ethics and informing good practice. The future of journalism would appear to rest with the journalists of the future and this presents a challenge to their educators (Greenslade, 2012; Frost *et al*, 2012).

Sharing stories, self-reflection and good practice:

In the end, journalism is an act of character (Kovach, 2001:230)

This paper builds on the concept of critical reflection as an important element of journalism education and the point at which journalism practice and journalism theory meet. Critical reflection is a prerequisite for understanding because it "is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb 1984:38).

Gone are the days when journalism education or training could focus solely on practice. It is no longer sufficient to teach the practical skills (both technical and conceptual) without reference to the academic debates that circulate around journalists, their place in society and principles they have always held sacrosanct (such as impartiality). If a professional practitioner is defined as 'a specialist who encounters certain types of situations again and again' then the specialist's awareness of self, or 'knowing in practice'

becomes ‘increasingly tacit, spontaneous and automatic’ (Schon, 1995:60). This can lead to complacency or narrowness, the sort of ‘I know it when I see it’ view of journalism: a practitioner’s outlook could quickly become narrow and jaundiced. A lifetime in journalism lived well, should seek to avoid ennui. Through reflection, a practitioner can embrace critical analysis and re-learning, looking at things from a different perspective and bringing a freshness of approach. Whilst it is important to avoid narcissism and excessive naval-gazing, ‘there is a constant need to reflect on one’s work, what one is trying to achieve’ (Moon and Thomas, 2007:7).

Research conducted for my doctoral thesis, *The Storytellers Tell Their Stories: The Journalist as Educator* (2013) indicates that the use of stories in journalism education can provide a route to ‘good practice’. Here, the concept of critically reflecting on and sharing lived experiences that are believable, that are authentic (and, as one participant observed, ‘credible’) and translating them into something ‘useful’ can inculcate good practice in others. Each of the participants in the study, which focused on practitioners who had become educators at the BBC College of Journalism, defined themselves through journalism practice (Usher, 2000) and contributed to a set of conclusions about the role of lived experiences in journalism education. These are some of the themes that emerged in conclusion:

Stories that are useful and credible:

Crucially, all of the participants acknowledged that not everyone is able to engage in or is suited to this method of teaching by sharing experiences. The simple act of telling and re-telling stories is not sufficient; it has to be a product of reflection on self-identity (Schon, 1995). It is not about sitting on a stool and telling ‘war stories’ since it involves the development of principles that have emerged over time as a result of practice. The notions of utility and credibility and the awareness of the importance of audience articulated by all of the journalism educators that I interviewed arguably mitigate the danger of falling into the trap of self-indulgence.

As a journalism educator, a deconstructed personal experience cannot simply be imposed on others in the shape of an anecdote because it is important to consider how it might be received, just as a journalist should consider the audience in reporting news stories. Awareness of the role of others is central to the ways in which an experience might be translated to make it useful. Stories are not simply re-told, but analysed and interrogated into a format that others can learn from – they have to be useful and to manifest ‘learning points’. Given the inquiring nature of journalism, journalists are unlikely to learn from a ‘top down’ or directional style – involvement in the process, the sense that ‘we are all in it together’ in an interactive and honest exchange of experiences (as newsroom cultures are ideally based on the sharing of ideas) can create a credible, useful educational experience for educator and student. There is authenticity here, a fit between journalistic practice and educational practice. One participant reminds us that good journalism should avoid imposed narratives and should aim to tell stories where the evidence ‘speaks for itself’. Self – reflexivity is core to ‘good’ journalism and to ‘good’ journalism education.

Critiques of bad practice:

Encouraging students to critique examples of ‘bad practice’ provides another method by which journalism educators can share their own principles derived from practice that have emerged over time. For one participant, a foreign correspondent, this is manifested in a critical analysis of the writings of others, through the prism of his own experience as a writer to elicit ‘rules’ or codes of practice for ‘good’ writing as an educator (in this context, news reports and features.) The students engage in a process of critical analysis of the stories of others in written form to develop their own approach in conjunction with the experiences that the journalism educator shared with them. For some journalism educators, the vocabulary that they use to teach others is developed through a sense of self, rather than direct experience. At these times, they see themselves as ‘coaching’ or ‘facilitating’. When they are teaching values, which are intrinsic – such as *impartiality* – the examples come from their own experience as editors and producers and from the vocabulary that they have devised to work with reporters and correspondents – from direct and indirect experience. One participant felt that sharing her own experiences ‘brings to life’ a personal sense of ethics. Another used storytelling to teach impartiality as, what he termed, an ‘active value’.

Where the educators are teaching ‘what they do’ the master/apprentice construct provides a useful model for the application of experience to journalism education. This is particularly evident in the approach adopted by the correspondent teaching writing skills: He defined journalism as a craft rather than a profession that is fashioned through instinct and stated that the learning and acquisition of skills took place through ‘informal apprenticeship’, taught by those who draw on and share their own experiences.

Immersive and experiential learning:

All of the journalism educators displayed a keen awareness of context; a recognition of the challenges facing journalism and a desire to shape the future by inculcating ‘good practice.’ They do not seek to impose models of good practice, based on rules and codes, and the educational value of an immersive, experience-centred approach could be questioned on this basis – as one notes, there are no obvious, tangible ‘intended learning outcomes’ that can be written down. The sharing of lived experiences in an educational context flirts with the realm of therapy, it is transactional and immersive and highly personalised. However, none of the interviewees hold themselves up as role models, even though they might be perceived in this way and some students might draw aspirational modes of conduct from the experience, it is not an intention of the educators. They all manifest a passion for the craft of journalism, which is projected onto the education of others and in this sense they lead by example. But it is not a blind passion, one participant articulates a sense of tiredness about the state of journalism and the impact that ‘bad’ journalism – journalism that lacks trust, that is based on flimsy or faulty evidence – can have on people’s lives. For some, there is a feeling of dissonance and a sense that connectivity must be restored with each offering different approaches to routes out of the mire, but they are all driven by a sense of social responsibility and the desire to ‘give something back’.

All of the participants care about inculcating good practice: For one, whose passion is data journalism, it is important to focus on ‘changing the prejudice’ and ‘breaking habits’ with a return to evidence - based storytelling, rather than assumption – led journalism so that the standard approaches are overturned. Others seek to break down conventions through encouraging journalists to ask ‘disruptive’ questions and so attain originality in their storytelling. Another seeks honesty and fairness through the recognition that journalists are part of the stories that they tell, they can report with an impartial, fair-minded and honest approach to the lives of others. This is particularly challenging in conflict zones, where the concept of impartiality is complicated by the experience of bearing witness and the journalist’s craft is thrown into sharp focus. Sharing these ‘uncomfortable notions of self’, as he calls them, with honesty, acknowledging that identity is shaped by the stories that journalists report - in this case stories of conflict, often partially ‘known’ as a result of the fog of war – can provide an exemplar, which usefully illustrates good practice in journalism and in journalism education.

Professional Perspectives: a case study:

My research into the ways in which journalists use stories of ‘lived experience’ as educators informs my own approach to journalism education. This case study is intended to show how I utilise my own professional practice and background as a journalist to deliver a unit, for final year undergraduate multimedia journalism students, which focuses on employability. It encourages students to consider the importance of a self-reflexive approach to jobs and career opportunities. *Professional Perspectives* aims to develop critical reflection on journalism practice and through a visiting speaker programme it engages students with practice in a theoretical context. The final assignment urges them to debate current challenges and issues in journalism within a conceptual framework.

The Programme of Study:

The unit is divided into two parts: the first five weeks are comprised of employability workshops, which are interactive and focus on the key skills that third year journalism students need at graduate entry level in a competitive workplace. These range from advice on social media usage and online profile to lessons from industry professionals on how to pitch ideas in order to get them commissioned. The workshops complement the students’ research for their final major project, where they have to pitch an idea, develop it, produce and publish it as an online multimedia piece. The remainder of the unit is devoted to a weekly class, where a visiting speaker from industry shares ‘lived experiences’ and ideas with the students in an interactive session, which assumes a ‘press conference’ format. The classes are structured so that they address current issues in journalism. The programme of study is designed to provide an iterative experience for the students: the first session sets out the key issues for debate to provide a context. For example, in 2013/14, the post-Leveson landscape highlighted issues around ethics and trust, original and creative storytelling, investigative journalism and reporting conflict. The importance of developing an individual ‘voice’ is also explained within the context of the challenges

presented by ‘an autobiographical age’ (Plummer, 2000), where journalists are expected to put more of themselves into their reporting. This section from the unit guide provides an example of how the biographical details of speakers are shared with students to set up the session:

Week 6: Martin FEWELL: *The Only Way is Ethics*:

Martin is former Deputy Editor Channel 4 News and has been Head of Communications, Metropolitan Police since September 2012. Martin started his career at the BBC at Radio Solent before moving to BBC Radio 4 News and Current Affairs, where he was deputy editor of The World at One. At Channel 4 News, Martin championed the programme’s original journalism, presented by award-winning anchor Jon Snow. He wrote a submission to the Leveson Inquiry for C4 News. A team player and a highly intelligent editor, Martin will discuss ethics, trust, police-media relations post-Leveson as well as providing insights into the arguably the most impressive news operation in the UK (Channel 4 News) and testing your ethical prowess.

The teaching method is experiential and interactive, with each of the visiting speaker sessions following a similar format of an hour of ‘lecture’, with slides, clips of video and audio, online examples followed by an hour of questions. The students ask questions and ignite debate. Sometimes there are interactive exercises, for example one speaker, Becky Milligan from BBC Radio 4’s *PM* programme, illustrated her talk on the importance of original approaches to storytelling with audio clips from interviews that she had not yet broadcast. The students were able to discuss issues of emotional journalism, taste and decency and ethics within the ‘safe’ classroom environment, whilst drawing lessons from her own experiences and her own ‘take’ on how she would approach these challenges. These were dynamic examples from of her own experience, distilled and focused so that the students could engage with the issues and reflect on their own practice. In order to present this class, Becky had reflected on her own practice to find learning points that she could share. In turn, through examples of things that work and some that didn’t, she involved the students in an exchange of ideas, through which they in turn reflected on their own practice.

In Martin Fewell’s session, ‘*The Only Way is Ethics*’, which ran in the weeks after the publication of the Leveson Report, the students worked together, guided and facilitated by him, to devise their own code of ethics for journalists.

This is the code that they produced in a workshop in 2012:

‘The Only Way is Ethics’ – A Code for Journalists

1. *Always act for the public good: a) audience b) interviewees*
2. *Always act in the national interest*
3. *Honesty*
4. *Balance/objectivity*
5. *Law – abiding*
6. *Accuracy*

7. *Protect the rights of minors*
8. *Protect sources*
9. *Perform to a 'gold standard' which is examined/endorsed (NCTJ)*
10. *Do not intrude into the grief of others*
11. *Check sources carefully*
12. *Protect privacy*
13. *Scrutinise government*
14. *Expose corruption*
15. *Do not mislead – the importance of truth*
16. *Fairness*
17. *Do not plagiarise*
18. *Do not cause harm*

Devised by third year BA (Hons) Multi Media Journalism students at The Media School, Bournemouth University. Tuesday February 28th, 2012.

The students place their code into the context of regulatory codes and editorial guidelines produced by OFCOM, the (former) Press Complaints Commission and the BBC. They also engage with ethical concepts based on moral philosophy and utilise the applied ethics that they have already studied earlier in the course, integrating these with the visiting speaker sessions to reach their own judgements. The aim is to expose them to the blend of theory and practice, to encourage them to operate as reflective practitioners. The production of news is an instant and immersive activity, so it is important that journalists understand the thought – processes, attitudes and personal values, which shape the story. This chimes with Schon's (1995) notion of 'knowing-in-action', the opportunity to reflect on the knowledge of practice. The stated aims of the unit, published in the student guide are to:

Review the multi media concept against the background of regulatory and technological change;

Establish a reflective overview of concept and practice of journalism with particular reference to ethical and professional issues;

Review the concept and practice of journalism against the background of other national and international developments in the media domain;

Provide an opportunity for students to engage with practitioners.

(Extract from the Professional Perspectives unit guide, 2013/14)

Assessment and Feedback:

The workshops and visiting speaker programme support the production of a final piece of assessment – a case study of a key challenge in journalism. The assignment brief outlines the requirements:

*In the light of the experiences of the Visiting Speakers and wider reading and research, write a case study of 2,000 words, which considers the challenges facing journalists under **one** of these headings: you devise the angle, there are areas of overlap, but it is important to define HOW you are tackling the challenge:*

- **The journalist as original storyteller** – what is 'original journalism'? The role of audience, impartiality, techniques of storytelling
- **The journalist as purveyor of truth** – ethics, compliance issues, trust, media ownership, investigative journalism
- **The journalist as responsible professional** – the exercise of power, sense of self and professional identity, relationship with sources, emotional journalism

The assessment and feedback for this assignment is informed by the criteria, incorporating journalistic core skills. It states that an exegesis blending theory and practice is a key requirement:

Assessment Criteria

Your assignment will be marked according to the following criteria:

The extent to which you have defined the challenge, which you have selected to analyse.

The extent to which you are able to give examples to illustrate your topic both from the Guest Lecture programme and your own reading and thinking.

The overall coherence of your arguments and structure of the case study

The quality of presentation, punctuation, spelling, grammar and referencing.

It is hoped and intended that these criteria are sufficiently broad and flexible to encompass a diverse range of approaches and individual arguments. The framework is provided by the three key challenges, but the students effectively set their own question or posit their own standpoint beneath the 'umbrella' title. The aim, as a tutor, is to convey the importance of respecting individual and diverse voices within the journalism profession through the assessment criteria. It is also hoped that the students will feel confident to reflect on their learning and to share a sense of 'self' through the case study. The other assignment for this unit – a portfolio of work from placement and a reflective essay – reinforces this and encourages the students to consider how their studies inform their practice.

Student and industry feedback:

The unit is evaluated with mid unit, qualitative feedback. The students have found this unit useful in developing their professional profile and in enhancing their employability. One student rep, writing on behalf of the 2013/14 cohort said:

The feedback we received on the unit was that everyone really enjoyed the guest speakers and found them all to be interesting and relevant to our future careers. I also know that fellow students found it helpful to have to put together a port-

folio for this unit, as it was something we would need for future interviews etc.

The Careers Forum held at the end of the unit, at which alumni and industry speakers share opportunities and experiences is very popular and supports the assessed work aimed at developing their own individual 'voice'. This is noted as a mark of good practice by the programme team in its annual report reflecting on the academic year:

The students respect the importance of employability initiatives and the quality of visiting speaker programmes and the Careers Forum.

Source: 2012/2013 ARFM for BA (Hons) Multi Media Journalism, Bournemouth University

In his June 2011 report, the external examiner from industry, Pete Clifton executive news editor of msn said that 'the focus on future careers for the students is also very striking'. In 2012, he held up the Professional Perspectives case studies as an example of good practice:

I was very impressed by the Professional Perspective Programme. The quality of the work produced by the students on the back of these presentations was good. The range of speakers was impressive and the topics discussed demanding. But it was easy to see how much the students got from these sessions, and I really liked the way they weaved the insight from the speakers into their written pieces.

Journalism as craft-artistry

Journalism education has got to get across that journalism is different. It's a very specific, closely defined thing (Marsh, 2012).

This statement by Kevin Marsh, the former editor of the BBC College of Journalism, supports the notion of journalism as craft artistry, a thing that is made. In order to create something of value (accurate, fair, trusted) journalists need journalism education to imbue them with a sense of confidence.

The multi-layered experience of learning through stories drawn from the lived experiences of others in that 'safe place' of a classroom environment can have a powerful effect. Removed from the competitive and deadline – driven context of the news room (Davies, 2004), individuals can reflect through interacting with an experiential, therapeutic form of education, on how they are personally affected by the culture of the workplace.

Their understanding of self and -- in tandem with this self-reflexive process - of key tenets of journalism practice - can be heightened, as the journalism educator is also continuing to learn about 'self' through sharing personal experience with others.

Conclusions:

We are all tellers of tales. We each seek to provide our scattered and often confusing experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our lives into stories (McAdams, 1993:11).

As journalism is a human activity, so good practice in journalism could be encouraged

by the exercise of an approach to journalism education, which centres on the narratives of identity of journalists who are aware that they are shaped by the experiences they share within an educational context, which in turn shapes the personal and professional identity of student and educator alike. Active learning from the lived experience of others can enhance the lifelong education of journalists, equipping them for a lifetime in journalism through informing their self – understanding. This virtuous circle of learning about self through the lived experiences of others does not allow for the construction of a specific educational model, predicated on learning outcomes but it does indicate that good practice and a pride in the craft-artistry of journalism could be inculcated through placing the autobiographies, the storied selves, of self-reflexive practitioners at the heart of the learning experience.

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Exploring experiential learning through blogging

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Abstract

Technological development has spawned new opportunities for the construction and dissemination of news and information by lowering or eliminating the obstacles to the production and distribution of media content. Changes brought about by this development pose challenges to journalism educators who now have to produce graduates who can perform efficiently in hybridised and multi-faceted newsrooms. One example of the impact of technological development is the evolution of blogging, which began as individualistic recording of opinion, into a reputable journalistic activity. Journalism graduates are finding work where blogging is central to their role, for example in traditional newsrooms where they are expected to facilitate interaction with audiences through web-based communication, in PR through the use of social media platforms, and as viable free-lance enterprise bloggers. This paper discusses how blog spaces offer a virtual learning environment where students can acquire and hone journalistic and relevant technical skills. It argues that blogging can provide opportunities for experiential learning through the development and maintenance of an online journalistic presence, facilitate the expansion of transferable skills and graduate attributes, and enhance awareness of lifelong learning and professional development.

Introduction

Scholarly research about the impact of converging technologies on the

education of journalists has been on the increase since the turn of the 21st Century and one area of interest has been the potential of blogging practice as a teaching tool.

While ‘much of current research on blogs discusses them in relation to social media and social network sites’ (Rettberg, 2014:65), interest in blogging in the context of education is growing because of its impact on teaching and learning. Technological development has resulted in the ubiquitous presence of mobile devices and software that offer educators opportunities to create new environments for engaging with their students. Similarly, students have been empowered by digital technologies to actively construct knowledge through virtual interactivity and web-based communication. Given the popularity of blogging as a common form of communication, educators have found ways of harnessing its potential as a teaching tool, thus confirming an assertion Jeremy B. Williams and Joanne Jacobs made in 2004 when they noted that ‘blogging has the potential to be a transformational technology for teaching and learning’ (2004:232). Their prediction has been tested by educators to different degrees of success. The trends among educators in various disciplines have been to use blogs to facilitate collaboration among students doing group work or as a platform for reflection and the sharing of ideas, or as shared space to unravel creativity, chronicle progress, and engage in active learning (Smith 2010). As Marie E. Flatley observed, blogs can ‘be an extension of a classroom, where discussions are continued and where students get an equal voice. Or it can be a place where new ideas are formulated through collaboration’ (Flatley, 2005:77). Writing about her own experience, Flatley described the use of blogs as a teaching tool as a cost effective investment and noted that they are an ‘excellent tool to support group work’ (Flatley, 2005: 78).

From the above, it is apparent that much emphasis has been placed on the use of blogging as a teaching tool. Our research takes a different route. We are interested in understanding how blogging can be used as a learning tool, particularly for independent, lifelong learning. We are specifically interested in how journalism students who blog can use their blog space as a virtual learning environment and a tool for professional development. We share Gilly Smith’s view that writing a blog can entail the shaping and re-shaping of ideas, a skill that involves ‘taking risks if those ideas are to push at the boundaries and spawn original thought’ (2010:283). The purpose here is to explore students’ use of unsupervised and unrestricted blogs as a platform for honing their journalistic skills and the possibilities of blogging practice as an academic activity. It is also aimed at examining the potential of blogging as a virtual space for experiential learning.

Experiential learning is conceptualised as learning through first-hand experience. It focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience outside mainstream academic setting. Kolb, a leading theorist on experiential learning, describes it as a ‘framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work and personal development’ (1984:4). Consequently, experiential learning projects the ‘workplace as a learning environment that can enhance and supplement formal education and can foster personal development through meaningful work and career-development opportunities’ (Kolb, 1984:4). Our research idea is premised on the notion that students could, through blogging practice, sharpen their journalistic skills outside a news room and enhance their capacity to respond to some demands of journalism without the pressure of deadlines. It is also driven by the idea that a blog could be a safe and conducive web-environment for honing relevant technical skills that would make journalism students more equipped for the workplace.

Maximising the potential of blogging practice as a setting for experiential learning can be an effective way of motivating students to become independent learners. This is particularly expedient given the rapid changes and challenges in the work place. As noted already, technological advances have reshaped the publishing industry and transformed the news production process. Media organisations, for example, have hybridised into multimedia products production centres where text, audio, video elements and much more are curated. Economic pressures on publishers mean there is little time or space to train new journalists. Against this backdrop, it is clear how a blog can offer students a setting for experiential learning and the space to practice journalism outside the work place. With the growing popularity of digital technology for conducting work activities, the workplace, as Billet and Choy (2013:264) have noted, has become more electronically mediated and this calls for ‘understandings and ways of knowing and working that are quite distinct from mechanical processes.’ In the context of journalism, this means journalists are expected to be adept at manipulating technology in addition to writing good, clean copy. Therefore, blogging space, if properly harnessed, can also provide a platform to build an extensive portfolio of work, and master relevant technical skills and applications. It is worth noting that the pace of technological advances has also generated new pressures on journalism educators to produce ‘newsroom ready’ journalism graduates who do not require specialised training. As Deuze has noted:

The combination of mastering newsgathering and storytelling techniques in all media formats (so-called ‘multi-skilling’), as well as the integration of digital network technologies coupled with a rethinking of the news producer-consumer relationship tends to be seen as one of the biggest challenges facing journalism studies and education in the 21st century (Deuze, 2005:451).

Experiential learning in the workplace is achieved through imitation, observation, socialisation and practice and while blogging does not create a physical environment for that level of interaction, it still offers a virtual setting for learning. Bloggers can exercise agency in ways not feasible in the newsroom because there are no definitive normative practices or clear boundaries of tasks in the writing of personal blogs. Unlike in the workplace, personal blog spaces are not formally regulated by managers but audiences can ‘regulate’ indirectly through their approval ratings, conversations, comments and expectations. Put differently, blogging can provide opportunities for students to be critically aware of the context of their practice and to learn to apply the knowledge formalised in the classroom.

Context of study and methodology

Blogs have not always been viewed as mainstream forms of communication but as Lou Rutigliano (2007:225) has observed, they have ‘evolved significantly since their birth in 1999 and now encompass a variety of formats’. Blogs have become ‘part of the history of communication and literacy, and emblematic of a shift from uni-directional mass media to participatory media, where viewers and readers become creators of media’ (Rettberg, 2014p. 1). In its basic form, a blog is simply an online journal, which allows a writer to share his or her opinion and ideas with anyone who has access to the blog. It also provides a forum for readers to post comments, thus serving as a platform for interactivity at a level that was not possible before the emergence of digital platforms that have redefined the communication process. Blogs enable writers to engage with their readers irrespective of their location, time, identity and social status. From a journalistic perspective, this interactivity challenges a key feature of journalism, namely: the journalist as the gatekeeper

of information. Digital platforms of communication have empowered consumers to be producers in the same space. However, the level of interactivity between writers and their readers is dependent on the nature of a blog as some are 'tightly controlled formats with little audience participation' while some versions are 'mostly built from the bottom up through the participation of their audience' (Rutigliano, 2007:225). Marie E. Flatley, a professor of business communication, has observed how a blog enables 'the writer to post ideas and thoughts quickly using conversational language for many to read. It allows the writer to link easily to other sites for support as well as for example. And it provides a repository for such items' (Flatley, 2005:77). Jill Walker Rettberg makes a similar claim about the potentials of blogging. She suggests that writers of topic-centred blogs can have significant influence on their readers by sharing 'newly discovered ideas and information with their readers, usually providing links to more information (Rettberg, 2014: 24). In addition to these elements, 'Blogs are also known for their interactivity and interconnect-edness, as seen in conversations and co-production that take place among bloggers and their readers and across blogs and other websites' (Manning, 2012:8). Blogs have even been conceptualised as an 'invisible college, a community of people who have, or seek, knowledge' (Manning, 2012:3).

Given that in principle, as Manning has pointed out, access to free-blog hosting websites and user-friendly templates make it easy for anyone with basic internet literacy and connectivity to start a blog (Manning 2012), we routinely encourage our journalism students to start and run a personal blog as a strategy for regular writing practice. This approach is underpinned by an understanding of blogs as a cheap and simple means to publish and distribute information (Rettberg, 2014) and since all students have access to the internet on campus or even on a mobile phone, we conceptualise blogging as a viable means of building an online journalistic presence. This is particularly relevant to journalism students because of the way 'blogging has become recognised as an important part of the media ecology' (Rettberg, 2014:94).

Students are introduced to blogging in a workshop on blogging during which they have to write blog posts. However, the maintenance and development of the blog is optional and many students stop updating their blogs after a short period of time. Some, however, continue and gradually build up a following, which provides an incentive and motivation for writing regularly. For the purpose of this study, we interviewed ten of our students who have blogged for at least a year about their experiences as bloggers. Our aim was to see to what extent the blogs served as a learning tool. In this context we understand learning to be experiential when the 'learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied. It is contrasted with learning in which the learner only reads about, hears about, talks about, or writes about these realities but never comes in contact with them as part of the learning process' (Beard and Wilson, 2013:4). Although we do not fully adopt this 'immersion' approach we encourage students to use their blog for self-directed learning. We stress the need for independent learning given that there is never enough time in workshops for in-depth learning. Two aspects of experiential learning are emphasised in our teaching programme: learning as a process and learning as a continuous process grounded in experience (Kolb 1984).

The data for this analysis was generated through semi-structured interviews and mapped into Kolb's learning cycle and analysed within a framework underpinned by the notion of experiential learning. A structured-interview approach was considered the most appropriate way of answering our research questions because we were interested in teasing out insights from the students on their experience of blogging and not on the content of their

blogs. As David Gray has noted, a 'well-conducted interview is a powerful tool for eliciting rich data on people's views, attitudes and the meaning that underpin their lives and behaviours' (Gray, 2014:382). As our study was largely exploratory, the interview method allowed us to 'probe' for detailed responses, clarify claims that the students made; understand the lived experiences of our blogging students 'and the meaning they made of the experience' (Gray, 2014:383). The semi-structured interview approach also enabled us to explore subjective meanings that the students ascribed to their experiences. Of particular importance was the level of flexibility that this approach afforded us. We were able to respond to what the students told us and to encourage them to reflect more. Through the process it became clear that some of the students were not even aware of how much they had learnt from the experience of creating and maintaining a blog.

The study was driven by three research questions:

1. Do blog spaces offer a virtual learning environment for honing journalistic and technical skills?
2. Can the development and maintenance of an online journalistic presence facilitate the development of transferable skills?
3. Does blogging enhance awareness of lifelong learning and professional development?

Analytical framework

The analytical tool used for this study reflects the experiential learning method which conceptualises the workplace as a learning environment where learning is a continuous dynamic process and learners can develop their potentials through practice (Kolb 1984). Kolb's idea of learning encompasses doing, reflecting, processing, thinking and application of knowledge.

Kolb (1984) developed his Learning Cycle (Figure 1) as a way of describing learning processes through the practice of an activity, an experience. As Jordan et al (2008:202) point out, the Kolb Cycle is well described and understood, and can take concrete experience as a starting point in a student's learning journey through a continuous process of knowledge and skill acquisition. The learner, having had a concrete experience, reflects on it and draws conclusions about the experience. The conclusions are used to plan new activity which becomes the new concrete experience. Learners can enter the cycle at any point, for example via a reflective observation, or perhaps active experimentation. However, for the purposes of this study, the creation of a blog provides the first concrete experience. The consideration of interactions with readers lead to reflective observation from which new story ideas or blog management techniques emerge via the process of abstract conceptualisation. These ideas and techniques are developed (active experimentation) leading to new blogging experiences which form the new concrete experience, taking the learning into a new circuit of the learning cycle.

Student responses to the research questions did indicate that they had engaged with the Kolb Learning Cycle, although they were unaware of any formal engagement with learning structures.



Figure 1: Kolb's cycle of experiential learning (Kolb 1984)

Results

It should be pointed out that this research is retrospective and was not part of the teaching plan. Thus, the research was not set up at the beginning of teaching and consequently, the outcome of our analysis is also a learning experience for us.

Research question 1: Do blog spaces offer a virtual learning environment for honing of journalistic and technical skills?

While most of the students were aware of the popularity of blogging and some had already started blogging before coming on the journalism degree course, none of them saw the practice as a journalistic experience or as an academic activity. The prompting to start a blog or to turn an existing blog into a journalistic space was therefore a concrete experience for all members of the cohort. The students were steered away from 'personal blogs' to 'filter' or 'topic-driven' blogs (Rettberg, 2014). The former focuses on personal narratives, and serves as an online diary while the latter serves as repositories of information and observations' (Herring et al, 2007) and not a log of the writer's offline life. The students were encouraged to find a niche, a subject that they were passionate about and that would engage their attention. The idea was for them to identify and define their areas of expertise. That, however, was challenging even for some of those who had been blogging before starting on the journalism course because they initially struggled with the idea of using their blog as an extension of the classroom. But once they did, many were interested in developing their voice. One student said that initially she did not know what to write about but after being prompted to identify her interests and hobbies, she decided to start a blog on figure skating because she was passionate about it and was confident that she could write intelligently about it. She said: 'I was made aware of the freedom to express myself and I transferred what I learnt in class to the blog in terms of

style. I have become a better writer and I am more confident in expressing my views.' Another student recalled that starting a blog appealed to her because: 'I liked the idea of having the space to express myself. At university I was encouraged to ask for press passes to attend events. Being on the course gave me confidence to go out and cover events. The lessons in class made me more critical of my writing. I now pay attention to word count and I have learnt to use different applications to design my site.'

Writing a blog provided opportunities for our students to hone their journalistic skills by experimenting and putting into practice what they were taught in workshops. While writing a blog was not similar to being in a newsroom, and did not follow the process of learning in the workplace through imitation, observation, socialisation and practice (Billett and Choy, 2013), the students had to actively engage and utilise their experiences in the classroom to enhance their performance, providing very clear evidence of concrete experience. One student said: 'I blog [match report] at the whistle as I need to get it out there straight-away. I asked if I could use the press box and I was allowed to sit there and blog the game.'

Moon (2004:122) a leading scholar in experiential learning, makes the point that while it is not usually mediated, reflection on experience is a key component in facilitating a deeper understanding of what is learned. She advocates that for learning to be properly embedded, the reflection should be formal and mediated, and in the context of the classroom, this usually translates into assessment of reflection to ensure students take a purposive approach to self-evaluation. Park et al (2011:159) in a study of the value of blogging in adult informal learning, where the learning was either self-directed or incidental, noted that unmediated reflective observation does have some value and can enable and enrich learning. In our study of journalistic blogging, student work was largely unmediated and none of the students formally reflected on their activity, for example by using a reflective log. This was a deliberate strategy on our part to encourage creativity in writing and blog development free from the constraints of assessment criteria, but at the time when we were encouraging students to set up blogs, we were not exploring their potential as learning tools, we were simply encouraging students to write and engage with audiences, therefore reflection was self-directed and informal. Students did indicate that they engaged with reflective activity, using readers' comment and reaction as the focus of their evaluation, and were very sensitive to feedback, and this played a large part in dictating changes in both blog quality and direction.

'When I did match reports, I learnt to get to the point. That was from readers saying "we don't need a minute by minute account of the match, you need to get to the point".'

Although their blogs were not regulated or monitored by members of staff, their readers had indirect influence on them through their approval ratings, conversations, comments and expectations. Student responses pointed to evidence that they were drawing conclusions from their informal reflection on reader interaction, suggesting an engagement with Kolb's abstract conceptualisation. One student said: 'I didn't used to like having feedback... but now I am better at this. This helped me with Uni work, and working with negative comments. Rather than getting upset I can take it.'

'There is a better flow in my writing now, and I am learning how to correct my own mistakes to make sure the work sounds right. I am better at writing to length now too, as if there is too much, people won't read it.'

'I started to write for myself but now I think I am also writing for my readers. I think about my readers when I write. I am more conscious of what I write so I critique my work closely.'

Students were sensitive to the use of validation tools such as the "like" button – which readers press when they have enjoyed a particular post. Participants said that if the peer group 'liked' a particular piece it suggested that it was the sub-genre they were interested in reading more about.

Moving one stage further around Kolb's cycle to consider active experimentation, it was evident that reader feedback informed learning, and also the development of future content. This point underscores the observations made by Rettberg (2014) who describes blogs as "immersive" environments, and complex "ecosystems". Blogging is not an exercise in one-directional publication, but more a conversation with an interested community of readers which encourages continuing reflection and development.

A fashion blogger said: 'I can tell what subjects engage audiences from the comments I get, and can work out what has gone well and what hasn't, particularly if there are no hits.'

A music blogger said: 'I write about things that excite me but I also monitor popular content. When I wrote about One Direction (a popular band), the response was mad.'

In the context of Kolb's learning cycle, it was clear that students were engaging with each stage of the cycle, from concrete experience through a period of reflection and development where transformative learning was evident. While their learning was both informal and incidental, as defined by Watkins and Marsick's work on learning modes (1992), it was evident that the blog space itself intrinsically provided an appropriate virtual learning environment for the development of journalism skills.

Research question 2:

Can the development and maintenance of an online journalistic presence facilitate the development of transferable skills?

There was strong evidence of activities that reflected the use of transferable skills but many of the students were not aware of how much they had learned until they were prompted to reflect on their experience as bloggers during our interviews. Moon (2004) makes the point that formal reflection is important in helping the learner understand what has been learned. During our interviews, it was evident that students had learned more than simply how to write journalistic blogs.

They had developed the ability to think creatively about problems. One student said: 'You have to keep getting content out there, even when there is not much going on, and you have to be creative to do that, to make news.'

Time management was also important to the bloggers. 'If you blog every week, on a particular day each week, then you develop an expectation in the reader. If you promise a particular frequency of publication, then you have to meet that expectation or you will lose a lot of readers.' One gaming blogger said: 'Time management is important, you have to find time on a regular basis to write your blog.'

Each of the participants demonstrated an understanding of sophisticated online methodologies to promote their work and gain a blog "following". Each used social media networks, including Facebook and Twitter, to drive traffic towards their blogs, and conversely used their blogs to drive traffic towards social media networks, techniques which

are commonly used to generate interest in online content (Jordan, 2008). For example, one student discussed his blog in terms of identifying the posts which attracted the most hits and developing work in that niche, in his case coverage of darts players and events.

I followed reader trends. In the beginning I had to beg retweets, I put my email address on my blog and linked the blog into my email signature, then started to pick up on which blogs had most hits and feedback. In the beginning you do a lot of work to promote your blog, hopelessly tweeting hundreds of people in the hope that some retweet you. All I do now is send a tweet saying the blog is up and people now follow me and go straight to the blog.

One music student was appointed as a volunteer blogger for a larger organisation which aggregates music blogs of events in Northern England through their website. After working on this site for a few months, he realised that it could attract more readers if it was configured differently. He suggested changes to the site's director and obtained permission to improve the site.

"The old website was hard to get round so I offered to build a new one which is tonnes better. I redid the website and set it up for better search engine optimisation [a way of attracting more readers], and got Facebook and Twitter going as it was old-school before...now we have a Facebook group going and this is where people post comments now....my coding skills got a lot better through doing all of that."

From our interviews it was clear that the students' management of their blogs demonstrated their awareness of the reader as being essential to the success of the enterprise. The conscious development of a reader base using blog data illustrated their numeracy and sophisticated levels of IT skills. All the bloggers had independently developed transferable skills through their blogging experience.

Research question 3:

Does blogging enhance awareness of lifelong learning and professional development?

All the students interviewed said writing a blog made them more perceptive about their online profile and the need to be seen as professionals. It was clear from their responses to questions that they were emerging as independent learners who were becoming critically aware of the potential of their blogs:

'I can tell what subjects engage audiences from the comments I get, and can work out what has gone well and what hasn't, particularly if there are no hits.'

'I know people on Twitter through running the blog and I am already known in the industry. The 'like' button is good for validation; it is like having a sense of community and community contacts.'

'Readers suggest story ideas and I get into conversation with some of them'

'As a PDP tool a blog is invaluable. When I apply for jobs I send a link to my blog, it is a professional tool.'

One student reported that within two weeks of completing his degree, he had been offered work as a communications officer for a large organisation. His interviewers told him that they had been impressed with his ability to network - a skill he had developed through running a music blog which had required him to build contacts with music agents and

venues around the country.

It was striking how the students on being encouraged to reflect on their experiences became more aware of the importance of their blogging experience in terms of their professional development. Moon (2004:74) makes the point that because experiential learning is largely independent of mediation, it fits outside educational structures and extends into “real world” experience. ‘In this way, this learning extends beyond formal education and becomes very important in self-managed continuing professional development.’

One student who started a sports blog talked about meeting sports reporters and getting to know many of them but did not think of them as contacts until it was pointed out to him. Another blogger, who writes about fashion, said being invited to review fashion products convinced her that she had a voice. This corroborates Rettberg’s view that ‘blogs rely on personal authenticity, whereas traditional journalism relies on institutional credibility.... Bloggers build trust individually’ (2014:98).

In 2007 Herring et al wrote:

Although some of the most read A-list bloggers are professional journalists, most bloggers would not call themselves journalist and do not even dream of becoming journalist. Their writing would not qualify as journalism because most blogs “focus on narrow subject matter of interest to a select but circumscribed niche. And the blogs that do contain bona fide news are largely derivative, posting links to other blogs and, in many cases, print journalism” (Herring et al, 2007:6).

Contrary to this position, many of our student bloggers self-identified as journalists and although they focused on narrow subject matter of interest, they approached their writing from a journalistic perspective. Those who concentrated on topic-centred blogs built up significant readership, thus confirming Rettberg’s point that writers of topic-centred blogs can have significant influence on their audience by sharing (2014). While there was ‘a strong sense of me-ness, given the deeply personal nature of the online diary-keeping or journal-writing function afforded by them’ (Sundar et al, 2007:85), some of the students were successful in reporting first-hand on events to which they were invited to cover as bloggers.

Concluding reflections

We set out to explore the potential of blogging space as an experiential learning environment by interrogating our students who blog. As Beard and Wilson (2006) have noted, for learning to take place the environment needs to be appropriate to the learning context. While they were for the most part discussing physical learning spaces, arguably their point is equally relevant when considering online spaces. If the student’s aim is to work in journalism where online activity is becoming increasingly important, it could be argued that blog environments do offer appropriate learning spaces.

From our interviews it became quite clear that the students saw their blogs as a space where they could practice what was taught in class. They found the experience empowering when they received positive feedback. They became more analytical and critical of their work in response to comments from their readers. As DeLong, a professor of economics, noted, the blogosphere can be conceived as an ‘invisible college, ‘a community of people who have, or seek, knowledge. It reflects and embodies a particular type of culture... for creating knowledge, and for observing, verifying, or validating the knowledge

that others create’ (2006:8). Our students learnt through blogging to tap into a network of people who share their interests and acquired various types of expertise through collaboration and exchange of ideas. Perhaps the most pertinent outcomes of this study is how the blogs facilitated student-centred learning and enhanced motivation. It was evident from their responses that our students had a better understanding and appreciation of their learning through blogging when they were prompted to formally reflect on that learning. We were also motivated to consider how to improve our teaching through the use of journalistic blogging as a tool for experiential learning within the curriculum.

Australian academic Stephen Billett, a leading international researcher on experiential learning in the curriculum, offers a useful framework of good practice for the management of experiential learning, which we intend to adapt for teaching blogging as a learning tool. He encourages a three-staged pedagogical approach: preparation for learning, monitoring and guidance during practice-based experience, and reflection on what has been learned. He stresses the importance of ‘aligning the kinds of experiences provided for students with the intended learning outcomes’. Underlining Moon’s point about the importance of reflection (2004) Billett recommends after-practice reflection, including making ‘links to and reconciliations between what is taught (learnt) in the academy and what is experienced in practice settings’. Although our students engaged in on-going reflection around the content and nature of their blogs (the practice setting), some of them did not consciously associate this with what they had been taught to any great extent. This suggests that there could be an advantage in bringing blogging into the experiential learning curriculum in journalism to enhance reflection on practice and secure what is learned through practice.

In particular, one area of development will entail the provision of scaffolding for reflection on ideas, performance and commitment. Attempts will be made to expand participation through dialogue on the benefits of blogging as we believe that it is important to encourage students to focus on personal development and lifelong learning and not just on performance in assessment.

We acknowledge that sample size for this discussion is small and this could be seen as a limitation but we are not convinced that a larger sample size would have significantly added to an understanding of blogging as an experiential learning tool given the similarity of responses to our questions. This study has given us an insight into how students can be guided to use the blog space as a learning environment.

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Creating specialist careers advice for journalism students: tailoring the message to suit the media

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Abstract

This paper is based on research related to improving employability outcomes for journalism graduates by creating specialist careers workshops aimed at getting jobs in the media sector. While many universities have centralised careers departments, media employers are often looking for tailored one page CVs and cover letters that require specialist knowledge of the industry. Journalism and media students face a particularly competitive employment market as an increase in the number of courses offering these undergraduate programmes combines with a contracting pool of paid entry-level jobs. Those from widening participation backgrounds are at an even greater disadvantage. Using action research methodology, this paper aims to analyse student experience of university careers advice and gauges their preparedness for the jobs market. Research consists of semi-structured interviews following a specialist careers workshop with a group of third year students. Theoretical texts, including Wolf's *Does Education Matter* (2002) and Collini's *What are Universities For?* (2012), inspire discussion points, such as the role of work experience and internship, building confidence in

widening participation students and the importance, or not, of a vocational degree to succeed in the profession.

Introduction

Education today is a socially acceptable way of ranking people which most employers would find it hard to do without. Wolf 2002, p29

Graduate-level employment is no longer a given for a sizable proportion of this year's university leavers. Over the past ten years the number of students failing to get graduate-calibre jobs within two years of leaving education has doubled to 40% (Futuretrack, 2013).

When the degree studied is vocationally geared towards the highly competitive media industry, which has already undergone a recessionary contraction, the possibilities of employment become even tougher. It is for this reason I have chosen to focus on employability prospects for the journalism students at my university.

After some informal discussions with third year students about to graduate from a relatively new set of journalism-related degree programmes, it appeared they might benefit from some specialist careers advice on breaking into the media market. While there is a general careers service at the university, it offers generic advice for all courses, and no specific emphasis on journalism.

With a low-tariff entry of 220 points to three programmes, Journalism, Sports Media and Journalism and Media Production, and a growing number of students who have chosen to remain in their home town to study, there is considerable scope to assist graduates with their first job applications.

As hackademics (Engel, 2003, Harcup, 2011), we are well placed to give careers advice because many of us are still working as journalists or remain in close touch with editorial staff on newspapers, magazines or websites. Practitioner journalists will have experiences of how to get an entry level job, although this may have been in the pre-intern era.

To contextualise this project it is necessary to understand the expansion of the higher education sector over the past 50 years as well as changes in the training of journalists and media professionals.

As university attendance has risen, within a generation, from being relatively uncommon to an increasingly normal part of education, employers have been provided with much larger pool of graduates.

When everyone, or almost everyone, has a degree, employers will obviously become more and more picky about the type of degree they want, and, justifiably, or not, will create new dividing lines: right subject, right result, right institution. Wolf 2002, p185

In 1980 there were around 300,000 students in forty-six universities. However, as polytechnics, then higher education colleges gained university status there are now 130 university level institutions teaching over 2.5 million students (Collini, 2012)

This increase of almost nine-fold in student numbers in the past thirty years means an inevitable rise in those applying for graduate-level jobs. Evidence comes from the latest annual study by High Fliers, which reported a 7% upturn in competition for graduate va-

cancy jobs with 56 applications per post (High Fliers Research, 2013).

In this research paper I analyse what effect introducing specialist career's workshops might have on the future employment prospects of students. The first part examines how journalism training has changed, looks at the concept and definition of employability and analyses the background of successful journalists.

The second half of the paper is concerned with data collection from students and analysis of their perceptions of the purpose of a vocational degree, engagement with careers advice and understanding of their employability as graduates.

Background: Do journalists do journalism degrees?

Journalism as an undergraduate subject is a relatively recent addition to university degree programme portfolios. It used to be a trade almost entirely learnt through practice, with qualifications provided by industry body the National Council for Training of Journalists (NCTJ).

However, as university expansion has continued apace in the UK, where over a third of teenagers follow academic routes into higher education (Wolf 2002, p174), a wider variety of degree programmes has been created to "professionalise" specific jobs.

Increasingly, universities were involved in what has been termed the 'credentializing' process, a mechanism for assuring society that only those with approved qualifications will be allowed to practise a particular profession. Collini 2012, p26

More than 60% of journalists are now graduates, although it is not specified whether they studied media related courses, and the past fifteen years have seen a rapid proliferation of related degree programmes. In academic year 1998 to 1999 there were 1,972 students on undergraduate journalism courses in the UK, by 2008 to 2009 this had increased fourfold to 8,095 students. (Caeser, 2010)

It was a similar picture for media studies courses with 7,416 students in the 1998 to 1999 cohort, increasing to 25,335 in 2008 to 2009. However, despite this huge potential workforce from a diverse range of universities, high profile positions in the media industry tend to be filled by individuals from select educational backgrounds, who may well have studied a different degree.

A survey by the Sutton Trust (2006) showed that 54% of leading journalists went to public school and of that sample, 45% went to Oxbridge.

In 2006 just 14% of the leading figures in journalism had been to comprehensive schools, which now educate almost 90% of children. My fear is that in another 20 years the chances of those from non affluent homes to reach the very highest strata of society – including the top of the media – will have declined still further. Lampl 2006, p1

In addition 72% of journalists in 2006 who went to university attended one of the 13 leading institutions identified by the Sutton Trust (Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Imperial, LSE, Nottingham, Oxford, St Andrew's, UCL, Warwick and York). These establishments have consistently been ranked top of major league tables, lending credence to Wolf's comments on "picky" employers.

As journalism and media-related degree programmes tend to be offered by the post-92 universities and other institutions, we might infer that many leading journalists did not study on a vocational course at undergraduate level.

If those not studying journalism are scooping some of the media jobs, then how employable are graduates of journalism programmes in other sectors? To examine this broader question we need to define employability in the graduate context. The Higher Education

Authority, through its Enhancing Student Employability Co-Ordination Team (ESECT), laid down several criteria when unpacking the concept including:

- *Getting a (graduate) job*
- *Possession of vocational degree*
- *Formal work experience*
- *Good use of non-formal work experience and /or voluntary work*
- *Possession of 'key skills' or suchlike*
- *Skilful career planning and interview technique*
- *A mix of cognitive and non-cognitive achievements and representations*

Yorke 2006, p6

Yorke argues that many employers are merely looking for “graduateness”, with no specific discipline, and that undertaking degree level study is seen to confer a particular set of skills and understanding that signpost “employability”.

Echoing Wolf’s comments Yorke states that “where many possess degrees, a degree confers no positional advantage in the labour market”. However, he goes on to suggest:

... the institution a graduate attended has a positional value. As Hesketh (2000) points out, some employers have a list of institutions from which they prefer to select graduates – and criteria such as the match of a curriculum to an employer’s business and the reputation of the institution can affect the graduate’s chances. Yorke 2006, p10

When we are dealing with a degree programme that seemingly defines a job within its title for example “journalism”, this raises several further questions for employers, students and academics. This research aims to examine whether students anticipate getting a journalistic job, or see the “graduateness” of those skills as transferrable.

Boosting confidence should enhance employability

When working with students from a widening participation background, one of the key areas to address is boosting confidence in making the first application for an entry-level job. This is highlighted by Buckingham in a recent article on pre-vocational and vocational media courses.

In general, the media industries are a buyer’s (or employer’s) market, with a huge supply of potential workers, but limited demand; in this context, social capital (the ability to network, or to sell oneself) has become vitally important. Buckingham 2013, p30

Whether, as academics, we can be expected to teach students how to develop “social capital” is questionable. But, given the focus of this project on careers guidance, students can, at the very least, be reminded of what they have learnt as a result of undertaking three years of study.

As one of the most frequently asked questions at open days and student visits (particularly from the parents) involves job prospects, it seems that in the university “marketplace” we need to produce alumni who are working in the industry in order to have credibility as a journalistic education provider.

Several students from the graduating cohort of 2012 now have jobs in the media, but none

of them received “structured” help in getting those positions. Instead lecturers helped with CVs, gave advice and pointed students in the direction of relevant media jobs websites as well as providing references.

The drive towards gaining, and retaining, industry accreditation from the BJTC and PTC for the journalism programmes also has a major role to play and final destinations of graduates is one of the criteria on which the institution is being judged.

Methodology: Planning and implementing a media career workshop

The methodology I have chosen to examine the effects of this workshop is action research. The project is necessarily “small, focussed and manageable” (McNiff and Whitehead 2010) because the number of students engaged on these degree programmes is relatively low.

Action research in this instance endeavoured to glean rich, qualitative data from a small group. This involved planning, collecting, analysing and reflecting on data (Henning, Stone, Kelly: 2009).

I began the cycle by planning my careers workshop, after gauging some interest from third year students. Researching CV and cover letter writing, jobs websites, and getting “breaking in” tips from two alumni now working at the BBC and local newspaper group, I prepared a presentation for my student audience.

The careers workshop was held in May and data collection was gleaned from two sources: a focus group before the presentation, and a series of semi-structure interviews with individual students after the workshop.

The relationship between myself as questioner and the student as respondent was possibly influenced by the fact that I am not a careers professional. Also, my status as a journalism lecturer (and a freelance journalist) may have skewed responses in a more favourable way towards that profession than if I was engaged in another area of academia.

The workshop involved a small sample of eight students from a third year cohort. Because of the small sample size no wide-ranging conclusions can be drawn, however, in analysing responses, many participants express similar opinions around the subject of future employment and their preparedness for the journalism job market.

Without including the entire third year it was difficult to gauge the perceptions of this cohort about their prospects in the media industry and whether that was why they chose to study particular subjects. It may be that the students who chose to attend were the least confident about getting a job in the media. Conversely, they might have been the keenest in the cohort, or a mixture of the two.

In order to provide some triangulation to the process and give a different environment for the students to voice their opinions, I held an informal focus group before the presentation. I chose to do this to enable me to gauge the levels of confidence and preparedness around applying for jobs before the advice was given to the students to try and allow some measurable outcomes for this research.

Data collection

My motive, in questioning the focus group, was to draw out the intentions of the students after graduation and examine how many planned to chase a job in the media. I also intended, as with the semi-structured interviews, to analyse whether students believe that a vocational degree only has one useful area of employment, or whether they perceived that graduate level skills are transferable to other sectors.

Work experience was raised as a key area of concern for students within the focus group. One student was chasing up employment following work experience on a football website, where he had already been published. With over 90% of recently qualified journalists having copy published during work-experience placements, this is becoming a well-established entry route. (Caesar, 2010).

A potential obstacle for students is the lack of integral exposure to work experience during the three year programme. This is particularly important when it comes to CV writing as evidence of practical engagement is perceived as more important than academic results for many employers. "They are all looking for work experience" (Student 2, 2013). Another added that he felt like he had the skills, "but they are all looking for people who've done work already." (Student 8, 2013)

This is not just true for media, but across all industries according to High Fliers Research. Over half the top 100 graduate recruiters questioned warned that:

Graduates who have had no previous work experience at all are unlikely to be successful during the selection process and have little or no chance of receiving a job offer for their organisations' graduate programmes. High Fliers Research 2012, p1

Some respondents perceived that a media degree is only useful for one type of career. "I'm not sure why you would do the degree if you weren't expecting to get a job in the media. There's not really anything else you can do with the degree." (Student 2, 2013).

Finally, the reasons for coming to the workshop were voiced by Student 2 (2013) who said he was there: "To feel more confident, to know where to look for jobs and how to go about making yourself as employable as possible with the skills we've got."

Questionnaire

The first step in data collection was to construct a questionnaire balanced between general and specific answers. Some questions needed to be factual, while others were designed to draw out more detailed responses.

My introductory questions aimed to examine whether students had chosen the programme with a specific vocational goal in mind. This is integral to this research project because degree programmes such as journalism are increasingly seen as "pre-career" choices borne at the expense of the embryonic practitioner.

Whereas journalists might have received on the job training from the NCTJ (and many still do), some areas of the industry, particularly magazine and online content generators, are reliant on students effectively funding their own instruction through undergraduate, and increasingly post-graduate qualifications.

For our Journalism, Media Production, and Sports Media and Journalism students, the nature of the degree title suggests they are undergoing training for a particular profession so it seemed pertinent to examine their perceptions of career prospects.

Other questions were designed to look at issues around skills learnt, student confidence, and the lengths to which these graduates are prepared to go to find work. In the highly competitive and London-centric media industry this is an important factor, particular as the Destination of Higher Education Leavers data shows that last year 83% of this university's graduates chose to take jobs in the South West, where there is limited provision for media employment.

As well as highlighting inequalities in the educational background of leading journalists, the Sutton Trust report also notes the unfair conditions for entry level employment that may prevent less-privileged students from being able to pursue these roles.

Low pay and insecurity at junior levels and the high cost of living in London; the increasing cost of postgraduate courses; the stronger skills, such as well-developed self-confidence, deemed to be exhibited by those from private schools; and a bias towards those with family or personal connections. (Elliot Major 2006, p4)

Four years after that report was written the author, former news editor, Elliot Major suggested that the "problem has got worse".

The newspaper industry, in particular, is going through a period of entrenchment, and it's harder than ever to get in. I do believe the profession is meritocratic, once you're there. The problem is this crucial early career stage in journalism. Typically, what people do is they go to London and work for free, or for very little, and hang around until they get somewhere. A very talented journalist from Newcastle who hasn't got somewhere to stay in London is not going to be able to do that.

(Anon, 2013)

Despite the profession seemingly favouring London-based graduates of Russell Group Universities, there are still openings for other students and with the right attitude it is still possible to break in according to Bull (2007).

Although you will need commitment, perseverance and doggedness to get your first job as a journalist, it can be done... recruits get their jobs because they show a number of things. They show that:

They are really keen to become journalists;

They have pursued this ambition by gaining relevant work experience;

Often, they have pursued their goal by getting the necessary training before applying for jobs; and that

They are determined to succeed, whatever it takes.

Bull 2007, p5

Reflections on the data

One of the purposes of my research was to analyse whether the students I questioned are intending to work in the media. This helped me understand whether they regard the degree as "training" for a specific end, rather than education that instils "graduateness".

Additionally, I wanted to ascertain whether they have received any help in applying for jobs prior to the specialist careers advice session, and then attempt to measure their levels of confidence following the advice given.

In order to achieve this, I analysed the responses and chose several topics that fitted the

subjects under discussion: vocationalism; careers advice (and what that might entail); and attitudes towards employability and employment. The first section examined the student's intentions on graduating, why they chose the degree originally, and whether they consider themselves employable as journalist practitioners or as graduates per se.

The next section examined confidence levels pre- and post careers workshop, looking at whether this was a useful implementation and if it could be enhanced or developed in future years. The final section focused on the determination of the student to get a job in the media. This is an area which is harder to measure because it may be more related to the personality and confidence levels of the individual, family background and as well other factors outside the influence of the university's degree content and careers advice.

Vocational degree?

Examining the responses, the majority of students interviewed expressed an interest in working in the media, marketing or public relations. Sports Media students also tended to express an interest in their specialism. Student 4, 2013 expressed a typical response: "I've got a passion for football and other sport and I sort of already knew I wanted to be a writer."

Others made the choice to study a journalism-related degree based on their A-Level or B-Tech courses in Media Studies or Media Production or said that they had always been strong in English.

Linking the answers to responses from the question about how having a degree affects employability helps further analyse students' motivation in choosing the degree programme. Many expressed views that seem to chime with Wolf's view that a degree is becoming an increasingly essential qualification for many jobs.

She contends, with the help of two bell curve graphs, that as numbers in the high ability group have grown significantly between 1950 and 2000, young people feel compelled to join this group, to improve chances of employability.

So long as only a small proportion have the given tag, the pressure is not very great. But when you move into a situation where the numbers with an upper-secondary qualification, or a degree, have moved well into that big middle bulge, then the pressure suddenly ratchets up. If you don't get that qualification, then what you are effectively saying to the world is that you belong in the left-hand tail. And in that case employees will have no reason to look at you, because they have plenty of people on the right-hand side to choose from. Wolf 2002, p179

Students generally agreed with that view of the need for further education and the "professionalization" of the job:

I don't think you could even attempt to be a sports writer unless you had a degree in sports journalism, it sort of reassures them really. I don't think it makes you any better, I probably could have done it three years ago, but it convinces them you are better because you've got a degree. Student 4, 2013

However, in choosing a degree with a vocational title, the students seem to perceive that they are not only proving that they are in the right hand camp, but they have further identified themselves as wanting to work in a specific job. Student 4 considers he has been trained for this particular role, and at this stage can't imagine doing anything else, although, with the realities of the employment market many have to change their plans.

The choice of occupation is, for many graduates, likely to be constrained. They may have to accept that their first choice of post is not realistic in the prevailing circumstances, and aim instead for another option that calls on the skills etc they have developed. (Note here the value to the graduate of adaptability and flexibility). Yorke 2006, p9

This currency is clearly understood by the students questioned. Respondents expressed the perception that being a graduate gave them more employment options aside from the vocational title of their programme.

You've got the skills, and obviously the degree shows that you've done that. You can get onto graduate programmes, like if there's a graduate programme for marketing. That's what you can apply for, if you don't have a degree you can't apply.

Student 5, 2013

I think it increases your employability, but at the same time, especially in a practical industry, like the media, it runs alongside work experience.

Student 1, 2013

There seems to be a sense among the respondents that being an undergraduate could provide the key to a higher status job than they would have qualified for before attending university.

That means that degrees are perceived by young people as the way they get a shot at the good life, and even the very top, rather than just a form of imposed time-serving that permits them, at twenty-two, to do jobs their parents did at sixteen or eighteen.

Wolf 2002, p177

However, respondents were very clear that while they felt they had the necessary training to do a journalistic or media-based job, just having the degree was not enough to gain a foothold into the workplace. There is a strong understanding that their "graduateness" will get them so far, but connections, "positionality" (Yorke) and work experience is integral as we see from these responses.

You can't just get a degree and nothing else. Even if it's just a couple of articles a week, it's your spare time anyway and it goes a long way.

Student 4, 2013

I've got the skills to get me into the job industry, but you are always going to be learning.... but I'm not sure I've got the experience of the work itself.

Student 1, 2013

Yes, I feel like I've got the individual skills, and it's not that I haven't got the knowledge, but I haven't got the confidence to assume that I can fulfil a role without the same sort of guidance that you get at university.

Student 2, 2013

Here there is a sense that the actual "training" is really achieved on the job and that perhaps employers may regard a journalism degree as education. With the media evolving so rapidly, respondents also appreciate that learning is a continual part of professional development.

Careers advice so far

When gauging how much career's advice students have already received, it was striking

that none had consulted the official career's department at the university. Some had taken a second year work based learning module, which gives some CV and interview advice.

Most reflected this view that the hackacademics on the staff were better place to help with job advice.

You might be better off talking to lecturers rather than the careers department. The lecturers need to tell you what should be on your CV because they have worked in the media.

Student 4, 2013

So, did the students feel more confident about their prospects after this specialist careers workshop, and did they feel it would be a good idea to introduce at least one session as a permanent part of the third year programme?

On the whole the respondents were positive about the workshop and said it had helped with writing CVs, looking for jobs and generally reminding them about how much they already know (but might have forgotten they had learned).

It's given me confidence in where to look for a job and that's one thing I wasn't entirely sure of before. There are a few places I knew to look, but there are places that I'd never heard of that I can look in now. It's also given me the confidence to develop my CV and what to put in and where to put it.

Student 2, 2013

It's made me a lot more confident now I've got a more professional CV because before it was geared towards finding part-time work.

Student 4, 2013

After today I would say yes. Up until now I wouldn't even know where to start looking. I'd still be looking at the Guardian. I didn't know anything about Gorkana. Without coming today I wouldn't have known where to start.

Student 1, 2013

Other suggestions about how to improve the nature of the workshops came out of the "any other comments" question. These included more emphasis on work experience (Student 4, 2013), "forcing" students to come to careers workshops as part of the degree programme (Student 3, 2013) "offer more workshops, maybe try and get people in who have got jobs in the media".

(Student 1, 2013)

This generally positive response has to be examined with the knowledge that none of the students had received any substantial careers advice from any professionals, and were therefore not in a position to contextualise their experience. Also, some of the students were possibly thinking about asking for help with applying for jobs and references, and so, are likely to be uncritical of the assistance I offered.

Internships

In the UK and the US, it has increasingly become a necessity, not least for university graduates, to undertake unpaid work as an 'intern' in one's chosen field in the hope of obtaining more permanent employment – although this option is one that largely depends upon parental support, and is therefore more readily available to those from wealthy families (Perlin 2011). (Buckingham 2013, p30)

More than a third of this year's vacancies will be filled by applicants who have already worked as an intern or in work experience at the employer according to High Fliers Research (2013).

While an NUS poll revealed 20% of 18 to 24 year olds has undertaken an internship compared with 2% of the same age 30 to 40 years ago. Nearly three-quarters (73%) in the same age bracket say that internships are a vital first step for a career in the media. (Boffey, 2012)

Among the respondents in this research, the question of unpaid internship is largely a financial and practical one as taking this action generally involves moving to a bigger city, and the cohort tends to come primarily from the South West area. Internships are also a class issue, with 10% of ABC1s undertaking an unpaid internship and just 3% of those in C2DE (Boffey, 2012).

Some students expressed the willingness to move, but none saw themselves in a position to work for nothing for any length of time, if at all. Very few expressed themselves in the terms of Student 7 (2013) that he would do whatever it takes. I've listed these responses in order of how "hungry" the students appear to be to get work in the media industry (Bull, 2007), with the keenest at the top.

Yeah, I'm prepared to move away and do an internship, possibly unpaid. Whatever it takes really to get the right job, rather than a non-media job.

Student 7, 2013

Yeah, I'd move anywhere to a job, even London or Bristol... but I'm not sure about moving for free. I've done loads of writing stuff while I was at uni. If I didn't have any other education or uni work, then I might try and get experience like that.

Student 4, 2013

I would move away from home, I would work for nothing. But obviously if you work for nothing you kind of need a set up. I can't move to London and then work for nothing. You can't live on nothing.

Student 5, 2013

An unpaid internship is great if you've got the money to support yourself, but I don't think I'd be willing to get into a lot of debt for it, or extra debt. I would do unpaid work for a period of time, if it would help.

Student 6, 2013

With paid jobs in the media contracting for the well-qualified it is unsurprising that graduate level positions have also dropped. According to High Fliers Research 245 students were recruited by December 2012 to work in the media, down 50% on the previous year, making it the worst affected sector of all the industries surveyed.

While the discussion around internships is detailed and complex, for the purposes of this research it might be useful to classify the practice as "unpaid further training". As most internships are taken by graduates, it might appear to be a cheaper way to an entry level job in the media than undertaking a post-graduate course.

As internships become more established in the media, often replacing entry-level jobs, the practice might, at surface-level appear to imply that employers don't believe graduates have enough training to make them employable. Although the economic arguments around getting graduates to work for free are probably more compelling.

Conclusion

In Britain... the question becomes less 'Does a degree pay well?' than 'Can I afford not to have one?' Wolf 2002, p177

My purpose in undertaking this research was to understand the views of students regarding their career prospects and gauge how important specialist careers advice is for journalism graduates to improve employability.

The outcome of the workshop was to try and better prepare students in their applications for media and journalism jobs, recap their key skills, and help them produce a well written CV and bespoke covering letter.

As a result of the first iteration, these students now know that steps such as engaging in work experience, joining Linked In, setting up a professional Twitter feed and writing a blog, can have a strong positive influence on employability.

By building on this first careers workshop the department will be able to teach students not only to become better journalists, but also to be better graduates. A more rigorous approach is undoubtedly needed to improve graduate employability at the university and following this first iteration of the learning cycle there are several plans to develop careers advice in the department.

These include:

Running starter workshops for first year students highlighting the importance of working on the student website, starting a blog, building a Twitter and Linked In profile and gaining as much work experience as possible over the three year programme.

Working with the careers department to develop regular third year workshops to assist with CV and cover letter writing skills, as well as guiding students to job websites.

Inviting in previous alumni to talk about how they got their first break for informal discussion with students.

Setting up interviews with media professionals to practice interview skills.

Embedding work experience into formal assessment as an essential part of the programme.

This research has hopefully contributed towards the future employability of journalism and media students, and with the implementation of the steps above will continue that drive.

Institutionally we can provide scaffolding to support the journalism students in their search for employment, but ultimately, as Yorke says, they will have to approach the final stages unaided.

The best that can realistically be achieved may be for higher education to facilitate the development in students of the understandings, skills and attributes that will help them to make a success of their careers. There comes a point in students' lives when they have to make a step-change: higher education can take them so far, but then they have to deal with the challenges that employment throws up. The situation is a bit like a rocket-powered aircraft being lifted by a conventional one up into the stratosphere so that it can maximise its performance at altitude without a prohibitive expenditure of fuel to get there. Yorke 2006, p11

In summary, the conception and realisation of this new specialist careers support has given a group of students, who have received no official advice from the university careers department, some essential tools to aid their confidence and employability.

My research indicates that for the future improvement of graduate employability in journalism and media programmes this type of specialist careers workshop can provide a good basis for application to entry level jobs.

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The night Big Tom died: teaching students to use personal experiences

Ken Pratt, University of the West of Scotland

The night Big Tom died I was watching The Holocaust programme on TV. It was the episode where the Nazis were executing mentally handicapped people in one of their concentration camps.

I'd been thinking about my friend at the bottom of the street who has quite serious learning difficulties and what they might have done to him. And then I heard my parents talking in the kitchen about Big Tom's tragic and sudden death. He was one of our closest family friends and neighbours and he was only in his forties. I grabbed a cushion from the couch and buried my head in it, crying sore for Tom, for the mentally handicapped during the war, and for my pal Jim at the bottom of our street. It was one of the saddest and most

traumatic evenings of my life and I was only twelve years of age.

The horrors of Nazism stayed with me in a personal way, weirdly connected to the death of our beloved friend. I watched episode after episode of *The World At War* on a Sunday afternoon, wondering when the time would come for me to play my part in this global shakedown. It didn't take long. In my first job as a trainee reporter on a Sunday newspaper in Scotland I routinely had to gather news and feature ideas for Tuesday morning conference. This would involve scouring local papers, reading notice boards, listening to gossip, and exploring any possible story source I could find. Imagine then the outrage I experienced when a pal of mine showed me a BNP magazine he'd innocently purchased at a Rangers game. In the small ads section there was an advert selling Nazi and Ku Klux Klan regalia. In these pre-internet days there was only a PO Box number, Alabama, USA. And so began my lengthy correspondence and subsequent infiltration of the KKK tracing their origins to Scotland and interviewing the Grand UK Wizard himself for *The Scotsman* newspaper. I made the front page, the headline ran: Opening Up The Bigot's Secret Society and so began my career as an investigative journalist, specialising in political extremism. The energy and determination it took to uncover the Klan in Scotland I put down to the early emotion of that eventful winter night as a boy crying on the couch. It quite simply fed my burning desire to find out what made people on the extreme right tick. Other big exclusives soon followed: BNP Infiltrate St Andrew's Day Celebrations; an exclusive interview with John Tyndall; Scots Join Secret Rally To Celebrate Hitler Centenary (*The Observer*); Alarm Over Race Hate Game (*The Observer*); School Books Move To beat Nazi Propaganda (*The Observer*); Anger Over 'Fascist Peeress' TV Debate (*The Observer*). Memories of The Holocaust programme as a child took me further a field – to infiltrate English neo-Nazi football hooligans at The World Cup in Italy 1990; to the Dhasheh refugee camp near Bethlehem to interview Palestinian families living under Israeli rule in conditions they claimed were similar to early Nazi concentration camps during World War 2; to Russia too where extreme white nationalist groups were linking up with religious charities from the West. Even in later life and as part of my PhD, I analysed hitherto uncollected prose by Hugh MacDiarmid, in particular his Plea for a Scottish Fascism (and was relieved to discover MacDiarmid's ideas of fascism were very different, though no less radical, to those I'd witnessed on the night of Big Bob's death) and merged my findings with a further analysis of Caledonian Antisyzygy to spotlight the contradictions at the heart of Scottish Literature, especially under the stress of foreign (particularly English) influence, my eventual contention that this emerging literary language was in fact Scotland's New 21st century Fascist Voice (a renaissance of the MacDiarmid tradition).

It was only when I began to connect my own experiences with that of other more renowned journalists that I began to think of applying new techniques to my teaching style. In *Conversations with History*; Institute of International Studies, UC Berkley, the Middle East Foreign Correspondent Robert Fisk explains the impact his father's First World War soldiering experiences had on him and his decision to become a war correspondent. Fisk explains: "When I was ten my father and mother took me on my first trip abroad, which was to France. My father wanted to go back to the Somme and find the places where he'd fought and of course almost died, and to find the house which he spent his first night of peace in, on November 11, 1918. He did find the house and he didn't look in. He was too shy. I went back later with a film crew, many, many years later, and knocked on the front door, and the granddaughter of the old lady who looked after him is still living there. So, he introduced me to the history of the twentieth century, the terrible twentieth century."

As with The Holocaust programme Fisk, aged 12, was heavily influenced by the mov-

ie Foreign Correspondent in which Joel McCrea plays an American reporter, Huntley Haverstock, who is sent off from New York just before the beginning of the Second World War. He uncovers the top Nazi agent in London, he's chased by the Gestapo through Holland, witnesses a political assassination, is shot down by a German pocket battleship over the Atlantic, and lives to not only file a scoop to New York but wins the most gorgeous woman in the movie.

Of course one of the greatest examples of a traumatic childhood experience leading to a later- in-life journalistic specialism is that of Karl Fleming, author of *Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Memoir*. Born in Virginia in 1927 his poverty stricken mother sent him to an orphanage in North Carolina, aged 8. It was there he witnessed the bullying and racism that was to later influence his journalistic life, and as a redneck underdog, he began to find compassion for other underdogs, both black and white. In *Childhood Experiences Shape A Reporter's Journey* Lester Sloan writes:

"By the time he reached Atlanta, married with two children and where he worked briefly as a magazine writer for the Atlanta Constitution, he came to the attention of *Newsweek* magazine and began covering the unfolding of the greatest story of the 20th century: the civil rights movement." Sloan adds: "But for the aspiring journalist, Fleming's book could be used as a primer on how to become a good reporter. From his early years at the orphanage we see him evolving into a person who desires to expand his world. The library becomes both a refuge and a repository of ideas and examples of life's vagaries. Beyond the orphanage, when he enters the military at the age of 17, and later as a young reporter for a paper in Wilson, North Carolina, he learns from both the skilled and the scum. Riding with a local cop who is both a bigot and a bully, he witnessed firsthand the suffering, degradation and murder of blacks in the South, his South."

Fleming, of course, later risked his life covering James Meredith's entry into the University of Mississippi and the deaths of three civil rights workers in 1964. He was badly beaten after the Watts riots in 1965 but soon became known as the former *Newsweek* reporter who helped draw national attention to the civil rights movement in the 1960's and risked his life covering it with perceptive stories about its major figures and the inequalities that fueled it.

While research is already underway at Sussex University to determine the precise therapeutic effects of writing fictional autobiography, how can this be applied to the writing of journalism? What range of journalistic talents are we sitting on in the course of journalism teaching among what Alan Young describes in *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder* "people tormented by memories that filled them with feelings of sadness and remorse, the sense of irreparable loss, and sensations of fright and horror"? In *Incest, War and Witness* Elisabeth Hanscombe points to the work of Paul John Eakin who makes the point that narrative identity is built upon rules of self-narration that we are taught as children. Clearly, he adds, the experience of trauma impacts on a person's capacity or preparedness to abide by them. In the course of my own teaching there are some basic case studies that at least indicate the worth of engaging with the student hinterland in order to inspire their best work. There was, for example, the student who had witnessed domestic abuse at home in which his mother had methodically bullied his father. He went on to write a series of exclusive news/features for a British tabloid on that very subject. Take also, the example of the student whose older brother had been involved in football hooliganism and who had witnessed the consequent trauma brought to the home as a result. He went on to investigate hooliganism and successfully contributed to a number of publications. It isn't rocket science. Sometimes all that is required as a journalism tutor

is an extra ten minutes to discuss what is happening in our students' lives. As a formative exercise I routinely ask students to extend by 500 words their essay on 'why you want to be a journalist' taking into account reflective issues such as describing their own ideological bias and focusing on events that moved or influenced them as children. The next step is to build further reading around their experiences, sometimes works of journalism, and sometimes works of literary fiction to illustrate the varied expression of such experiences. As journalism educators if we perhaps move forward by building up research into the experience of students taking journalism courses at universities throughout the UK we can arguably illustrate that writing reflectively at an initial stage of the student experience and sharing the results in small groups can enhance motivation to cover certain types of story material and indeed highlight a new range of possibilities for journalistic specialisms. From a curriculum perspective this also has the added benefits of assisting students with module options and even dissertation topics at a later stage of the course. In the context of writing fictional autobiography Celia Hunt, in *Therapeutic Effects of Writing Autobiography* refers to two different kinds of writing techniques, referred to as 'semiotic' and 'dialogic' which, it is argued, when used in conjunction with each other, can provide a framework for therapeutic change. Hunt writes: "These techniques, it is suggested, are suitable for use in therapeutic settings, whether psychodynamic, humanistic or cognitive behavioural." Short of engaging in a complex discussion of sociolinguistics or semiotics, and without directing our analysis into 'the psychology of the journalist' we should still be able to create our own simplified model for the teaching of journalism. There exists, for example, a strong interdependence between literary theory and life writing. The subtext of this concludes that in isolation each offers restricted forms of expression, yet when blended can exhibit an independent intelligence free from the shackles of both conventional autobiography and traditional academic enquiry. Taken in the journalistic context it could be argued that there exists a strong interdependence between childhood experiences (best explored by autobiographical reflective writing) and an analysis of how this is 'expected to appear' in traditional print structure and in convergent driven platforms.

In her essay *Memory and Imagination*, Patricia Hampl writes: 'Our capacity to move forward as developing beings rests on a healthy relationship with the past. We should learn not only to tell our stories but to listen to what our stories tell us.' Hampl may be right. In a discussion on sources of journalism the Irish journalist Fergal Keane refers to the importance of journalistic hinterland. In *The Power of Storytelling* (an appraisal of radio Four's 'From Our Own Correspondent,') Keane writes:

'It is quite simply the best programme we have in news. It seeks out the thoughtful and literate and sets them apart from the cliché-spouting, whiny voiced clones that abound in today's news environment. It is a programme that promotes storytelling rather than story processing.'

Keane further points out that it is a chance to report from a deeper, richer hinterland. It is a term he uses a lot to explain the importance of young journalists knowing who they are and where they are from. It is certainly a very important point for journalism educators. If we can tap into that deep, rich hinterland of our students and encourage them to seek inspiration for stories from that source and to think carefully about the way in which they tell those stories then maybe we can begin, post-Leveson, to change the culture of newsrooms also.

In *Stories From The Hinterland: Community Journalists go hyperlocal*, The Press Trust of India reports that a Community Correspondent Network (CCN) has been launched by the Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS), a UK government initiative which trains com-

munity journalists in video production. Stories of neglect, deprivation and discrimination, which often fail to get into the mainstream media, are now being captured on video by a network of community journalists, reporting on issues like waterlogging at a local school, the struggle for clean drinking water or even how poor health facilities are forcing people in another district to fall back on dangerous ritual practices. This reportage contains one important feature for our discussion – the journalists involved all have first-hand experience of the community issues they are covering. And many are introduced to the craft of journalism by firstly expounding their experiences, sometimes in a basic form of memoir, a technique that then allows them to examine the wider social and political context of their situation, its impact on self, family, community, region, and nation. It could in-fact be argued that some of the best journalism stems from this technique. In *The Lost*, Daniel Mendelsohn uses his family history as well as letters from a great uncle to explore the fate of his family during the Holocaust, subsequently recounting the story of thousands of Jews who also suffered. In *The Cost of Hope*, Amanda Bennett knits a sensitive elegy for her late husband with a rational examination of the cost of keeping him alive while dying from cancer, a personal recollection that became a national journalistic issue. In *Brain on Fire*, Susannah Cahalan tells of her experience with a mentally debilitating illness and combines it with reportage about the nature of the illness itself. And in *The Night of the Gun*, David Carr's recalls his memories of addiction and his hard battle to recovery. In so doing the writer meticulously researches every memory he had of his years of addiction. It should be noted that three of these four books are by very successful journalists. Bennet for example is a former *Wall Street Journal* bureau chief. And in true *Wall Street Journal* style she recounts the harsh practical economics of the situation to allow her story to flow seamlessly. Writing for the *New York Times* memoirist and award-winning journalism professor Susan Shapiro explains how she encourages student journalists to look into their own lives for material. Shapiro, who lectures in feature writing at New York University, argues that students should not only look into their lives for journalistic inspiration but should specifically concentrate on the humiliating and painful experiences of the past in order to flourish in the future. Some ethics departments in the UK might cringe at this advice but some argue that facing up to your own reality is a crucial stepping stone towards facing up to the realities of all societies and cultures, a pre-requisite for every serious reporter. There are some conditions to this theory however. As Professor Michele Weldon (author of *I Closed My Eyes, Revelations of A Battered Woman*) explains in *Journalists and Memoir: Reporting and Memory*: 'The story must move beyond a verbal regurgitation of hastily recalled anecdotes. You need to report live from your life, researching with interviews, data and documents that support your recollections.'

She continues: 'The point of the memoir, as it is for most memoirists, is to artfully illuminate a corner of the world to empower and educate others. My motivation to write the memoir in stolen moments while teaching and working as a freelance contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* was because I felt foolish and hypocritical telling other people's stories as a journalist every week when I was afraid—and embarrassed—to tell my own.' *USA Today* columnist and ABC and NPR commentator Christine Brennan writes: 'It's quaint now to think about the days when you didn't want to be part of the story. With all the social media—Twitter, Facebook and everything being about me, me, me—it's now such a personality-driven journalistic world.'

The night Big Tom died was a turning point in my life. But I've never written about it until now. Looking back I remain convinced the combined trauma of The Holocaust programme and that tragic news, heavily influenced the story material I chose to cover in later

life as a journalist. There is one important caveat to underline in all of this though. Encouraging our students to think about or use their hinterland in their pursuit of a journalistic specialism may be useful. But it has to be combined with most of the other disciplines we already teach. The pursuit of facts; solid research; intelligent interview techniques; striving for balance; an understanding of objectivity; knowing your readership; empathizing with the public interest and understanding the fact that it may not be your memoir in particular that is of interest but the issues surrounding your memoir are all of paramount importance. As journalists progress through their careers they tend to increasingly reflect on what has driven them through the tight deadlines, the long shifts and the millions of words written. Some will awake to the harsh reality that they have been part of a crazy PR machine and will wonder what difference they have really made. But for those with clear reflections on what inspired them to do it at the outset, a greater peace of mind awaits and with it a vocational satisfaction that will carry them high into the latter stages of life.

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Reviews

The reviews pages are edited by Tor Clark. If you have a book you would like to review or have come across a new book we should know about please get in touch. Also if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed, please contact Tor on tclark@dmu.ac.uk

Reviews section

By Tor Clark, Reviews Editor, De Montfort University, Leices-ter.

About six years ago, *The Guardian's* Nick Davies was an interesting and controversial speaker at an AJE seminar at Sheffield University. The culmination of the work he described that day has since become Hack Attack, the most eagerly anticipated Journalism book of this year which, for once, left me fending off would-be reviewers. David Baines got in first and he finds *The Guardian's* Davies to have written a compelling, interesting and important account of phone hacking and the Murdoch empire, which will be of interest to Journalism students and academics everywhere.

Staying in the Steel City, the prolific Tony Harcup, from Sheffield University's Department of Journalism Studies, has guaranteed himself another entry on our reading lists by producing the useful and thought-provoking Oxford Dictionary of Journalism, which students all over the UK are likely to be finding very useful on the courses very soon.

Julian Assange of Wikileaks and Eric Schmidt of Google cross swords in our third review of recent books of interest to Journalism students and academics. Michael Foley finds he has written a strange book, which nevertheless sheds useful light on two organisations now essential parts of the world of Journalism.

Anna McKane's useful text *News Writing*, which she introduced at an AJE conference in Cardiff a couple of years ago, gets a new look, a new edition and a new review from Gary Hudson.

And finally, to challenge the plaintiff cry of many journalists over the years: "I do words, not numbers" (correctly proven in many an expenses claim!) David Hayward, formerly of the BBC College of Journalism, lauds a guide to understanding and using numbers, which he urges every aspiring journalist to read and keep by their side. Indeed The Tiger that

Isn't... is so numerically necessary it is the latest Journalism text to be awarded classic status on the JE Journalism Bookshelf.

Eagle-eyed Reviews Section regulars will note we are welcoming three new reviewers with this edition. There was an excellent response to the recent appeal for more reviewers to come forward and as a result readers can also look forward to another cast of new faces contributing the reviews for the next edition.

In the meantime, Journalism Education welcomes offers to review, suggestions of books to review or ideas on which classic text to feature for anyone associated with the AJE.

To get involved with the Journalism Education Reviews section, either as a reviewer, author or publisher, please contact Reviews Editor Tor Clark at TClark@dmu.ac.uk

Hack Attack: How the truth caught up with Rupert Murdoch by Nick Davies

Review by David Baines, Newcastle University,

Nick Davies says the single sentence which encapsulated what this book is about, came to him while he was waiting for a bus. 'This is a book about power and truth.' It is an account in forensic detail of his investigation into the now widely known hacking scandal presented in three parts: Crime and Concealment; The Power Game; Truth.

It lays bare how lies were gradually exposed through painstaking journalism, one small step at a time, and in the face of concerted opposition from the political, and most of the media, establishment.

But Davies' critical narrative offers context to these events, and he is right: this is a book about power. The most vivid account of that power is in the description of the wedding of Charlie Brooks to Rebekah Wade, editor, at the time, of *The Sun*. But she is not the sun around whom the guests circle: the one with the real gravitational pull is Rupert Murdoch. The head of News Corp, says Davies, might be a highly political animal, but he wields his power not as an end in itself, the motivation of Big Brother in 1984, but as a means to an end: to help his company get bigger.

'In practical terms this comes down to a repeated demand to be freed from regulation. He and his senior journalists all sing from the same song sheet on the virtues of deregulated free markets... theirs is the world's loudest voice calling for the state to be cut back to make way for private enterprise. Repeatedly, Murdoch has had to find ways to... sideline the public interest in order to advance his own.'

The question that passage prompts, a question from virtually every page, is: 'What is journalism for?' It has particular resonance for journalism educators. Issues of applied ethics with which students grapple often address 'the public interest'. In journalists' codes of conduct, acting in the public interest can justify what would otherwise be unacceptable conduct. Davies is here exploring and exposing the conduct of individual journalists, and when journalism educators explore ethical concerns with their students, they usually do so with a regard to how those students should shape their own professional practice. But

for Davies this is a secondary level of concern. *Hack Attack*, despite its title, is primarily a work of organisational analysis, a systemic interrogation of a large section of one corporate news organisation, the corporate media industry, the political establishment and the police.

His quest began with a doubt over the 'one rogue reporter' defence of the News of the World. But he also exposes the myth of one rogue newspaper. The Information Commissioner's reports *What Price Privacy* (Information Commissioner's Office, 2006a) and *What Price Privacy Now?* (Information Commissioner's Office, 2006b) exposed the unethical practices of most of Fleet Street, and 'Fleet Street chose to report almost nothing of this to the outside world'.

'In a tyranny,' Davies says, 'the ruling elite can abuse its power all day long. In an established democracy, abuse of power cannot afford to be visible. The secrets and lies are not an optional extra, they are central to the strategy.'

It is important to explore with our students the conflicting demands of journalism as a business and journalism's functions in the democratic process, its roles in society at large: to consider the question, 'What is journalism for?' If we are to prepare our students to work with integrity in the field of journalism it is clearly not enough simply to teach them the skills to do the job. They need to understand how the systems work and how that can influence content, professional practice, professional and organisational values.

Hack Attack is an account of a landmark achievement in investigative journalism by (probably) Britain's finest investigative journalist. From the point of view of the journalism educator, it is an example to put before students of journalism at its best, in exposing far-reaching abuses of journalism - and of power. But it is also a useful pointer to curriculum design.

Hack Attack: How the truth caught up with Rupert Murdoch by Nick Davies, Chatto & Windus, 2014, Hardback: 430pp. £11.00

The Oxford Dictionary of Journalism by Tony Harcup

Review by Tor Clark, De Montfort University, Leicester.

Many moons ago, as I began my A levels in History and Politics, I was given the Penguin Dictionaries of Modern History and Twentieth Century History to complement my studies. I couldn't put them down. I spent hours starting off reading entries in which I was already interested, then following the cross-references and discovering new facts, new characters or new events which I didn't previously know about and then developing my knowledge around those areas by following the associated cross-references. Those dictionaries offered a fascinating adventure through modern politics and history, equipping me with a fascination and developing curiosity which helped me to succeed in the subjects by opening them up to me.

Thirty-odd years later Tony Harcup may have done the same for Journalism, in compiling an indispensable guide to all terms journalistic.

He was, of course, one of the authors of the Key Concepts in Journalism Studies (Franklin et al, 2005), which has been an invaluable reference tool for Journalism students ever since. This new dictionary should be seen a companion volume, rather than a competitor to that earlier text.

Our education starts from the word go, as we learn there is such a body as AAN, the Association of Alternative Newspapers, and continues through to Zoo, where we learn of the basic tactics this magazine used to lure young male readers. Along the way 1,400 terms are defined with key basic areas covered well, and other less known terms defined very succinctly.

But Harcup doesn't stop with just defining terms, he includes a timeline of key journalistic events in his chronology, and concludes with an index of key people in journalism, from Max Aitken to Barbie Zelizer, which associates them with the key products, concepts, movements, issues or developments with which they were most closely associated.

Handily, as in the previous Key Concepts text, Harcup also offers readers further reading on the major terms and themes, and also offers more than 200 useful web links.

But he is keen to limit the scope of his new book, declaring that it is indeed a dictionary and not an encyclopaedia. It is a starting point for further study or investigation, as well as a handy and quick reference guide to the working student or journalist.

And he is happy to declare: "This is not an account driven by the 'great men' or 'great women' of journalism, so there are no biographical entries." Though this does not damage the value of the content as it exists, it is perhaps an opportunity missed, as it is hard to study journalism's rich context and history without knowing a bit about the character and motivations of key players such as Northcliffe, Hearst, Beaverbrook, Cudlipp, Murdoch, Mackenzie, Evans or Bradlee. Perhaps there is an opportunity here for a companion biographical dictionary of key figures from journalism?

Despite the personality cull, Harcup does include 'Murdoch Empire' and most of the above get worthy mention in the entries around the products or issues most associated with them.

Tony Harcup has been one of the most prolific authors of books, articles and journal papers of direct use to Journalism students in recent years and here we have a text which is destined to appear on many courses 'buy before you arrive' pre-reading lists because it will help many students who have never studied Journalism before become familiar with many of the key terms they will come across during their studies and long afterwards. It is a fascinating little book which lecturers will love thumbing through and students will find indispensable. Expect to see it on a reading list near you in the near future.

A Dictionary of Journalism by Tony Harcup Paperback: published by OUP 368 pages ISBN-10: 0199646244; ISBN-13: 978-0199646241 £10.39

When Google Met Wikileaks by Julian Assange

Review by Michael Foley, School of Media, Dublin Institute of Technology

At the heart of this book is a long interview Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks,

gave in 2011 to the chairman of Google, Eric Schmidt, the director of Google Ideas, Google's in-house think tank, Jared Cohen, and Schmidt's partner, Lisa Shields, a former TV producer and then head of global media relations for the Council on Foreign Relations.

That interview was for a book by Schmidt and Cohen, *The Digital Age*, which was reviewed by Assange in the New York Times under the heading *The Banality of 'Don't Be Evil'*.

He described *The Digital Age* as a 'startlingly clear and provocative blueprint for technocratic imperialism'. He wrote of 'ever closer union between the state department and Silicon Valley'. He also said his own words had been misrepresented and so this strange book is to set the record straight, and more besides.

The interview at the heart of 'When Wikileaks met Google' took place in June 2011 in the rural idyll of Ellingham Hall in Norfolk, owned by Vaughan Smith, former army officer, war correspondent, founder of London's Frontline club and described by the *Guardian* as a rightwing libertarain. Assange lived for a while in Ellingham Hall under house arrest while he continued to fight the Swedish extradition case. The conversation coincided with Arab Spring uprisings, anti-capitalist protests and Wikileaks continuing to anger the United States by releasing diplomatic cables online.

The bulk of the book is the long interview, but there is also Assange's *New York Times* review of Schmidt and Cohen's book, some background on Wikileaks itself and a great polemic on Google, called 'Beyond Good and Don't Be Evil'.

The interview will appeal to geeks, with its acrymons and initials. There are discussions on keeping information and files safe with helpful responses from Assange about Wikileaks' own security.

During the interview Assange outlines his philosophy, including that of journalism, and expands on what he calls 'scientific journalism'. The press 'has always been very bad. Fine journalists are an exception to the rule'. His scientific journalism is that 'things must be precisely cited with the original source and as much of the information as possible should be put in the public domain so people can look at it, just like in science so you can test to see whether the conclusion follows from the experimental data.' Otherwise, he says, 'the journalists probably just made it up.' There are extraordinary claims. One is that most wars in the 20th century started as a result of lies amplified and spread by the mainstream press.

What is also extraordinary is Assange's seeming naivete. He believed Eric Schmidt was a 'brilliant but politically hapless Californian tech billionaire'. Assange and Wikileaks was 'under siege' and Assange 'had to learn to think like a general. We were at war.' And then he lets the enemy into the bunker.

This book is about settling scores and Assange does it well. The essay on Google holds nothing back. Assange, who has been described as narcissistic and egotistical, was clearly flattered by the attention of four intelligent, clued in people, despite their backgrounds and politics: 'I sought to guide them into my world view. To their credit, I consider the interview perhaps the best I have given. I was out of my comfort zone and I liked it. We ate and then took a walk in the grounds, all the while on the record.'

But then Schmidt and Cohen wrote what one reviewer, Evgeny Morozov, described as 'this superficial and megalomaniacal book' and Assange hit back, now, presumably, regretting his hospitality three years ago.

- **When Google Met Wikileaks by Julian Assange, OR Books, ISBN-10: 8189059661**

ISBN-13: 978-8189059668 223pp, RRP £10, ebook £6

The Oxford Dictionary of Journalism by Tony Harcup, published by OUP, 2014, 355 pages, ISBN 978-0-19-964624-1. RRP £12.99.

News Writing by Anna McKane (second edition, 2014)

Review by Gary Hudson, Senior Lecturer in Broadcast Journalism, Staffordshire University

The first edition of this news writing guide paid due homage to its forebears and was a long overdue update of well-established practice.

Eight years on and the second edition should be even more welcome. Such is the pace of change that eight years and several reprints later the first version had not worn as well as the works of the great exponents of the craft, Keith Waterhouse and Harold Evans.

The author acknowledges this: the first edition spoke about events that people might hear about first in a local paper; nowadays it will be on Facebook, Twitter or a blog. She suggests this has not fundamentally changed the way news is written. Well, up to a point, Lord Copper.

The basics – or should that be the clichés – are all included: the inverted pyramid, the ‘all the rest is advertising’ quote (attributed here to William Randolph Hearst) and our old friends Galtung and Ruge. The chapters on Accuracy and Getting it Right, Choosing the Right Words and Writing for Clarity are must-reads for any journalism student, and therein lie the book’s strengths.

But the claim in the publisher’s blurb that this edition is ‘fully updated to account for the role of online journalism’ is not followed through.

Neither the glossary nor a particularly sparse index include search engine optimisation. There are a few pars on the topic in the chapter about headlines, but hardly enough to take the reader beyond the blindingly obvious and certainly not a comprehensive guide to this essential skill for web writers.

The assertion on the back cover that the essentials of using smartphone images are covered is also wide of the mark. One might ask why a book on writing needs to cover the use of pictures, and there’s the rub. This isn’t really a book about news writing at all. It’s a book about newspaper writing updated to include aspects of the way traditional news outlets write for the web.

It does not cover the wide and occasionally very different range of news writing skills used by broadcasters. There is no mention of writing for radio, except a nod to the BBC College of Journalism website under Further Reading. The absence of TV writing skills is therefore no surprise, but it means the craft of writing to pictures, ways of introducing interviews and actuality and how and when to use a piece to camera are ignored. The glossary is particularly misleading in giving only the newspaper definition of a ‘wrap’ as a round-up from different sources, rather than the widespread use of the term for a radio

package.

There is plenty to commend this book to students on NCTJ courses. For those following the traditional pathway into the declining mainstream, it has useful exercises and discussion points at the end of chapters. There are strong examples of how to cover breaking news stories, and easily understood guidance on constructing longer news reports.

Most of the examples come from the British press, including at least one piece of advice crediting a *News of the World* reporter, which I fear would not impress most of the young would-be journalists I know, who have been horrified by the phone-hacking scandal.

So it surely cannot be an isolated attempt to garner an international audience that leads to the reference to a ‘full point’ in the grammar section. In Britain, we’re told, headlines do not take full points. I understand that they don’t take full stops either.

News Writing by Anna McKane (2nd edtn) Sage ISBN 978-1-4462-5630-5 ISBN-10: 1446256308 ISBN-13: 978-1446256305 192 pages £21.59

A classic from the Journalism bookshelf: The Tiger That Isn’t – Seeing Through a World of Numbers, by Michael Blastland and Andrew Dilnot

Review by David Hayward, Hayward Black Media consultancy and Coventry University, previously BBC College of Journalism head of journalism.

Although this book was only published in 2007, it is of such importance I believe it already merits its place as a classic on the journalism bookshelf.

When I am lecturing students or talking to aspiring young journalists, there are two books I recommend as essential they read, devour, keep with them at all times and continually refer to.

They are *Bad Science*, by Dr Ben Goldacre, and this edition’s featured classic journalism text, *The Tiger That Isn’t – Seeing Through a World of Numbers*, by Andrew Dilnot and Michael Blastland.

The reason is simple. Historically non-specialist journalists have struggled to grasp the complex principles of numbers, statistics and science. This book is a perfect guide to debunking many myths surrounding the use of numbers in everyday life.

It takes on the work Michael Blastland and Andrew Dilnot began when they created and presented the BBC Radio 4 programme *More or Less*. Michael is a journalist, broadcaster and author, Andrew is Principal of St Hugh’s College, Oxford and formerly Director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies.

The opening lines clearly establish the need for the book:

“Numbers saturate the news, politics, life. For good or ill, they are today’s pre-eminent public language – and those who speak it rule. Quick and cool, numbers often seem to have conquered fact.”

“But they are also hated, often for the same reasons. They can bamboozle not enlighten, terrorise, not guide and all too easily end up abused and distrusted.

Potent but shifty, the role of numbers is frighteningly ambiguous. How can we see through them?”

The next two hundred or so pages, provide an entertaining and enlightening guide, on how to make sense of the world of numbers and how not to be misled by the lies damn lies and statistics. It is beautifully written and has a clarity which makes it simple to understand subjects otherwise daunting to the novice.

We learn how to assess what makes a big number. Just because a figure has several noughts, it doesn't necessarily make it vast. For instance we discover £300,000,000 is actually quite small, when put into context of timescale and coverage.

This particular figure was used to illustrate the sum the UK government was planning to spend revolutionizing childcare over a five-year period. When explained just how many people the £300m would cover and for how long, it actually became quite a piffling number.

This is what the book does so successfully. It offers an idea of perspective when dealing with numbers and statistics. It gives you the ability, if not to become a statistical genius, then at least to know when to question figures you are presented with, on a daily basis.

We are given an insight into how numbers are counted and calculated, how to read and use averages, who is rich and who is poor, targets, risk, sampling and chance, the fact that numbers go up and down - and that shock figures are not always so shocking.

I worked with Michael Blastland at the BBC College of Journalism. Based on this book, Michael devised a short presentation, which he would deliver to journalists across the BBC. It was one of the most useful things the College of Journalism has done. The look of realisation around the room every time he spoke was astonishing.

Understanding numbers and statistics is vital to the work of any journalist, as Michael and Andrew say at the beginning; it is the pre-eminent public language. By reading this book journalists and journalism students can gain a more coherent grasp of what numbers are saying and how to report them. A must read.

The Tiger That Isn't – Seeing Through a World of Numbers by Michael Blastland and Andrew Dilnot. Profile Books, 226 pages, ISBN 978-1846681110, RRP £8.99 (paperback)

Information for contributors

We accept original articles about journalism education and topics linked to journalism and education that are not offered for publication elsewhere at the time of submission. Articles for peer review should be in the range of 5000-7000 words.

Articles for Comment and Criticism should be shorter at about 3,000 to 4,000 words.

The copy deadline for the next issue is: February 28, 2015 but material sent earlier would be appreciated. Articles should be submitted to the editors at ajejournal@gmail.com together with a 100-150 word abstract. Comment and criticism articles can be more polemic and do not require an abstract.

Presentation and submission:

Articles should be produced in Word format, double spaced and set in Times New Roman 12pt with the minimum of formatting and **no double spacing**; please do not press the “enter” button to put a double space between paragraphs and do not use specialist templates. Referencing should be in standard Harvard form with citations in the form: (Simmons 1955, p404) whilst notes should be set as footnotes. References should put the publication title in italic with authors' name in the form: Jones, Brian (2004). All tables and figures should be produced separately either at the end of the article or in a separate file. Each should be clearly labelled Table 1:..... Table 2:..... Fig. 1:..... Fig. 2: etc and a note inserted in the text identifying approximately where it should be placed. Ideally they should be presented in JPG format.

Please include a short (100w) biography as a separate document.

Book Reviews:

Reviews of appropriate books should be approximately 400 words. We do not accept unsolicited reviews of books, but are always grateful to be given the opportunity to consider a review proposal. Please contact Tor Clarke, the reviews editor, if you wish to submit a review. All book reviews should include author, title, ISBN number, publisher, number of pages and price.

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Journalism Education

The Journal of the Association for Journalism Education

The Association for Journalism Education is a subject discipline membership association of journalism schools in higher education institutions in the UK and Ireland.

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