Original Article

The Role of Journalism Training Institutions in the Changing Media Dynamics of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the role of journalism training institutions in the changing media dynamics of Tanzania. Journalism training institutions are accredited higher learning facilities that offer diploma and degree certifications to those who graduate respectively after a two-to-three-year course of professional training in journalism in Tanzania. Media dynamics refers to the prevalent environment surrounding the media performance in Tanzania. These range from the media laws, policies, the regulatory frameworks, ownership, media pluralism, media diversity, market preferences and communication technologies. This paper is derived from the findings of a research dissertation submitted for award of a Doctorate degree in Mass Communication at St Augustine University of Tanzania. The study employed a descriptive survey design. A mixed method approach was employed to collect data from four news editors from two prominent media houses (Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation and Mwananchi Communications), six working journalists, four journalism lecturers and 150 journalism students from St. Augustine University of Tanzania Malimbe Campus. Interview data was thematically analysed and presented in a narrative form while the survey data was analysed using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS version 23 and presented in tables, charts, and diagrams. The findings showed that, owing to the fast-paced technological advancement in the media houses, graduating journalists could not adapt smoothly in the newsroom. Moreover, the constant changes in media policies engineered mostly by political pressures were not communicated to the training institutions. Although the training institutions are competent and sufficiently equipped still, they cannot invest in the constant technological shift like in the media. This study recommends that stakeholders employ an intense

collaborative effort to bridge the training to industry, such that journalism students are more engaged in a practical media experience during their course of study. Media houses should facilitate field attachment training opportunities to students in order for them to stay abreast of the current technological changes in their profession.

INTRODUCTION

This study assessed the role of journalism training institutions in the changing media dynamics of Tanzania. The paper is divided into the following subsections as follows: The background, the problem statement, research questions, the scope, theoretical literature review, methodology, findings, discussions, and the conclusion.

Defining the Journalism Training and Media Dynamics

The UNESCO (1958) defines journalism training as a type of communication training for people who plan to have interactions with media outlets. This training prepares individuals to represent themselves, a brand, or a company to the media by teaching them how to discuss relevant topics in an engaging and professional way. In Tanzania, the Tanzania commission for universities (TCU) and the National Council for Technical Education (NACTE) are authorities responsible for designing, managing, and supervising higher education and training.

The Media dynamics in Tanzania that this study unveils means the prevalent environment surrounding the media performance. These range from the media laws, policy and regulatory frameworks, ownerships, media pluralism, diversity, market preferences, and communication technologies. These dynamics according to Hamdi and Etoutah (2019), is what presents the confusion to what both the graduates face after completion of journalism programs in their universities and the media employers. Hjarvard & Lundby (2018) define media dynamics as a typology that distinguishes among three different media functions albeit;

> *"The media's ability to amplify the communication and the ramifications of the reported events, how the world is represented, framed, in the media, and the ways in which the media bestow the communication of events (pg. 51)"*

While the Tanzania media enjoys a diversity of public and private ownership, the control and supervision are also diverse according to the Media Ownership Monitor's report of the Reporters without borders (RSF 2018). This is in the sense that journalism professional bodies, regulatory authorities, and the Government ministry all control media performance given their areas of jurisdiction and parameters of influence.

As far as the training of journalists in Tanzania is concerned, Mfumbusa (2010) highlight on the crossroads a challenge that meet media professionals encounter in lieu of their education in relation to practice. Seconded by what Hanitzch et al. (2019) state that journalism is undergoing a particularly challenging but also fascinating time in many countries around the world.

Statement of the Problem

According to Bazira & Uki (2019), the performance of fresh journalism graduates and their subsequent progression into the media houses has been met with complaints of unethical practices, poor performances, and inadequate skills of handling newsroom practice. The qualities expected of journalists in Tanzania seemed to be below the expected professional aptitude. Several stakeholders such as a media organizations, owners, and employers, among others have raised concerns regarding the role of journalism training.

Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch (2019) posit that while journalism around the world battled against increased efforts of political and state authorities that restrict editorial autonomy, efforts that undermined the autonomy of journalism have contributed to further erosion of public confidence in the news media and its authority around the world.

The MCT (2019) report further raises concerns of half-baked professionals joining the media arena coupled with the changing media dynamics that includes the regulatory frameworks, ownership & convergence issues plus the media technologies in Tanzania. In addition, the report questions the accountability of both the training and their counterpart media organizations in making the profession sustainable. These are pertinent gaps that required investigation.

Research Question and Scope of the Study

The study used the question below to explain the scenario in perspective:

What were the emerging media dynamics at the work place and how did they inform professional and practical media training in Tanzania?

With regards to the scope of this study, an analysis of specific issues within the boundaries of journalism curriculum and how the training was related to the changing media dynamics of Tanzania were explored. The focus however, was to investigate how efficient the journalism graduate journalist were fairing in the media. The curriculum was used to view the learning patterns that illustrate and describe how learning institutions enabled the journalism students to practice effectively in the field after graduation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Journalism studies have indeed a rich literature in Tanzania. Tracing on the historic developments of the media in Tanzania, journalism education has never been neglected. According to Sturmer (1998), Mfumbusa (2010), and Mwafisi (2021), media training and practice in Tanzania has long been associated with the country's political history. The current study traces the current complaint by media owners and editors that graduates are hardly suitable for newsroom practice and therefore, attribute to add more literature to journalism studies and media performance in Tanzania.

Mfumbusa (2010) makes a provision that there is a challenge between western journalistic values provided in the curriculum and the local realities practiced in the media house. He defined how the journalism professional rites could merge and form a desired media performance in respect to both (i.e., the training curriculum and the prevalent media practice). This notion is also seconded by Egbujor (2018) when she explains on the decline of ethical reporting and loss of credibility in news items and articles of common day journalists.

Since the inception of mass media, societies have relied on the media for information, knowledge, education and entertainment and fact finding, according to Chaffee (2001). However there have been attempts that undermine the autonomy of journalism around the world which has contributed to further erosion of public confidence in the news media and its authority around the world as far Hanitzch et al. (2019) study is concerned.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by two theories. The Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory which emphasizes on studying the learning pattern; whereby experiments are an explicit and necessary dimension of learning from experience. The theory gives detail of the learning process gained throughout constant practices and therefore should not be conceived as an outcome. The theory supported the training institutions variable of this study.

The other theory which supported the media dynamics side of the study was the McCombs'& Shaw (1972) agenda setting theory. The theory describes the influence that the mass media topics have over salience public opinion. Such that whatever the news media covers over time, makes the public think, and act the same way. The importance of the theory is in shaping public opinion which thereafter shapes policy. In this situation journalists (being society watchdogs) are offered the opportunity to influence public agenda.

As far as the training institutions is concerned the study subjected to examine the application of learning by experience to gain substantial linkage of the learner's practical field experiment such that when this theory was emphasized maybe the complains of failure to handle newsroom practice would not have value.

Although Kolb's model also allows testing of theory against external reality; it also can help to explain, understand, predict, and change it. In his work on the integration of theory and practice in the 'interpersonal' professions, Ellis (1992), delineates three kinds of theory – personal, professional (prescriptive) and academic (descriptive). To achieve integration in the curriculum, he advocates something close to *Schon's practicum*, in the 'middle ground between the college course and the relatively uncontrolled environment of real agencies' (Ellis, 1992, 76; Ahva & Steensen, 2019).

The question again here lies in the model of the changing media dynamics. How did the curriculum offer flexibility in accommodating the external environment that determines the professional practice? This is to say that the training curriculum ought to allow for real time experiments in the program almost throughout. Since the nature of the profession is seemingly for pragmatics, the study questioned on how well were all the students adapted to their styles and newsroom practices, such that the complains would not have value?

Josephi (2010) contends that the knowledge and attitude of journalists is the foundation of the professional practice. However, unlike many other professions, journalism is a discipline that embraces various skills to give a lively version of content in newspaper, radio, television, and now online publication. It becomes apparent that a combination of skills ought to be imparted and tested for professionalism in journalism to happen.

In the new directions of the agenda, setting theory and research, another study by McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver (2014) outlined the different facets that theory has taken over the fifty years since inception, that of being more relevant in how the agenda is oriented, networked, and meddled. In this, the authors contend that this theory still holds crucial relevance in journalism practice which means scholars and researchers in journalism still require learning how to outline the aspect of agenda setting in their relevant actions and research. Need not to say more, the major function of a journalist is being the society's loyal informer on the many issues that face it. Being an agenda setter, the journalist as a loyal informer ought to steer the direction of the public opinion.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed method research approach survey design. Tashakori & Teddlie (2003) defines survey research as a research method involving the use of standardized questionnaires or interviews to collect data about people and their preferences, thoughts, and behaviours in a systematic manner. Survey Research was used as the process of conducting this research using surveys that we sent to survey journalism student respondents. The data collected from surveys was then statistically analysed to draw meaningful research conclusions. The importance of mixed survey is to ensure the counterbalance of data in the analysis plan. The qualitative data was sought from the four news editors of two prominent media houses (Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation and Mwananchi

communications) Four Journalism lectures from St. Augustine University of Tanzania and six graduate journalists working in various media houses in Dar es Salaam Tanzania.

Location of the Study

The Study took place in Tanzania featuring two prominent media houses; Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) and Mwananchi Communications. The Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation is a public television and radio broadcast network operated by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. Mwananchi Communications is a private print media owned and governed by the Nation Media Group with headquarters in Kenya and country office in Dar es Salaam. The media has six print publications (daily, weekly, and monthly papers) with extensive readership countrywide and online sites. The study also assessed the training part at St. Augustine University of Tanzania Mwanza Malimbe campus in the department of Mass Communication and Journalism. SAUT was chosen purposively owing to the long history of training journalism students in the country.

Target Population

Bhattacherjee (2012) and Creswell (2009) define population as all people or items (unit of analysis) with the characteristics that the researcher wishes to study; the unit of analysis may be a person, group, organization, country, object, or any other entity that the study wishes to draw scientific inferences about. The study targeted all the Editors of media houses, all journalism graduates, and the cohort of current journalism students at SAUT (2018/2019 – 2020/2021 academic years), and all Journalism lecturers. The total population for quantitative data was 1500 respondents. The reason for the target population is to substantiate how current the curriculum in place has been implemented.

Sampling Technique

The importance of choosing a sample according to Bernard (2000) and Creswell (2009) is to obtain the true representation of the population to answer the factors about the study, saving the researcher's time and resources. This study adopted a non-probability sampling technique to obtain the qualitative sample

of the editors of Mwananchi communications, TBC, the journalism lecturers, and journalism graduates of academic years 2018-2021 working in the media.

In order to obtain the right representation of the sample, purposive sampling was used to intentionally select informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon. Stratified sampling technique was also employed to obtain respondents for quantitative data inferences from SAUT journalism students. After the stratified population was identified, then questionnaires deployed systematically. The strata grouped respondents into three sections i.e., certificate level, diploma level finalists and bachelor degree level finalists. The study used the bachelor degree finalists as respondents. Thereafter the stratification also identified the male and female respondents from the graduating year group that provided a balanced representation. After the stratification according to course levels, a systematic random sampling applied to obtain respondents at every final year level in the SAUT journalism program. This method according to Bhattacherjee (2012), Thomas (2020) is the preferred method over simple random sampling when a study maintains a low risk of data manipulation in order to maintain validity

Sample Size

A sample of current journalism students of SAUT (bachelor degree finalists) formed the quantitative sample size for this study as follows: 10% of the sample frame of 1500 respondents = 150 respondents obtained systematically. Kothari (2004) talks of characteristics of a good sample to be the one which truly represents a reasonable level of confidence. The level of confidence derived from this sample achieved an alpha value of 0.05, which means that there is a less than 5% chance that the data being tested could have occurred under the null hypothesis. This number was sufficient to provide a descriptive status of the factors being investigated in the study according to the methods of data collection tools used and the data analysis plan.

Burmeister and Aitken (2012) talks of the factors that influence the sample size to include effect of size, or difference expected between groups or time points and the homogeneity of the study

participants. This study considered all these factors and that the 10% of the journalism students' population at the given time was acceptable in providing the risk of error.

Research Instruments

Instruments deployed in this mixed method survey included; questionnaires to obtain quantitative data from current journalism students of SAUT. The schedule for interviews was used to obtain qualitative data from the SAUT Journalism lecturers, journalism graduates working in the media and media editors.

Data Collection Procedures

The Honeycomb of Research Methodology identifies four methods of data collection: interviews, questionnaires, observation, and secondary data (Wilson 2014). The researcher used interviews (face to face) to collect primary qualitative data whereas questionnaires were used to collect primary quantitative data from the respondents. The population for qualitative interview for this study included the four media news editors of TBC and Mwananchi communications, four SAUT journalism lecturers and six journalism graduates working in the media. Quantitative data was sought from the final year journalism students. The document review was sought from educational departments and websites of SAUT, NACTE and TCU which complemented the desktop research for relevance of what is taught in theory and what is practiced.

Data Analysis

The quantitative analysis used numeric measures and data was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables and charts using frequencies and percentages and interpretations made based on the research objectives. Qualitative data was analysed thematically and presented in narratives. We triangulated the study findings with the theoretical framework and the literature review to determine how the findings addressed the research gap and the objectives.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations derive from the values that Iphofen and Tolich (2018) describe as "things of importance" that matter and are worth upholding and preserving (p. 2). Permission to conduct this study from specific authorities of the higher institutions and the media institutions was sought and research clearance was granted by SAUT. The quality assurance department reviewed the research tools and issued permission. Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the National research Bureau through St. Augustine University of Tanzania, School of Graduate studies.

The study did no harm; it respected the private domains of participants and avoided deception. Consent was sought and obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose and importance of the study. Only those respondents, who consented to participate and signed a consent form, were included in the study. Respondents were assured that they are free to answer all or none of the questions, and that confidentiality was maintained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the first objective of the study, we intended to view the training exposure of the respondents, to annul the training part from complains. The responses were as follows:

Figure 1: Journalism training exposure
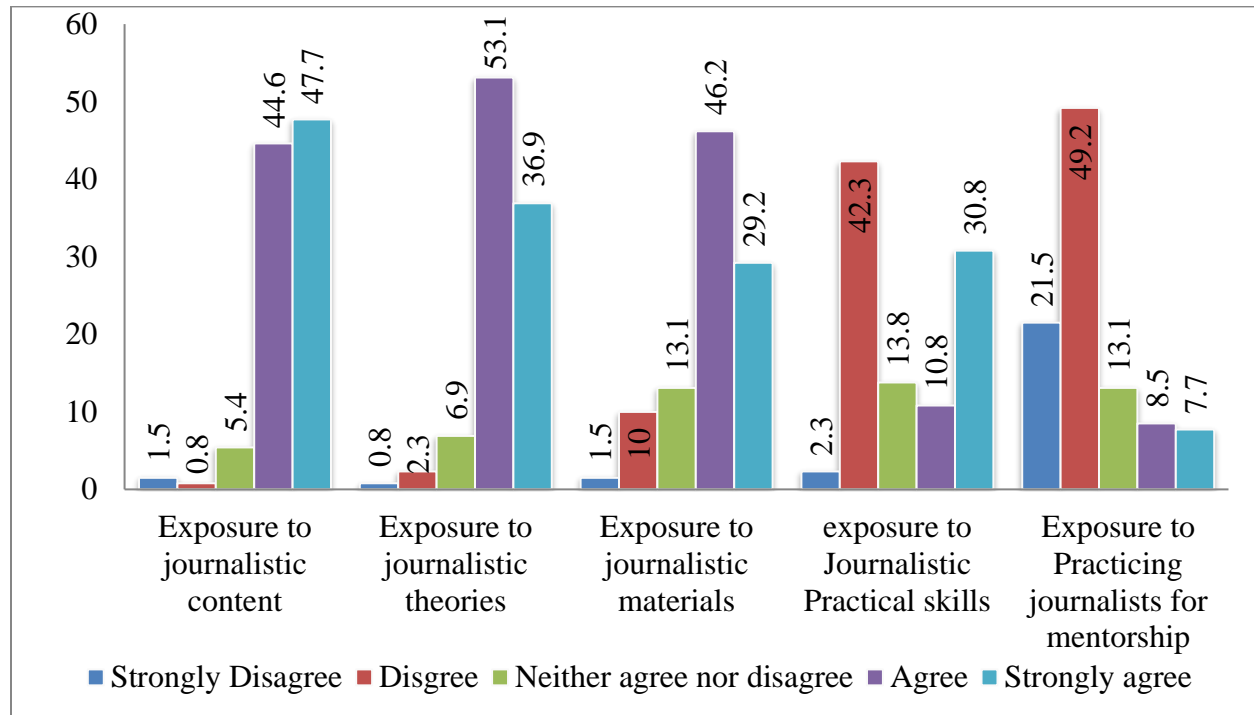
Source: (Field data November, 2021)

Upon the training exposure: 47.7% of respondents strongly agreed to being exposed to enough journalistic content in class, 44.6% agreed, 5.4% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the exposure of enough journalism content in class and a total of 2.3% disagreed to the item.

On the aspect of being exposed to adequate journalistic theories; 36.9% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 53.1% agreed, 6.9% neither agreed nor disagreed and a total of 3.1% disagreed to being exposed to adequate journalist theory. Upon the exposure to journalism materials in class; 29.2% strongly agreed, and 46.2% agreed. 13.1% of respondents to this item neither agreed nor disagreed and a total of 11.5% disagreed.

B1-2 Still on the same category of journalism training the respondents were asked to fill upon whether they were exposed to enough journalism practical skills; the responses were as follows; a total of 41.6% agreed to have that exposure while 13.8% neither agreed nor disagreed and a sum of 44.6% disagreed to have an exposure to practical skills. The fifth label (B1 -5) on journalism training

exposure category was finding out whether the respondents had been exposed to journalists who are currently practicing in the media, to mentor them about the media dynamics, the following are the responses: 70.7% of respondents disagreed, while 13.1% neither agreed nor disagreed and a sum of 16.2% agreed to have been exposed to practicing journalists.

The inferences as far as the data recorded about the training of Journalists, shows a general acceptance and adequacy of training offered by journalism trainers. Given this as a scenario, it means that the trainers have provided an acceptable leverage in the learning opportunity to their scholars as required. The chart shows the level of congruency to various aspects of the training curriculum that are well adhered to. However, we proceeded to establish what was the disconnection between training and industry.

The next inference that alleviates the training part away from the poor professionalism claims comes from the respondents' self-belief in the media practice as seen below:

Figure 2: Journalist self-belief in the Journalism practice
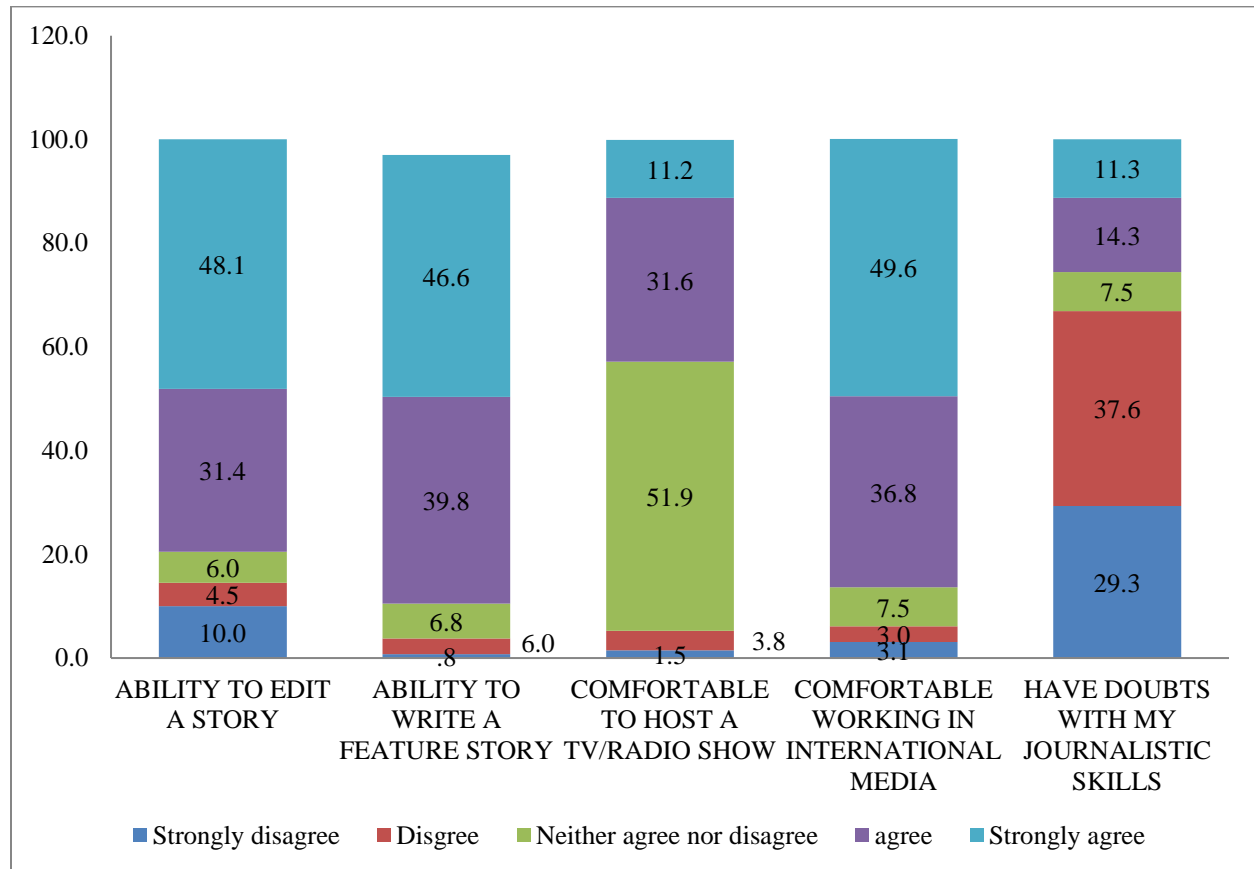
Source: (Field Data November 2021)

Inferences from the table above about respondents, self-belief in journalism practice; on the item (B3-1) ability to edit a story, 48.1% strongly agreed and 31.4% agreed to have the ability to edit a story. 6.0% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to this item and a total of 14.5% disagreed to have the ability of editing a story.

Another item (B3-2) in this category was to find out whether the respondents believed in their ability to write a feature story. The responses were as follows: 46.6% and 39.8% strongly agreed and agreed respectively. 6.8% neither agreed nor disagreed and a sum of 6.8% disagreed.

On (B3-3) the respondents were asked to show their level of acceptance on how comfortable they were in hosting a TV/ Radio show. A total of 11.2% and 31.6% strongly agreed and agreed respectively, that they were comfortable to host a broadcast show. While 51.9% neither agreed nor disagreed and a total of 5.3% disagreed that they were comfortable to host broadcast show

Respondents believe in themselves for professional journalism practice to as far as their training has supported them. Slight concerns were noted in their ability to host a TV and Radio show as seen in the chart.

Figure 3: Showing Respondents Media experience
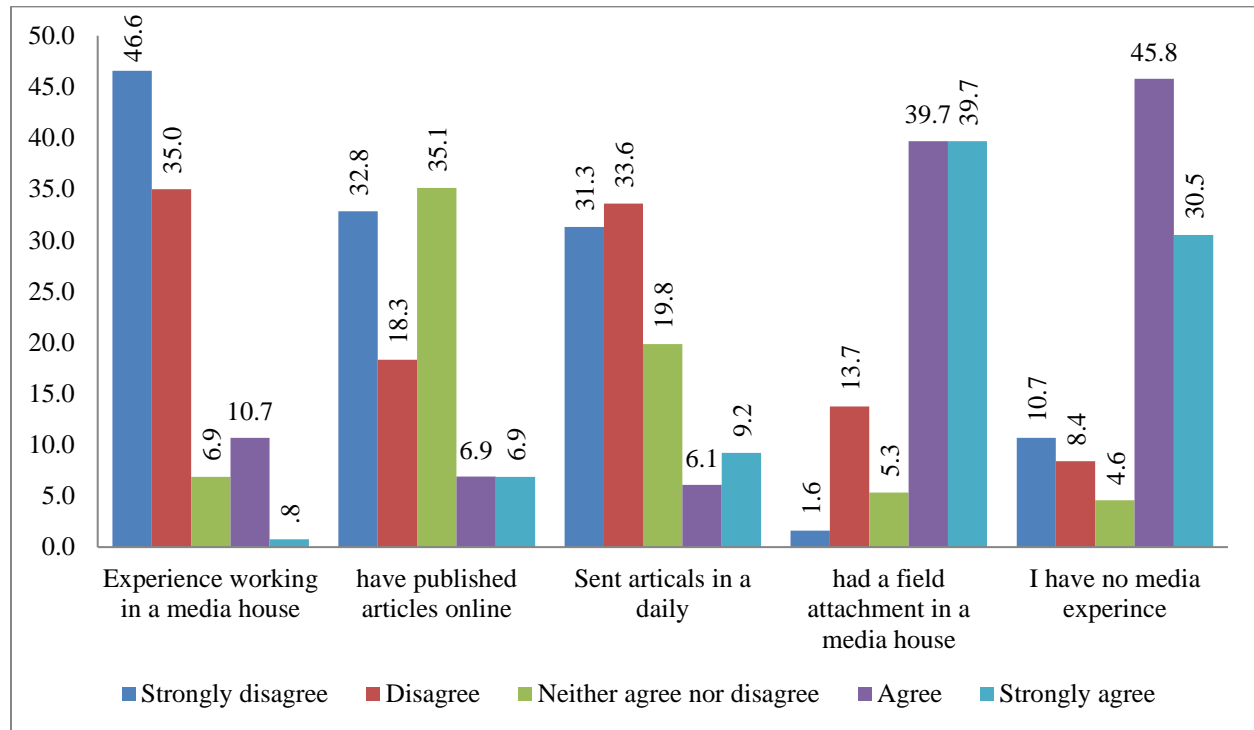
Source: (field Data November 2021)

The above table depicts the practical media experience that the respondents have. In the first item of this category (C1-1) sought to know if the respondents have any experience working in a media house. The responses are as follows; 46.6% and 35.0% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to have any experience in the media house. 6.9% neither agreed nor disagreed a cumulative percent of 11.5% agreed to have some media experience.

On the item (C1-2) required respondents to indicate whether they have published articles online; a cumulative 51% of respondents disagreed, while 35.1% neither agreed nor disagreed. 12.2% agreed to have published articles online.

Another item (C1-3) wanted to find out if the respondents sent articles on a local daily. The responses are as follows; 31.2% and 33.6% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively, 19.8% neither agreed nor disagreed and a cumulative percent of 15.3 agreed to send articles in a local daily.

Item (C1-4) enquired about the respondents' field attachment in the media house. The response was as follows a cumulative 79.4% agreed to have had their field attachment in the media house. 5.3% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and another cumulative 15.3% disagreed to have field attachment in a media house.

The last item in this category of media experience (C1-5) asked respondents to admit outright that they have no media experience, their responses were as follows: a cumulative 76.3% equivalent to 99 (ninety-nine) respondents agreed that they have no experience in the media. 4.6% and equivalent to 6 (six) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and cumulative 19.1% equivalent to 25 (twenty-five) respondents disagreed.

The above **Figure 2** & **Figure 3** reflect the inferences of the descriptive data obtained from the questionnaires that prompted to know the state of affairs that surround the training of journalists. As we tried to explain earlier the data responses show a general acceptable situation in the training that aids the learner to comfortably handle newsroom

practice. However, in Figure 3, the media exposure among many respondents was a challenge. A considerable percentage of respondents although had their field attachments in the media house, contend that the experience was limited.

The key finding of the study derived from the in-depth interviews with both the editors and graduate journalists who contend to the idea that the constant change of technology requires a constant change of training packages for journalism courses. The current day journalist requires more skills and talent-based individual who can flexibly adapt to multimedia working styles.

CONCLUSION

This article investigated the role of journalism training institutions in the changing media dynamics of Tanzania that aimed at address the emerging media dynamics at the work place and how they informed the professional and practical media training in Tanzania. The findings established that indeed the media industry ought to support the training by offering opportunities for students to learn by experience. Thus, this objective supports the experiential learning theory by David Kolb (1984), which postulates that experiences form a major part of learning and hence professionalism.

Although the practical journalism skills are enhanced in the training, the technological advancements in the media are far beyond what the training schools can provide. This explains the desire for scholars like Mwafisi (2021), who suggests the reprogramming of the journalism course to be a trade profession whereby learning is by practical experience in a real time media.

The study suggests that both education policy makers and media policy formulators in Tanzania should invest on the research ideas brought forward by various stakeholders over the state of affairs in each sector. The ways to make experiential learning achieve its significance in the total education system should be given significance in the current vocational state of media practice globally.

Recommendation

The media dynamics in Tanzania as seen in this study have a role to play in ensuring that the journalism professionalism is upheld against the claims of poor performances. The study recommends that:

- Media houses should create a department for training field journalists with an in-house style and capacity to mentor students, who in the long run may become their staff or employed elsewhere.

- Media houses must facilitate communication research and monitoring package for training institutions so that there is a two-way flow of information sharing between journalism training and media practice

- Journalism training institutions should invest in multimedia teaching and learning styles in order to respond to the requirements of the media sector. This may be done by investing more on the vocational skills training interchangeably between training institutions and media institutions in order to suit the trend.

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