

Sanef's '2002 South African National Journalism Skills Audit'

Final Report

Prepared for the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) and the Sanef Education
and Training Committee (ETC)

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Section A: Media Industry

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The South African media, electronic and print, is gradually moving away from the racially-defined 'boxes' of the past and lifestyle, rather than colour, is becoming the key determinant for audiences
Mike Siluma (newly appointed CEO of Jacaranda 94.2fm)

One of the biggest problems facing the (media) industry is the juniorisation of the journalistic skills base. This comes at a time when the South African story is becoming more and more complicated. We have to get our house in order in a very quick way in this sense
Mathatha Tsedu (Chairperson South African National Editors Forum)

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Introduction

This report deals with a skills audit project commissioned by the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) through its Education and Training Committee (ETC). It should be read against the background of the final proposal accepted by Sanef as well as the interim report, and consists of two sections: A: Media industry; and B: Educational and training institutions (Section B is dealt with in a separate section of the final report).

Section A: Media industry

This report outlines the following: The results of fieldwork (consisting of news evaluations, questionnaires and interviews) conducted at media sites in Durban; Port Elizabeth; Johannesburg; and Cape Town.

1. Purpose

The purpose of Section A of the research project was to conduct a situation analysis of journalism reporting, writing and accuracy skills among reporters with between 2 and 5 years experience.

2. Problem identification and supporting material

The research underpinned the problem identification as described in the proposal. The research team did not find major issues deviating from the stated problem identification in the proposal, though deviations to a degree were found, as well as new issues not initially anticipated. The latter did not affect the problem identification in any material way. The most salient issue impacting on the problem identification was: that *probably most of the present challenges facing the media as far as news coverage is concerned, are to be found in reporters' skills to properly perform the task at hand*. Other salient issues were:

- **Perceived mistrust between government and the media:** One of the major issues leading to the audit was the perceived mistrust between the government and the media, which government felt resulted in unfair and unbalanced reporting on their policies and activities. Apart from this, government also indicated an 'irritation' with the fact that reporters apparently lack the experience and skills to accurately report on individuals' names, titles and positions.

It was found that although skills training can play an important role to alleviate this situation (or at least remove some irritation), it is only part of the solution.

Deeper-rooted issues in a changing society (e.g. media policies, ownership, management, a new-style work/career ethics, a rapidly transforming work environment - both as far as technological and human resources are concerned, and a radically changing socio-political and economic media system) were identified as perhaps playing even more significant roles at this stage than simply the issue of education and training as such.

- **The challenges of transformation in the media industry:** Globalisation, convergence between different media, and changing roles and circumstances within the media industry were found to present unique challenges for

transformation in the sphere of journalism education and training¹. Not only are reporters faced with a wider and more diverse range of news issues, but management approaches to news and training also need to be adapted. News media faces the challenge of remaining competitive within a very problematic market, reporting the news in such a way with a skilled corps of media workers that will not only satisfy a changing audience, but also simultaneously allow the media to remain financially viable.

- **News coverage and comment on major socio-economic challenges:** This issue relates to the above. At most of the media institutions visited, attention was drawn to a new emerging group of media workers and audiences who do not necessarily see themselves as primarily belonging to a particular culturally or racially oriented group, but rather as media workers/users per se who are interested in news issues related to new social and economic circumstances.² On the other hand, instances were found where race/ethnicity/cultural and political differences clearly played a dominant role in the news process. These do not directly relate to the question of skills as such, but are much more of a social and management issue.
- **News, staff and infrastructural management:** Perhaps the single most important issue not addressed in general discussions on journalism skills is that of management. The research team found that this issue needs serious, incisive analysis and consequent action on a comprehensive scale (on ownership/top management as well as on operational/news management levels).
- **The apparent lack of training:** Research attention was focused on certain skills that junior reporters (and for the purpose of the audit, primarily those with 2-5 years experience) might lack when they enter the media from universities, technikons, or other tertiary training institutions. Where these skills were found lacking, it was apparent that the news media in general (with some very clear exceptions such as those found at Media24) lack the training policies, staff capacity, financial resources and time to adequately address the matter informally through peer-group support or formally through in-house training. Limited resources prevent media institutions from taking junior reporters through a (traditional) process of mentoring, guidance and 'osmosis' through which they can learn the 'tricks of the trade' from their senior counterparts.

¹ Many editors and news editors (see 3.2: Editors and news editors) expressed their concern that the standard of practical knowledge and experience among journalism teachers is insufficient. This results in a situation where journalism students enter the media unaware of the challenges facing them. As a result, it takes junior reporters longer to 'find their feet' within a new, changing and challenging work environment. This was supported by a sentiment among editors that tertiary institutions offering journalism training should include prominent role players from media organisations in their advisory boards. These people can make a significant contribution towards improving the level of skills training at these institutions, simply because of their up-to-date practical experience in the media industry.

Apart from this, more ongoing and formal interaction should be established between editorial and management staff of different media and organized media institutions such as the office of the Press Ombudsman and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission (BCCSA). Because of a lack of interaction between these groups, cognizance is taken of media codes, but these are not necessarily applied practically in everyday reporting situations.

² What is currently happening on the South African media scene in general is what *Beeld* editor Ton Vosloo termed the 'upward moving mobile generation' in the 1970s. There is a definite awareness among editors that socio-economic aspects in the media market are overtaking political and racial issues. This has a profound influence on news content, reporting and journalism skills training. As recently stated by the newly appointed CEO of Jacaranda 94.2fm, Mike Siluma: 'The South African media, electronic and print, is gradually moving away from the racially-defined "boxes" of the past and lifestyle, rather than colour, is becoming the key determinant for audiences'.

- **The continuous juniorisation of newsrooms:** Editors identified various causes for this situation, with the majority of newsrooms experiencing a high level of staff turnover. Reporters advance to other media organisations (glamour status in the case of TV and radio, higher remuneration in regions such as Gauteng, less stressful circumstances), government departments and/or the private sector (differences in remuneration mentioned ranged from significant to extreme). However, when looking at the graphic illustration of reporters' experience within journalism, this argument becomes slightly irrelevant (see figures 12 and 13).
- **The need to obtain a clear profile of reporters and the skills they might lack:** Given the above broader macro issues affecting the news process in South Africa, the need for research regarding a profile of reporters and their reporting skills became evident during the research project. One of the issues highlighted by the audit was reporters' need for life and conceptual skills.

3. Research design

3.1 General

The research project consisted of two questionnaires and a series of open-ended interviews (see later).³ This facilitated the process of triangulation in order to obtain the most reliable results possible.⁴

3.2 Population and sampling

The **population** for this project consisted of major print and electronic news *media* in four South African metropolitan areas (Durban, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town – see Table 2); as well as *editors*, *news editors* and *reporters* actively working in these areas (the latter having between 2 and 5 years experience). At least one *news story* was expected from each reporter.

Sample: Other than initially anticipated, the newsrooms visited were overall smaller in terms of staff numbers, and consequently fewer reporters were available to participate in the project. The research team therefore needed to reduce the number of reporters and news stories initially anticipated for the sample. The target was thus set at obtaining at least five reporter respondents and five stories at each medium site. In order to achieve this, the questionnaires were handed to the news editors beforehand, who in turn handed them to reporters available in the newsroom and explained to them that they would be treated anonymously. The profile of 2-5 years experience was not met in all cases, though this criterion remained the primary aim. No requirements were set in terms of gender or race⁵, as availability and a willingness to participate in the project were the main factors

³ The research team had to make certain changes to the original research design (i.e. changes in 'real time' observation situations, the sample of media sites and reporters, and the conducting of interviews). These changes were discussed with the ETC and implemented after approval was obtained from the committee. See the interim report for more information.

⁴ Triangulation is an attempt to use multiple sources of data collection in a single research project in order to increase the reliability of the results, and to compensate for the limitations in the research methods used. As such, triangulation in this research project refers to the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand as fully as possible the nature of the research problem and to produce outcome based results.

⁵ In terms of the responses the majority of newsrooms were found to still be very white, especially in Cape Town (more than 50%) and Port Elizabeth (more than 70%). In Johannesburg, however, more than 50% of reporters were found to be African. As far as gender was concerned, the reporter profile was found to be

in obtaining cooperation from reporters.⁶ As such, the sample can at best be described as a combination of a convenience/accidental sample, but also as a purposive and volunteer sample. *One would therefore not be able to generalise the findings, although it would still offer a broad national scope of reporter/reporting skills being audited for the first time in South Africa.* On the other hand, it should also be noted that the research sample actually worked with a total universum of reporters being available and willing to participate. It should also be noted that it was not part of the brief to do a study that could be generalised. Instead, it was a pilot study with a focus on certain media and a certain group of reporters within a real-time situation. Consequently the researchers would aver that the results give a comprehensive and realistic ‘snap shot’ view of the research issue.

- **Media (N¹)**

For planning and budget purposes, the researchers compiled a stratified convenience sample from the above media population (see Table 1). Although care was taken to make the sample as representative as possible, it was difficult to compile a completely random sample due to the disperse and disparate nature of the media.

A number of guidelines were followed in selecting the media sites.⁷ A per-site exposition

predominantly male. It was only in Durban where more female reporters than male reporters were included in the sample (49% male and 51% female). However, these statistics may be skewed in terms of footnote 6 below.

⁶ The elements of availability and willingness to cooperate might have had an influence on the sample of reporters who participated in the audit. Overall, one could therefore have expected a higher performance level from these reporters.

In terms of the selecting of the sampling procedure, as with the rest of the audit, one should note that a single study (such as this) offers only an *indication* of what might exist. In effect, the results indicate: *This is what may be the case* (see Wimmer & Dominick, 1991:34). The results therefore do not provide the basis for a theory or a law regarding journalism skills in South Africa. To be relatively certain of the results in the present study, the audit needs to be replicated. Even so, the research team is satisfied that the audit has laid a solid foundation for further research.

As such, the research team is also aware of the possible shortcomings of the audit. These specifically relate to what Wimmer & Dominick (1991) call the TAT laws of research (They are Always There). With hindsight the research team could have done certain things better; the sample might have been too small; the pilot study was not efficient enough to show all possible problem areas; and not all subjects would have given honest answers.

Also, one might argue that the research team should not have used a non-probability sample as was the case, but rather a probability random sample. The research team is aware of the advantages and disadvantages of this issue. However, given the time, financial, and disparate nature of the audit, as well as the lack of previously applicable research results, the research team agrees with Kidder & Judd (1986:41) that the advantages of using non-probability sampling might have outweighed the risks of not using probability sampling in this particular case. This, for instance, includes control over the research environment; a higher than usual response rate; completeness; time frame; and being available to answer questions related to a more complex questionnaire).

For instance, should one have used a questionnaire based on a random sample, there would have been no specific guarantee for a high return. On the contrary, mailed questionnaires sometimes receive response rates as low as 10%, with many more studies receiving response rates between 10%-20% instead of very high percentages (Bailey, 1987:149, 169).

In the present audit (according to information given in section B), a total of 833 reporters were identified presently working in the South African news media (junior reporters: 199; reporters: 301; senior reporters: 220; and specialist reporters: 113). The 112 reporters in section A of the audit would then amount to 13,5% of the universe of 833. Seeing it from another perspective: major national public opinion polls in the USA work on samples of 1%-2% (i.e. 2,5% of the population of 250 million).

⁷ The following guidelines were used in compiling the media sample:

- **News focus:** emphasis fell on media with primarily a news focus. Consequently, consumer media as such (e.g. pharmaceutical, engineering) were not included;

of this is given in Tables 1 and 2, as well as in figure 1.

Table 1: The stratified media sample

Daily newspapers	10
Weekly newspapers	7
Magazines	5
Television channels	3
Radio stations	4
On-line news media	3
N¹ =	32⁸

These media organisations were located in:

KwaZulu-Natal (Durban)	5
Gauteng (Johannesburg)	10
Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth)	6
Western Cape (Cape Town)	11
N¹ =	32

Figure 1 illustrates (figures provided in percentages) the distribution of the media sites visited, as well as the regions where they are situated:

Figure 1: Distribution of media sites and media (Media: N¹=32)

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- **Geographical areas:** four major metropolitan areas were included in the sample (Durban, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town). This meant that smaller metropolitan areas in the other five provinces were not included;
 - **Title:** mainly important or representative types of media were selected. As far as mainstream media is concerned, particular care was taken to make the sample as representative as possible. Due to the size and wide geographical distribution of community media, it was, however, not possible to do the same with the latter. Despite time and financial constraints, a small number of community media was included;
 - **Cultural and language diversity:** though the emphasis was on English as a medium, two other South African languages (Afrikaans and Zulu) were also included;
 - **Media types:** dailies, weeklies, magazines, radio, television, and on-line news media;
 - **Comparison between titles:** attempts were made to choose the most significant titles in each metropolitan area;
 - **Clusters of media titles:** in the case of magazines, and due to financial and time constraints, some titles were clustered according to media group and geographical location of sites (e.g. those at Media24 in Cape Town);
 - **Perceived significance of media title:** see *comparison* above;
 - **Circulation:** this was considered only when it was difficult to choose between titles;
 - **Media houses vis-à-vis independent media:** the major media groups (e.g. Independent, johnnic, Media24), as well as the SABC, e-tv and independent / commercial radio stations were included;
 - **Financial and time factors:** the limited time-frame and cost-effectiveness were important considerations in selecting the media sites.

⁸ 39 Media sites were initially identified, but cooperation from 7 media titles could not be obtained for various reasons (see Table 2). Similarly, it was initially anticipated to get cooperation from 10 reporters at each of the media. For the reasons given above, these had to be reduced to 5 per medium site.

Table 2 outlines the different media sites visited in the different regions, as well as those that were not available to participate in the audit.

Table 2: Original media sample according to titles (numbers of questionnaires received from individual sites are indicated in brackets)

Region	Dailies	Weeklies	Magazines	TV	Radio	Web media
Western Cape Cape Town <i>15-21/04/2002</i>	Die Burger (5) Cape Argus (5)	District Mail (4)	You (5) Sarie (NA) Drum (0) Fair Lady (0) Finansies & Tegniek (NA) Landbouweekblad (5)	e-tv (5)	KFM (3)	News24.com (5) iafrica.com (2)
Eastern Cape Port Elizabeth <i>9-12/04/2002</i>	East Cape Weekend (5) Herald (5) Die Burger (Eastern Cape) (4)	PE Express (1)		SABC (1)	Radio Algoa (4)	
KwaZulu-Natal Durban <i>12-15/03/2002</i>	Mercury (4) Natal Witness (4)	Ilanga (4) Sunday Tribune (2)			East Coast Radio (5) Ukhozi (NA)	
Gauteng Johannesburg <i>19-26/03/2002</i>	Sowetan (3) Business Day (NA) The Star (4) The Citizen (NA) Beeld (5)	Sunday Times (NA) Rapport (4) City Press (4) Mail & Guardian (3)	Pace (3) Tribute (NA)	SABC (3)	702 (5)	Mail & Guardian online

NA – Not available. Media which fell into this category were contacted several times in order to establish contact with either the editor, news editor or someone in a management position in order to explain the project and set up a meeting to conduct the audit. In most cases cell phone, fax and e-mail messages were not answered. In some cases respondents indicated that they were not willing to participate in the project because they/their media institutions were not Sanef members. In other cases, meetings were set up, but the relevant persons did not show up for the meeting. No further cooperation could subsequently be established. For another group of sites (Sarie and Finansies & Tegniek) convenient meetings could not be set up during the period the research team visited the specific area.

Overall, a very positive response and cooperation was received from the editors, news editors and reporters with whom appointments were made. As recent history shows, this is vastly different from the situation 2-3 decades ago. Media spokespersons expressed the importance they attach to media training. Whereas some decades ago reporters were not required to have formal journalism training, the latter has now undoubtedly (in the majority of cases) become a prerequisite for employment in the media. Generally, the editors and news editors expressed genuine interest to participate in the project in order to contribute to the process of improving journalism education and training.

- **Reporters (N²)**

Most of the sites visited did not (as was planned) offer the opportunity to find 5 reporters with between 2 and 5 years professional experience who would have been available to participate in the project. On the contrary, at most sites it was extremely difficult to find 5 reporters at all to participate. In most cases, this was due to the small number of staff, while at a few sites reporters did not want to participate, even though newsroom management was willing to assist. Still, the emphasis was on acquiring cooperation from at least 5 reporters per site, whether they fell into the 2-5 years group or not. Consequently, the number of reporters ranged from 1 to 5 per site, with an average of between 3 and 4 per site giving a sample of 112 reporters (see Table 3).

On the issue of obtaining parity in terms of race and gender according to the national composition, the final sample was determined by the number of reporters being available and willing to participate in the project at each media site. It is difficult to determine whether this situation equalised itself, even though the reporters in the project came from all designated groups and were included primarily on an availability basis. As such, the researchers would not aver that the gender and race of reporters (N¹=112) offer a representative sample of the South African media situation in general.

- **News reports (N³)**

Given the situation described above regarding the number of media sites (N¹=32) and the number of reporters (N²=112), 102 stories were obtained from these reporters (N³=102). The news editors evaluated these stories.

- **Editors and news editors**

At all 32 sites, interviews were held with news editors and at most sites also with the editors or assistant editors.

3.3 Research instruments used: Checklists, questionnaires and interviews

The following research instruments were developed in cooperation with the ETC and practical inputs from the ETC (based on experience from both the ETC and the research group) were included, also taking into account the issues of time, practicality and financial resources. Both these instruments were pre-tested at the Potchefstroom Herald.

- **News editors' checklist for evaluating stories.** On the basis of the stories submitted by the reporters, the news editors evaluated the following three skills categories (see Addendum B):

A: Reporting skills
B: Writing skills

C: Accuracy of news stories/copy

- **Questionnaire for reporters.** A self-administered questionnaire (see Addendum A) was used to obtain information related to:

A: News awareness

B: Professional profile

- **Interviews:** The research group arranged for open-ended interviews with news editors at the sites visited, and where possible with the editors or an assistant editor, where the editor was not available. The interviews were arranged beforehand, and lasted between about 30 minutes and 1 hour or longer.

News reporting issues raised in the evaluation forms and self-administered questionnaires were discussed and qualitative impressions were obtained. The issues raised in the first part of the report (see 2) were also discussed with editors. Based on these findings, the quantitative data obtained through the questionnaires could (through a process of triangulation) largely be supported, refuted, or elaborated upon as discussed in this report.

4. Introduction to research findings

This research project started out on the premise that *probably most of the present challenges facing the media as far as news coverage is concerned, are to be found in reporters' skills to properly perform the task at hand*. As was inferred above, the research results showed that this assumption was too superficial and does not address the problematic issues on macro level, such as socio-economic, political and media changes. It also does not include owner/management attitudes in the process of education and skills training on the one hand, and news management on the other.

This was specifically found to be true when reporters were asked to indicate (in their opinion) the three most important steps they would take to improve reporting skills in the country. These suggested steps were categorised. Figure 2 below gives the numerical values of these clusters of suggestions on how to improve reporting skills in South Africa. Reporters were asked to name the 3 most important steps needed to address reporting skills in the country.

Figure 2: Categories suggested for improving reporting skills

Q23: Three most important steps (in reporters' opinion) needed to address reporting skills in South Africa (results given on the basis of the number of responses, although not all reporters completed this question. Because the 112 respondents could each give 3 possible answers to the question, a potential of 336 responses could be given.

In terms of the individual clusters shown above, the elements identified are elaborated upon in footnote 8.⁹

However, on the level of reporters' skills as evaluated by the news editors, the research showed some major problems regarding the news gathering process, writing the final product, accuracy, and formal training.

⁹ In terms of the individual clusters/categories shown, the following elements were identified:

- **conceptual skills:** analytical skills, creativity, critical skills, enquiry skills, general knowledge, narrative skills, knowledge of media systems, improved reading skills, social awareness, social responsibility;
- **language skills:** general skills, other languages;
- **life skills:** basic communication skills, correct and positive attitude in writing and reporting, striving for excellence, international experience, self-motivation, professionalism, punctuality, sensitivity to race, reading/literacy skills, voice training, work ethics;
- **media ethics:** avert bias, honesty, independence from political influences, objectivity, knowledge of press code;
- **media industry:** interaction between journalism departments and the media;
- **media law:** court reporting;
- **practical skills;**
- **remuneration:** incentives built into internships;
- **news gathering skills:** accuracy, angle, beats, contacts, dealing with 'sacred' facts, in-depth reporting, interviewing, multi-skilling, developing a sense for news, photojournalism, how to do research, shorthand, writing clearly, specialization skills;
- **training resources (in-house, technikons and universities):** compulsory internships, appointing experienced reporters, development programmes for trainers, train the trainers, mentorship, shadowing, evaluation, feedback, stylebook;
- **resources:** infrastructure;
- **subjects (other than journalism, media studies, communication):** economics, financial aspects, political science;
- **writing skills:** spelling, checking own story, write audience-directed.

These issues tie in perfectly with the type of skills training reporters were found lacking in both the questionnaires and evaluation by the news editors. It was noticeable that the reporters themselves considered the acquiring of conceptual, practical, news gathering and writing skills as the most important weaknesses in journalism training. On the other hand, although they did not do well on the media law question, they did not consider media law to be such an important skill to acquire.

In terms of the ETC's brief for this project, interventions into journalism education and training related to the following could be considered:

- **The news gathering process** (e.g. gathering of information, insight into the depth/context of news, a sensitivity to and an awareness of South African news issues, and an understanding of legal and ethical issues, especially as they relate to fairness and gender/race sensitivity; and being able to identify elements contributing to a news story). *All of these issues were found to be valid problems that need to be addressed.*
- **Writing the final product** (e.g. organising the facts, writing the copy, using correct grammar and reporting style). *Through interviews with editors and news editors, it was specifically found that junior reporters need more guidance in organising facts and writing stories. This problem was addressed in some cases by more senior staff members guiding and coaching (mentoring) junior reporters, while in other cases it was indicated that senior staff members had to rewrite stories in full in order to bring the final product up to the required standard.*
- **Accuracy** (e.g. spelling mistakes, typing errors, accurate presentation of facts, and attributing information to sources). *In the majority of cases, news editors stressed the fact that they encourage all members of staff to represent all stories as accurately as possible. Again, the way in which this specific issue was tackled, varied between different media and needs further investigation.*

In the following section, the other results from the Questionnaire for reporters (Addendum A) and the Checklist for news editors (Addendum B) are discussed.

5. Results of the self-administered questionnaire

5.1 News awareness/insight

Reporters completed the questionnaires in their own time (within the framework of the period the site was visited). News editors/editors assisted the research team in identifying the reporters falling within the prescribed category, distributing and collecting the questionnaires. Although much emphasis was placed on the fact that reporters needed to be as honest as possible in the anonymous completion of the questionnaires, a number of instances were recorded where reporters either asked colleagues what the correct answer to the questions would be, or used external resources (e.g. the Internet) to obtain the answers.

Results obtained through the self-administered questionnaire on news awareness/insight are depicted through graphs and illustrations (in each case figures given are percentages of the findings). Information is given per region, but also for the country as a whole. It should be stressed again that the results cannot be generalised to represent the media as a whole (see 3.2).

5.1.1 Interviewing skills

In the questionnaire (see Addendum A, Category A1), an interview situation was sketched and reporters were asked to indicate areas where they thought the reporter made mistakes. Overall, reporters reacted negatively or were sceptical about the scenario being sketched, and general feedback about this specific part of the

questionnaire was not very positive. Where reporters did complete the section, the majority of them were not in a position to identify the majority of ‘correct answers’ as provided in the memorandum. The following gives a summary of the percentage of reporters who *would not have passed* with 50% if the interview situation had to be evaluated in a typical test scenario:

Durban:	89%
Johannesburg:	94%
Port Elizabeth:	60%
Cape Town:	80%
South Africa in general:	82%

Even with the possible formulation problems of the questions, the results confirmed editors’ and news editors’ concern that reporters (especially junior reporters) lack the skills to conduct a professional interview. Reporters themselves expressed a need to improve interviewing skills (see footnote 8).

5.1.2 Awareness of news events and general knowledge

The results obtained from this part of the questionnaire are graphically illustrated through bar graphs (figures 3-8). Figures again represent percentages of reporters who could not give the correct answer to the questions. The different variables (see Addendum A, Category A2) were clustered into different categories, namely:

- Local political issues (figure 3);
- Local and international sport (figure 4);
- Local and international culture, entertainment and media groups (figure 5);
- Local and international geography (figure 6).
- International issues (figure 7); and
- Science (figure 8);

Although some reporters, editors and a member of the research team expressed the view that the general knowledge questions might be too easy, significant numbers of reporters still did not know the correct answers to some very basic questions.¹⁰

¹⁰ One case in point is the percentage of reporters who could not correctly indicate that Washington DC was the capital city of the USA (almost 20% in Durban). Closer to home, significant numbers of reporters did not know for instance what the abbreviations HRC (almost 30% for the country as a whole) and TRC (almost 20% for the country as a whole) stand for. One enterprising reporter averred that the former stands for ‘Heidelberg Rugby Club’. Reporters also did not know who the captain of Bafana Bafana is (more than 30% for the country as a whole), or could not name the major South African media groups (here, however, respondents had to name two media groups correctly to score 1 mark. Most of them could name at least one media group correctly, but not two as was asked in the questionnaire). Despite the fact that the Staggie news event occurred in the Western Cape, more than 70% of reporters from that region could not correctly name at least one reporter who was involved in that case as well as ‘section 205’ of the relevant Act. Many could, however, name one of the reporters, but they again had to name both the reporter and the article of the act to score 1 mark. The fact that they either named a reporter or the article pointed towards reporters not thoroughly reading questions as they were asked.

As far as reporters’ affiliation to specific racial or ethnic groups was concerned, both news editors and editors highlighted the fact that a new group of reporters is emerging not necessarily affiliating themselves to the history of the ‘old South Africa’. Irrespective of race, language, or ethnic grouping, they indicated that reporters form a new group of ‘media workers’ who are concerned about similar issues impacting on their lives (e.g. sport, entertainment, and financial issues such as interest rates). This was clearly illustrated by the fact that in most cases about 70% of respondents did not know how many people were killed during the Sharpeville shootings in 1960. However, all respondents who participated in the audit knew that Nelson Mandela was the country’s first democratically elected president and that the late Govan Mbeki was president Thabo Mbeki’s father.

Reporters were also found to be lacking the skills to do a relatively uncomplicated calculation (percentage).¹¹

One possible reason given for reporters' lack of general knowledge skills could be the lack of a reading culture among younger reporters, especially when compared to the previous generation.¹²

Figures 3-8 give a breakdown in percentages of the extent to which reporters in the audit **were not in a position to give the correct answer** to the general knowledge/news questions asked. In each instance, the findings are given for individual areas, as well as for the country as a whole (N=112). The questions related to the figures are given in each instance.

Reporters' level of skills on scientific issues (history) also seems to be alarmingly low. In Durban, for instance, more than 60% of respondents did not know who formulated the theory of relativity. More than one third of respondents for the country as a whole also did not know the correct answer to this question. Similarly, almost half of respondents in Johannesburg were not able to indicate correctly who formulated the theory of evolution. Again, for the country as a whole, almost one third could not give the correct answer. These findings might highlight the fact that reporters lack the basic skills and background knowledge to effectively contextualise a story or put it within the relevant framework. The fact that general knowledge skills are not on par negatively influenced them to 'see the bigger picture' within which their stories needed to fit.

¹¹ Editors also expressed the sentiment that skills essential for modern-day reporters are not adequately addressed. These include knowledge of and training in subjects like economics, contemporary history, political science and the like. It was argued that tertiary institutions should train students in these subjects, in order for them to have better contextualization skills, more insight into social issues and eventually better output in terms of the reports they write. This also related to calculations and mathematical skills.

¹² Although this assumption might partly be true, it is not the case across the board. There seems to be general consensus that the younger generation of reporters does not read as widely and in depth as their older and more experienced peers and their counterparts would have done two or three generations ago (e.g. all newspapers available, news magazines, topical fiction and non-fiction books). However, it seemed that they now rather turn their attention to the Internet where they read specific interest related copy. When having to form a perception of whether young people read or not, this type of reading was not always taken into account.

Figure 3: General knowledge - Local political issues (% of incorrect answers)

(Q1 – Who was the first democratically elected president of South Africa?)

(Q3 – What is the name of President Mbeki's father?)

(Q5 – When was the ANC founded?)

(Q16 – What does HRC stand for?)

(Q26 – What controversial tax was introduced in South Africa as of 1 October 2001?)

(Q2 – Who was the president of the ANC when Nelson Mandela was released from prison?)

(Q4 – How long was Nelson Mandela imprisoned?)

(Q13 – Name one of the photojournalists who refused to testify in the Staggie case, and what law was used to subpoena him?)

(Q17 – What does TRC stand for?)

(Q28 – How many people died in the 1960 Sharpeville shootings, commemorated on 21 March?)

Figure 4: General knowledge – Local and international sport (% of incorrect answers)

(Q6 – Who was the captain of Bafana Bafana in the 1998 world cup?)

(Q7 – What is SA’s national women’s soccer team called?)

Figure 5: General knowledge – Local and international culture, entertainment and media groups (% of incorrect answers)

(Q8 – Who is Mama Africa?)

(Q12 – Brenda Fassie was the front woman for a famous SA band in the 1980s. What was the name of the band?)

(Q21 – Who painted the Mona Lisa?)

(Q25-3 – Indicate the organisation/institution Vuyo Mbuli is associated with)

(Q27 – Name two large media groups in South Africa)

(Q11 – Which South African musician has been in prison for years since he was accused of being involved in an armed bank robbery?)

(Q18 – Who wrote The Lord of the Rings?)

(Q24 – Who is the author of the Harry Potter books?)

(Q25-5 – Indicate the organisation/institution Anant Naidoo is associated with)

Figure 6: General knowledge – Local and international geography (% of incorrect answers)

(Q9 – What were the previous names of: Harare, Mpumalanga, Zimbabwe, Maputu?)
(Q15 – What is the new name for the Northern Province?)

(Q10 – What are the capital cities of: Libya, Egypt, Kenya, Botswana, Zambia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, United States, Britain?)

Figure 7: General knowledge - International issues (% of incorrect answers)

(Q14 – Are the 2002 Zimbabwean elections for president only or for president and parliament?)

(Q23 – Name the former leader of Yugoslavia/Serbia who is appearing before a UN war crimes tribunal.)

(Q25-2 – Indicate with which organisation/institution Alan Greenspan is associated.)

(Q29 – What is the new currency of the European Union called?)

(Q22 – Name the Nobel prize-winning author of Nigeria?)

(Q25-1 – Indicate with which organisation/institution Bill Gates is associated.)

(Q25-4 – Indicate with which organisation/institution Michael Woerfel is associated)

(Q30 – If 4 000 000 Zimbabwean citizens indicated that they were going to vote, and 2 000 000 indicated that they were not going to vote, what percentage of Zimbabwean citizens will vote?)

Figure 8: General knowledge – Science (% of incorrect answers)

(Q19 – Who formulated the theory of relativity?)

(Q20 – Who formulated the theory of evolution?)

5.1.3 Awareness of/sensitivity to South African issues

Reporters experienced great difficulty with this section (see category A3 in Addendum A). As was indicated in the preliminary report, respondents for instance questioned the 5W's and the H of some statements, as well as source-related elements (e.g. who said it, where was it published?) instead of responding to or indicating the issues they found troubling about the list of statements given. Although the issue was explained to editors and news editors responsible for the questionnaires, reporters overall did not deal with the section as was expected of them.¹³

Almost all media sites visited agreed that this is an element receiving proper attention in the newsrooms.¹⁴

5.1.4 Legal awareness/sense of fairness

In terms of this section (Category A4 in Addendum A), reporters were given a list of statements, and they had to indicate the major problem with the statement from a legal point of view. A list of 5 possible answers was given to each of the statements. Reporters seemed more aware of what some legal problems were than they were aware of the sensitivity issues discussed above, but very high percentages did not know the answers to some very basic legal issues. Figure 9 illustrates how reporters performed on this issue (figures given are percentages of reporters who did not know the correct answer).

The results obtained from this part of the audit absolutely supported the need for training in media law.¹⁵

¹³ Although one would, for instance, expect the majority of South African reporters to be sensitive to the politically correct reference to for instance 'a rape survivor' rather than 'a rape victim', or 'someone living with HIV/Aids' and not 'someone suffering from HIV/Aids', very few could indicate troubling elements about these statements. Reporters could not interpret fairly straightforward statements correctly, highlighted by the fact that more than one quarter (26%) did not know what was troubling with the statement 'The rape victim described the alleged rapist as a young black man'. Similarly, 89% could not indicate the troubling element about the statement 'Three million are thought to have died of Aids' instead of 'Three million are thought to have died of Aids-related illnesses'.

¹⁴ It was stated in more cases than not that this was an element prevalent throughout the news process and that reporters were continuously made aware where, when and how they did not adhere to this policy. This is done on both a formal and an informal basis (e.g. the examples mentioned above, as well as not mentioning a news person's race unless it is absolutely necessary for comprehension of the news story).

¹⁵ It was clear that reporters lack the necessary media law skills to know legal boundaries. Judgement on these issues is generally left to the news editors or senior people within the newsroom, because junior reporters do not have the skills to handle it. One possible reason for this might be that after 1994 many training institutions put less emphasis on media law training due to a more open society and the lifting of restrictive media laws, as well as the guarantee of press freedom in the constitution. However, in the process important aspects such as defamation, the sub judice rule, the section 205 issue, and copyright seemed to have fell by the wayside. One news editor even went as far to state that he experienced a general disregard for media law issues that could be pushed to the ultimate 'boundaries' (e.g. the sub-judice rule) among people working in the news environment. The other side of the coin is, however, also true. At one publication, the editor specifically pointed out that they would disregard certain media laws if they considered it to be violating South Africa's new constitution.

Figure 9: Legal awareness/fairness

(Q1 – Police yesterday arrested Mr John Smith for allegedly raping a 16 year old girl.)
(Q3 – Johan Smit [16] was apprehended by the police for shop-lifting.)

(Q5 – In the divorce paper she alleged that her husband repeatedly had relationships with other women.)

(Q7 – It is expected that Judge Williamson will today rule in favour of the applicant.)

(Q9 – A search has been mounted by police for a rugby player who raped Mrs Charmaine Winterbuck.)

(Q11 – South Africa has entered into negotiations with the United States for the purchase of a new anti-submarine advanced radar detector for the SA Navy.)

(Q2 – An infamous murderer, John X Killroy, yesterday appeared in court on the charge of murder.)

(Q4 – A Pretoria magistrate yesterday told a grandfather, who indecently assaulted his two grandchildren, that crimes against children are not excusable. Magistrate Henk Nolte told 74-year-old Hendrik Potgieter that the loathsome manner in which he continued to disrespect the sexual integrity of the little girls, Silvia and Anna, showed that the accused felt no remorse. Potgieter has pleaded not guilty since his arrest in December 1998.)

(Q6 – Mr Peter Brown faces charges of molesting his six-year old daughter.)

(Q8 – Police have arrested Jack Verneuk for the murder of Joe Tromp.)

(Q10 – National Intelligence officer Jack Oberholzer has been engaged on a top secret investigation into the activities of African rebel groups in South Africa.)

5.2 Professional profile of reporters

The following section outlines basic elements related to the average professional profile for the reporters who participated in the audit (based on the availability/volunteer sample drawn for the audit).

5.2.1 Race of reporters

Except for Johannesburg, the results indicate that the majority of newsrooms (especially those in Port Elizabeth) are still to a certain extent white¹⁶ (also see footnote 4). This was found despite editors' and news editors' indication that race and gender equality were e.g. high on their mediums' policy agenda.¹⁷

5.2.2 Gender of reporters

The gender profile of the newsrooms was still found to be to a large extent male (also see footnote 4). Despite this, editors and news editors (depending on the specific medium) focused the research team's attention on the fact that gender equality is high on their policy agendas.¹⁸

5.2.3 Reporters' role/title/specialisation

Although it was initially found that smaller newsrooms result in reporters having to play more than one role at a time (or cover more than one beat in their day-to-day activities), this did not seem to be a general trend among reporters who participated in the audit. In some cases, specialised beats like environment, health/social welfare, and crime were identified; it was also found that this probably differed among individual media.¹⁹ An interesting finding was that crime and governmental reporting did not seem to feature strongly among the media

¹⁶ Some audits reflect a change in demographics of reporters, though sub-editing rooms were found to still be largely too white, due to a lack of a natural progression of African reporters to the sub-editing room (some African reporters leave publications for other occupations in the field of communication too early to advance to this level). This situation was exacerbated by the fact that many senior reporters left South Africa before 1994 and again after the 1994 elections. According to one editor, this has created a generation gap between junior reporting staff and senior sub-editors that would take at least 10 years or more to rectify.

¹⁷ The impression was that the media overall strives towards obtaining as much equity in their newsrooms as possible. This does not only relate to their staffing component, but also to news presentation. However, some media managers indicated that they do not merely take on African people for the sake of filling numbers. They felt very strongly about the fact that they would not compromise on quality merely for the sake of having African reporters working in the medium. They indicated that they would rather have fewer resources but good quality, than a fully-fledged representative workforce with poor reporting qualities. It was stressed that a lack of experience and skills linked to high-level pressure of performing a task that a person is not capable of, will eventually destroy the person and result in the company's affirmative action policy being brought into disrepute. In other mediums, however, it was stated that African reporters would be paid up to 50% more than their white counterparts with equal skills levels, just to keep them within the medium.

¹⁸ A general tendency was identified in especially print media that much more attention is given to a racial balance than to the issue of gender equity. The sentiment was also expressed that women are better equipped to work with 'softer' news issues than men. Despite this, it was found in other instances that news organisations pay as much attention as possible to address the gender imbalance in line with the Labour Relations Act. It was found in some newsrooms that the staff component almost solely consisted of female employees, often under 30 years of age and in management positions. It was also stressed by a manager within the broadcasting industry that their specific corporation vigorously addresses the issue of gender. Some editors stressed that a number of female employees had been promoted to assignment editors in the immediate past, with the percentage of assignment editors being appointed in the regions also becoming more balanced in terms of gender equity.

¹⁹ These could definitely be identified as emerging beats, especially in light of the HIV/Aids situation and more attention being paid to environmental hazards and ways to protect the environment.

included in the sample. Within the current social circumstances in South Africa, one would have expected the opposite to be true.

Figure 10 illustrates the breakdown of the most salient roles reporters were found to play within their specific media (figures given as percentages of the total).

Figure 10: Reporters' role/title/specialisation²⁰

In Cape Town, for instance, it was found that the largest number of respondents were employed as general reporters. This was also the case in Johannesburg. It was only in Durban that the majority of reporters were found to be junior reporters. Linked to the question of experience (see below), this draws into question the issue of juniorisation of newsrooms, and the effect this has on the level of skills and output within the South African media.²¹ Due to the fact that many reporters leave the media for other positions, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to specialise in specific beats.

²⁰ Where all variables given in the questionnaire are not displayed in figures, insignificant percentages were found for those variables.

²¹ One of the causes for juniorisation was identified as the high level of staff turnover in a large number of institutions. In contrast to the above finding, editors indicated that many junior reporters only enter their medium for a short period of time before advancing to other media organisations (glamour status, higher remuneration, less stressful circumstances), government departments and/or the private sector. It was envisaged that this situation might redress itself once more stability in newsrooms was reached, programmes were in place to motivate staff and stimulate staff morale, and the necessary incentives have been introduced. An important element relating to this is the fact that good communication should take place between management and reporters especially in order to motivate them. In cases where the newsrooms did become more junior, one way of handling the situation was using stringers, freelance correspondents and interns. Unfortunately, this led to a situation where media organisations have little control over the type of skills, training and background of reporters working for them. Another way of addressing the situation is by using internship students from especially technikons. These were largely regionally based. However, the short period spent at the news organisation results in little time for training and education. The success of this also relies strongly on individual students and their skills/ambition to really become talented reporters, although mentoring would play an important role in their success.

It was found in the empirical research that this does not as such relate to the issue of juniorisation (in years experience), but more to younger people being promoted to higher positions too early in their careers, without having the skills and/or the experience to cope with the demands and pressures of these positions.

Figure 11 illustrates the extent to which juniorisation in the newsroom was actually experienced among the sites visited (figures given as percentages). In the light of the results below, one might argue that juniorisation does not as such reflect on reporters becoming less experienced, but rather becoming younger than a decade or two ago.

Figure 11: Years of experience in this role

Due to the situation in some newsrooms that not only reporters with between 2 and 5 years experience could be included in the sample, quite a number of more experienced reporters (more than 10 years) were identified and included. This could also have impacted on the result that the majority of reporters falling into the category of between 4 and 5 years experience (or more).

Despite the fact that it was statistically found that reporters tended to stay longer in specific roles than was initially anticipated, it was also found that reporters overall had more journalism experience than anticipated. This is illustrated in figure 12 below (figures given as percentages).

Figure 12: Years of journalism experience

Figure 12 indicates that reporters tend to either leave journalism within the first 3 years, or that they stay on for longer periods once they have exceeded the 4 year mark.

A number of editors and news editors stressed the necessity for training junior reporters²², as well as mid-career training for people staying in journalism for longer.²³

5.2.4 Formal journalism training prior to becoming a reporter

In all the geographical regions (except for Port Elizabeth), it was found that more respondents had a Diploma in journalism than a degree,. In Durban, more than half of the respondents indicated that they had a Diploma in journalism, either obtained from the Natal Technikon or the ML Sultan Technikon. News editors and editors in this area also specifically referred to the overall good standard of journalism education at these two institutes.

Although some reporters indicated that they had higher tertiary qualifications than merely B-degrees (e.g. Masters or PhD-degrees), these were in the minority. Overall, but specifically in

²² Attention was in many cases drawn to the lack of skills among junior reporters leaving universities, technikons, or other tertiary training institutions to work in the media. Exaggerating this situation was the overall lack of staff and financial resources within the news media to adequately address the matter through peer-group support or in-house training. These constraints prevent media institutions to take junior reporters through a process of mentoring, guidance and osmosis. Despite this, this style of guidance and in-house training was still indicated as the preferred way of introducing new reporters to certain styles, skills etc.

²³ In some cases, it was highlighted that the training of more senior staff members could in fact be more important than training junior reporters. This especially related to management training, as it was found that news editors (or news managers/directors) were increasingly becoming younger and less experienced. They face the important task of guiding more junior people through the news gathering and news management process, while keeping them motivated and acting within the guidelines of the Employment Equity Act, without having enough experience themselves. Apart from this, the motivational factor of training and retraining more senior reporters should not be underestimated. However, a lack of availability was experienced for these types of courses. In the broadcasting industry reference was for instance made to the management training courses at, for instance Rhodes University, University of Stellenbosch Business School and courses presented by the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism. Linked to this, was the view that more attention should be given to the training of sub-editors. Again, a lack of suitable training courses was identified.

the Western Cape, the Stellenbosch University B-Phil (Journalism) degree featured very strongly, with the majority of editors indicating that the students they receive from this programme are on a much higher level due to the fact that they first did general degrees and then specialised in journalism. The advantages of the formal training agreement between this department and the different media at the Media24 group were highlighted as a very important mechanism to strengthen the relationship between the media and training institutions, as well as improve the general skills level among reporters in the country.²⁴

Although editors and news editors indicated the trend in media was to employ reporters with formal journalism education rather than those with no formal training as a reporter, exceptions to this were found in all regions visited (except maybe Johannesburg) (see figure 13).

Figure 13: Formal journalism training

5.2.5 Short courses/other training completed since becoming a reporter

Editors and news editors highlighted the importance of reporters attending short. It seemed as if close ties exist between various media institutions and the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism in Johannesburg²⁵, and that this was primarily the institute where reporters obtained additional training. However, the fact that the IAJ is based in Johannesburg makes it difficult (and not affordable) for news media in, for instance Cape Town and Port Elizabeth to send enough reporters to attend the courses. Negotiations are, however, underway to also present IAJ courses in the Western and Eastern Cape, making it more accessible to reporters in these areas. Some media organisations also indicated co-operation with, for instance the

²⁴ Although in the minority, some news editors indicated that formal training is not the ultimate solution to a lack of skills in newsrooms. They emphasized that formal training is a good foundation and is definitely needed, but the success thereof ultimately depended on the reporters themselves.

²⁵ Both editors and news editors emphasised the important contribution made by the IAJ, especially in terms of on-the-job training. Editors highlighted reporters' new attitude towards reporting and their 'brushed up' skills and higher levels of motivation after they had attended these courses. Apart from this, news editors working in the broadcasting industry specifically referred to the fact that the IAJ knows the needs of broadcast reporters and that they design their courses to suit the requirements of the television world. Apart from the IAJ, reference was also made to the new journalism program at Wits. Media in Gauteng envisaged that future cooperation would be established with this department.

Poynter Institute and the Freedom Forum for additional skills training, and highlighted the need for increased co-operation with these institutes, so that reporters could further their skills and broaden their experience within the international news context.

Reporters were asked to indicate what short courses/other training they have completed since becoming a reporter. Table 3 indicates which institutions featured most:

Table 3: Training institutions and types of courses offered

Training institution	Type of course
IAJ	Advanced crime reporting Advanced journalism writing Basic reporting Business journalism Computer related journalism Educational reporting Feature writing Financial reporting Gender and journalism HIV/Aids and the media Interviewing skills Photo-editing Political reporting Reporting on race and ethics Sub-editing course
Media 24	Basic article writing Human rights Investigative reporting Legal course Sub-editing Writing techniques
Tertiary training institutions	Desk-top and design (Natal Technikon) Freelance journalism (Cape Technikon) Industrial marketing (Unisa) Mass communication (University of Cairo) Project management (Stellenbosch University Business School)
Industry-related training	Advanced news editing (Sunday Times) Apple Mac (Star) Editing and scriptwriting (SABC) Investigative reporting (SABC) Journalism course (The Star) Newsroom internship (SABC) Radio news (Classic FM) Radio presentation (Classic FM) Sub-editing and layout (Business Day)
Training provided by international institutions	Exchange program (USA) Investigative journalism (Commonwealth) Women and journalism (Sweden) Writing international news (Reuters)
South African business industry	Business reporting (Standard Bank)
Other	Commonwealth and conservation (Wessa) Environmental journalism (Kruger National Park) Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL)

5.2.6 Types of journalism training institutions

The results indicated that the era of in-house training has largely ended. A few noticeable exceptions have been found, the prime example being Media24. Smaller newsrooms, smaller

budgets *vis-à-vis* larger demands to increase circulation, increased competition, and deadline pressure results in in-house training becoming almost impossible.²⁶

An area which seems to have grown in providing tertiary training for journalists, is technikons. This is especially true in the Durban area, while it seems that for the country as a whole more reporters obtained their formal journalism training from technikons than from universities. Figure 14 outlines the types of training institutions where formal journalism training was obtained (figures given as percentages).

Figure 14: Type of formal training institution

Reporters were also given a list of subjects from which they had to indicate majors or minor subjects included in their journalism training curricula. Results indicated that the extent to which specific subjects were included or excluded in the curricula differed largely depending on the specific institution and/or area where the reporter studied. Figures 15 and 16 give an overview of the different major subjects being included in curricula, while figures 17 and 18 highlight the minor subjects (figures given as percentages).

²⁶ The above led to a different approach in current in-house training. Due to a lack of time, senior reporters and/or news editors do not work sufficiently enough with junior reporters on their stories anymore. The latter are being ‘thrown into the deep end’, and often have to report on major events without adequate skills and/or experience, nor feedback from senior colleagues. Where time and resources are devoted to the issue of in-house training, media organizations (over time) obtain a clear picture of where reporters’ strengths and weaknesses are and to address these effectively. In-house training was one of the areas identified by editors and news editors in which the MAPP Seta money could be invested.

Figure 15: Major subjects in journalism diploma/degree

Figure 16: Major subjects in journalism diploma/degree (continued)

Figure 17: Minor subjects in journalism diploma/degree

Figure 18: Minor subjects in journalism diploma/degree (continued)

5.2.7 Language in which reporters most often write their news reports

Throughout the country (except for the Durban area) there seemed to be a general tendency for reporters to mainly work in English or Afrikaans. Twice as many reporters indicated that they write reports in English than in Afrikaans. The following figure illustrates the distribution in terms of regions as well as for the country as a whole:

Figure 19: Language

Except for Port Elizabeth and to a smaller extent the Durban area, a significant percentage of reporters in each of the regions indicated that the language they most often wrote news reports in was not their mother tongue. This was the case in especially Johannesburg (more than 50% of reporters do not work in their mother tongue), as well as Cape Town (more than 30%). This situation could exaggerate the situation of reporters not being able to spell correctly or formulate sentences in a journalistically acceptable manner. This inevitably impacted on the need for language skills training in the country.²⁷

Figure 20 illustrates the extent to which the above situation applies to the different regions, as well as to South Africa as a whole.

Figure 20: Reporters not working in their mother tongue

²⁷ A refrain running throughout media newsrooms is the lack of emphasis on the teaching of basic language, grammar, and syntax skills (especially in English). Many interviewees were of the opinion that in the past reporters had no formal journalism training qualifications, but they had language skills. Today news media mostly insist on journalism qualifications, but too few people have good language skills. Concurrence was found on the view that language courses should be reintroduced and that the very basic elements of language should receive far greater emphasis than is currently the case. Compared to print media, news editors in the broadcasting media indicated a sentiment that too little attention is paid to training reporters in 'broadcast language'. More attention should be given to issues such as voice articulation, pronunciation, and projection, especially in technikon training curricula where more attention is given to practical elements of journalism reporting. Many editors in the broadcasting industry indicated that they were more concerned about reporters' ability to pronounce words correctly than to spell them correctly. This sentiment might create a problem when reporters working in the broadcasting industry left for print media or when sub-titles are used in broadcasting.

5.2.8 Monthly remuneration

This issue again varied across the different regions of the country, as well as different media organisations. Whereas it was found that reporters working in the print media largely earned between R1 000 and R5 999 per month (probably closer to R5 999 than to R1 000), salary figures were much higher in the broadcasting industry. The largest number of respondents with a monthly income between these two amounts mentioned above were found to be in the Durban area (more than 80% of respondents). Johannesburg had the highest response for reporters earning between R6 000 and R10 999 per month, as well as for those earning between R16 000 and R20 999 per month.

Apart from this, a correlation was also found between race, gender, geographical location of the medium, type of medium and remuneration:

- 33% of reporters who indicated that they earn between R1 000 – R5 999 were coloured;
- 27% of reporters who indicated that they earn between R6 000 – R10 999 were African, with 47% of reporters who indicated that they earn the above amount of money were found to be white;
- almost half of respondents (41%) who indicated that they earn between R6 000 – R10 999 were located in Cape Town, with 35% of these being located in Johannesburg;
- equal percentages of reporters who earn between R6 000 and R10 999 were male and female (50% each). More female reporters than male reporters, however, indicated that they earn between R1 000 and R5 999 per month; and
- the medium with the highest level of monthly remuneration was found to be daily newspapers. 33% of respondents in the R6 000 – R10 999 income category stated that they worked at these mediums.

Despite the above, the research team found indications that African reporters were in some cases paid more than their white counterparts, with this group of reporters also being scarcer than white reporters and subsequently more in demand.²⁸

²⁸ Strong and differing views were found as far as this issue was concerned. On the one hand, some editors in the print media indicated that well-skilled African reporters are so scarce that they would pay them up to 50% more than their white counterparts in an effort to keep their skills within the specific medium. On the other hand, news editors at an independent broadcasting medium as well as in print media considered this unfair practice and discrimination against the person's peers. Their general feeling was that their medium would not get involved in a

While editors and news editors alike indicated that they consider the level of reporters' remuneration to be too low, reporters themselves did not consider this to be one of the major issues hampering their development as reporters (see figure 21).

Figure 21 gives a breakdown (according to the percentages found) of the different scales of remuneration as per region and for the country as a whole:

Figure 21: Monthly remuneration

5.2.9 Most important elements hampering and promoting progress as a reporter

Reporters were asked in an open-ended question to indicate the three most important elements hampering their progress as a reporter. Numerically, the following was found, as indicated in figure 22²⁹:

price war for reporters – even if this meant losing skilled people, and that the so-called 'bidding war' was paying journalism a disservice.

²⁹In terms of the individual clusters, the following elements were identified:

- **infrastructure:** lack of e-mail facilities, lack of financial support for infrastructure;
- **language skills:** lack of third language skills;
- **management of news:** lack of ethics and honesty in newsrooms, lack of media freedom (societal intimidation), external pressure (politicians, peer and other groups), internal pressure (news management, peer group);
- **management of staff:** effect of affirmative action, lack of feedback, lack of mentoring, coaching and buddy systems not working, stigma of mentoring, coaching and buddy systems, lack of recognition (apart from by-lines), lack of support structure;
- **management style:** lack of news focus (vague or no news policy), poor career path planning, red-tape, top-heavy structures, lack of vision;
- **news selection, reporting, writing:** lack of focus, frustration of having stories rewritten by someone else, lack of news policy (uncertainty about standards, angles), lack of quality (e.g. in-depth reporting, follow-ups);
- **remuneration:** unequal payment for same level of work;
- **personal development:** lack of mid-career courses, lack of education, lack of motivation, lack of research facilities, lack of knowledge, lack of internships, lack of computer skills, lack of opportunities for growth, lack of funding, need to develop professionalism, need to develop timeliness, lack of multi-skilling, lack of on-going evaluation, lack of exposure to other media, lack of incentives and promotion, policies not transparent or fair, demotivation.

Figure 22: Elements hampering reporters' progress (figures depicted on a numerical basis)

In terms of elements promoting their progress as reporters, the following was stated as is numerically depicted in Figure 23:³⁰

From reporters' point of view a lack of language skills did not prevent them in producing good quality reports. However, as indicated earlier, editors and news editors identified this element as one of the most important factors hampering reporters' news output. From reporters' point of view, however, personal development was a much more important element that needed to be addressed.

³⁰ In terms of the individual clusters, the following elements were identified:

- **infrastructure:** IT, office equipment, library resources;
- **freedom of the media:** freedom to report;
- **language skills;**
- **management of news:** special beats, diverse opportunities;
- **management of staff:** effect of affirmative action, debriefing and feedback, feeling part of media system, mentoring and coaching, being able to develop a network, peer input, recognition, editor as role model, being respected as a journalist in society, support structure;
- **management style:** funds being made available, good management, planning, vision;
- **news selection, reporting, writing:** being in a position to report news with fairness;
- **other:** need for a driver's licence.

Figure 23: Elements promoting reporters' progress (figures depicted on a numerical basis)

6. Results of the evaluation of reporters' skills by news editors

As indicated previously, news editors evaluated a total of 102 news reports for the purpose of the audit. These evaluations determined areas where news editors rated reporters as being 'average' to 'poor'. In identifying these areas, interventions are to be planned to address problems and improve the overall level of skills among reporters working in the South African media.

In the questionnaire for reporters (Addendum A), respondents were also asked to rate the following on a scale of 1-5 (where 5 = excellent and 1 = poor):

- General standard of news reporting in the medium where they currently work within the South African context;
- Standard of reporting at the medium where they currently work; and
- The level of their own reporting.

The evaluation done by reporters themselves on these issues was used to form the background against which news editors' evaluations could be rated.

Figures 24-26 provide the results for respondents' rating of the above three issues (figures given as percentages).

- **General standard of news reporting in the medium where they currently work within the South African context:** in each of the regions, as well as for the country as a whole, this aspect was rated as either 'good' or 'average'. Depending on the region, between 30% and 55% of respondents considered this to be the case (see figure 24);

Figure 24: General standard of news reporting (medium specific)

- **Standard of reporting at the medium where they currently work:** while some of the reporters considered the standard of reporting in the medium they currently work in as being excellent, the majority (between 35% and 55%) considered it to be either 'good' or 'average'. In terms of excellence of the medium, reporters working in the media in Johannesburg considered their specific mediums to be not as good as their counterparts in other parts of the country (see figure 25); and

Figure 25: Standard of reporting (medium specific)

- **The level of their own reporting:** again between 5% and 12% of respondents considered their own reporting to be excellent. However, the majority (between 20% and 70%) thought their own level of reporting was either 'good' or 'average' (see figure 26). This was a contradiction in terms of earlier findings (see figure 2). When reporters were asked what they would address if they were in charge of journalism skills training, they highlighted a strong need for news gathering, practical and writing skills. News editors and editors alike highlighted this sentiment throughout the interviews. Despite this, they rated their own standard of reporting (see figure 26) as well as the standard of reporting in their mediums (see figure 25) as either 'good' or 'excellent'. The lack of skills to accurately evaluate the standard of their own reporting and the standard of reporting in South African

media in general *vis-à-vis* the more negative perception among news editors clearly requires intervention.

Figure 26: Standard of own news reporting

The above rating provides a good background for the level of skills rating provided by the news editors and based upon a most recent story that the reporters had written. The issues regarding the reporters' reporting skills, writing skills and accuracy skills based on the different issues included in the 'Checklist for newsroom situation, Questionnaires 1 and 2 (see Addendum B) are subsequently discussed.

6.1 Reporting skills

One of the major issues leading to the audit was the apparent lack of reporting skills among (especially junior) reporters. The following provides a breakdown of the way in which news editors evaluated their reporters' skills, based upon an assessment of '5' = 'excellent' and '1' = poor. In each instance the graphs and the discussions focus on those areas where reporters' skills were considered to be between 'average' and 'poor', as these make up the critical areas to which attention should be paid in skills training (figures are given as percentages of $N^3 = 102$).

Figure 27 illustrates the extent to which problem areas were identified in terms of story development and insight into story contexts.

Figure 27: Lack of skills to develop story ideas and lack of insight into story context

6.1.1 Development of story

During the interviews news editors and editors overall commented that reporters generally lack the ability to develop a story or to come up with story ideas to be followed up. Various methods were discovered through which this situation is addressed at the different media visited.^{31 32}

When news editors had to rate the extent to which reporters did not develop their own story ideas, it was found that between 30% and 60% of reporters evaluated did not initiate the specific story used by themselves. However, it seemed as if reporters themselves still initiated more stories than the news editor, the diary or another source. It was only in the Durban area that more stories were initiated by the above sources than by the reporters themselves.

In one sense, an encouraging finding was that the evaluation from news editors indicated that more original stories were submitted than follow-ups. Although this indicated that new story ideas are being developed more often, the negative side is that fewer stories are investigated further, and less research is being done on new and different angles to a story.³³

6.1.2 Relevant issues being taken into account when submitting the story

Figure 27 indicates that few news editors regarded taking relevant issues into account when submitting the story to be a major problem. They indicated that between 10% and 20% of the reporters sufficiently considered all these issues. However, during the interviews with editors, this issue was highlighted as being a problem to which more attention should be given.³⁴

6.1.3 The impact of deadline pressure on submitting a story

Between 10% and 34% of reporters were evaluated as submitting a story by deadline, even though there might still be mistakes or not enough information. Increased pressure on newsrooms was identified as one of the facts contributing to this situation – pressure for

³¹ One of the ways in which news editors encouraged reporters to improve their ability to develop a story idea is through establishing and fostering their own news networks. These did not only relate to local and national networks, but especially also to international ones. Recent cases in point where such international networks contributed largely towards the national media industry distributing credible information on hard news issues were the September 11 terrorist attacks in the USA and the recent presidential elections in Zimbabwe.

³² The research team also identified another ‘unique’ way of encouraging the development of story ideas. At a magazine in Gauteng, the news editor indicated that they regularly have staff meetings where all the staff members working for the magazine are present (including security personnel working at the gates, cleaning staff etc.). During these meetings, the discovery of new story ideas is encouraged, and when some of the supporting staff came up with a unique idea, a member of the reporting staff is assigned to investigate it further. This approach did not only stimulate the identification of new story ideas, but also leads to a situation where supporting staff members made a contribution to the publication as well as identifying important issues within the community which might not have been uncovered before.

³³ One of the contributing factors to this situation was identified as the generation gap discussed earlier. Junior reporters often do not have the experience and the insight to discover unique angles to stories, and in many cases, this is left to the sub-editors or more senior members of staff (with a different approach and/perspective to the story).

³⁴ A lack of resource (both human and financial) leads to a situation where junior reporters cannot find their feet in specific beats quickly enough. The result of this is that they submit stories without taking into account all the relevant news issues. This situation is exaggerated by the branching out of media activities into relatively new beats such as health, environment and education. Because senior staff members do not always have the time available to coach juniors into developing skills in these areas, improving the situation within the newsroom becomes difficult. Junior reporters also need to take responsibility for a wider range and more diverse news issues than in the past.

higher circulation figures, to be first with a new story, increased turnover and audience expectations.³⁵

News editors and editors also indicated that junior reporters often lack the commitment to produce a story (within tight deadline pressure) as best they could. Deadline pressure might have become a good excuse to not thoroughly investigate all angles, gather all relevant information, and check the correctness of inputs used.³⁶

6.1.4 Giving sufficient background for the reader/listener/viewer to gain insight into the news event

Whereas reporters in Port Elizabeth were more likely to provide sufficient background to the stories, reporters in Durban were less likely to do so. In Port Elizabeth, for instance, only 6% did not succeed in doing this. In Durban, 28% of reporters evaluated did not provide sufficient background into news events.

Editors and news editors contributed this situation to a number of issues, e.g.:

- a change in the demographics and composition of media audiences and media staff.³⁷ Audiences have become more diverse, with a wider range of possible issues needed to be taken into account to provide insight into the news event.³⁸ This also calls for a new approach towards news presentation;
- juniorisation of the newsroom;³⁹ and
- a lack of insight from reporters in the print media that they needed to give audiences something else and something more fundamental in their reporting compared to the broadcast media.⁴⁰

³⁵ Because stories need to be presented on tight deadlines, reporters often do not have enough time to adequately research a story. In the case of junior reporters, they also lack the depth of personal knowledge and/or experience on specific issues, exaggerating the situation. One news editor labelled this way of approaching news as a 'production habit' rather than a 'research habit'.

³⁶ This leads to a situation where editors, news editors, sub-editors or other senior staff members are often required to correct/point out the gaps or mistakes in junior reporters' stories. This specifically related to reporters not considering all relevant sources, not checking all the information for correctness, etc.

³⁷ Changing demographics under news reporters were specifically experienced at on-line media. Because reporters working at these media are younger (below 30), they predominantly form part of the group of an 'upward moving mobile' audience. As a result, they see themselves coming without the (especially political) baggage of the past, and having a unique perspective to present to the news medium they work in. Reporters therefore have a new perspective of what news is. The nature of their medium also allows them to move the traditional boundaries of news more easily (e.g. news on gay and lesbian issues). Apart from this, they present young reporters and readers with the opportunity of opening up the new e-world with a vast range of ideas, issues and perspectives.

³⁸ In Durban, for instance, it was indicated that a radical change took place not only in the demographic composition of the readership, but also the staff complement. Whereas readership in this area (and for the specific medium where it was mentioned) has been predominantly white, it has over the last 10 years changed to around 45% white, 33% Indian and 20% African. Predominantly 'white' news therefore had to make way for more 'coloured' news. However, the fact that the majority of new reporters employed come from the African component, affected their capacity to interpret and portray news to almost 80% of readers who are not African. The same was found at a Cape Town Afrikaans daily, where 40% of buyers were white Afrikaans-speaking, but 60% of their readers were coloured Afrikaans speaking people.

³⁹ This was a problem specifically highlighted in daily newspapers. A lack of resources contribute to the fact that reporters are becoming younger and less experienced, resulting in a situation where they are less experienced to provide adequate insight into a news story.

⁴⁰ Journalists do not realize that they need to delve deeper into a story in order to present more to the reader than what they could obtain through the broadcast media. Journalists increasingly regard news in the same way as their audiences (short, brief versions of the news reality), and this perception needs to be changed in order to add more to the news event than broadcast media does.

One solution for this situation might be to encourage reporters to read more, become more enthusiastic about their news stories, etc. As one manager at an on-line medium put it: Deadlines for submitting stories are becoming increasingly shorter. As a result, reporters should be taught and encouraged to be first with a story, read more, have an open mind towards news events in the world around them, and give a unique angle to a story already carried. They need to be more adaptable, source information from reliable sources and provide a sense of continuity towards a story. If all these elements are attended to sufficiently, reporters will be put in a position where they will be able to provide more/better background information for a story and have a greater sense of other relevant issues in the news environment.

6.1.5 Presenting the facts without editorialising

Although not a major problem, editorialising does seem to be something that would have to be addressed. Again, it was found that reporters in the Durban area were more likely to editorialise (19% did not submit a story without editorialising), while those in Cape Town seemed to be the least likely to do so (0%). For the country as a whole, the quantitative assessment found that 8% of reporters had a problem with this issue.

One of the reasons why reporters are becoming more likely to editorialise than might have been the case in the past, is the larger emphasis on freedom of speech and freedom of opinion when compared to a couple of decades ago. Reporters lack the skills, though, to distinguish between editorialising and giving more angles/perspectives to a news event.⁴¹

6.1.6 News stories resulting from enterprise, inventiveness or resourcefulness on the part of the reporter

The lack of enterprise on the part of reporters seemed to be a problem among the majority of media sites visited. In the quantitative assessment, it was found that more than 40% of stories evaluated were not the result of enterprise on the part of the reporter (see figure 27).

In terms of the different regions, the situation seems to need the most urgent attention in Port Elizabeth, where more than 50% of stories evaluated were not the result of enterprise from the reporters' side.

Reporting staff, however, seem to be divided into two groups as far as this issue is concerned:

- junior reporters on the one hand, with an overall lack of initiative.⁴² In many cases, the situation is so negative that news editors or other staff members were concerned about the level of performance on their behalf. News editors also need to constantly

⁴¹ Editors and news editors stressed that many reporters know very little about the difference between newspaper policy on one hand and the issue of editorialising on the other. Few seem to realize that newspapers do have a particular point of view, which influences not only story or topic choices, but also the presentation of those issues. On the other hand, junior and senior reporters at some media tend to think that they could editorialise within an own personal context divorced from the medium's news policy. The larger freedom in handing out by-lines also contributes to the above (see later).

⁴² Editors did mention, however, that there are exceptions to this, and that a certain group of junior reporters should not necessarily be included in this group.

feed these reporters with story ideas, check information on their behalf, contact sources not being included in the report, etc. It has been indicated that when reporters from this group do come up with a story idea, the news editor still needed to integrate the information into the news story and make sure about the content thereof. Although news editors specifically pointed out that they do experience an improvement in the skills of reporters as they gain more experience in the newsroom, this improvement is not overall satisfactory; and

- this situation seems to be different, though among more senior members of staff. These reporters were said to constantly interact with the news desk and their initiative is good. This was found to especially be the case in business and feature writing. A lack of resources (human and financial) and time, however, prevent these reporters from mentoring or guiding the above group of junior reporters in order to improve their skills levels significantly enough. In addition, due to the generation gap described earlier, there are not sufficient numbers of these staff members to compensate for the lack of enthusiasm among junior staff.

6.1.7 Insight into the story context – insight into the specific story’s relevance within the broader news context

All individual regions of the country scored more or less equally on this issue. In almost all cases, 20% of reporters evaluated did not provide insight into the story’s relevance within the broader news context (see figure 27). Again, editors and news editors contributed this situation to a number of causes, namely:

- a lack of in-house training (as discussed earlier);⁴³
- a lack of or a changing reading culture among (especially) junior and younger reporters;⁴⁴
- a lack of curiosity about major issues occurring in the world around them, as well as a lack of enterprise to identify these issues and getting to know more about them;⁴⁵
- flattening of the hierarchical structure within newsrooms influencing reporters’ learning curve and exposing them to more difficult situations for which they often

⁴³ Junior reporters are subsequently put into positions where they need to handle major stories without feedback and input from senior journalists. This inevitably contributes to the lack of insight into the story’s relevance within the broader news context. Without proper in-house training programmes, media are not in a position to identify reporters’ strengths and weaknesses and concentrate on improving these.

⁴⁴ This impedes on reporters’ ability to contextualize news. Editors and news editors expressed a strong opinion that junior people enter journalism without having the advantage of a reading culture which would have enabled them to contextualize not only run-of-the-mill stories (e.g. crime stories), but also those important stories they have to deal with at a very early stage of their careers. One of the reasons given for this lack of reading culture is perhaps the influence of the broadcast media and flawed assumption that having a basic overview of relevant news issues can be compared to having thorough knowledge of these issues. However, this situation was qualified to some extent with a number of news editors pointing out that junior reporters do read, *albeit* only those specific topics they are interested in. Unfortunately, however, it was also indicated that within this scenario, junior reporters often forget about the bigger picture of journalism and the important issues related to this. Not even their own media (or even worse) their own stories facilitate a better understanding of news and the news process.

⁴⁵ Many reporters’ lack of interest in journalism as a specific occupation (differentiating it from any other job) leads to a lack of extra effort in reading, networking, attending functions etc., especially in their own time. The need was expressed that education and training at journalism departments in the country should also include teaching reporters to take initiative, be pro-active and get their own grasp of reality and news issues in the world around them.

- neither have the reporting skills nor the reporting experience to effectively deal with;⁴⁶
- lack of peer group discussions and exchange of ideas among peers.⁴⁷

6.1.8 Critical abilities and accountability – factual accuracy

One of the major factors contributing to this audit was the sense of irritation among government that the level of reporting on their people, their positions, their programmes and their policies was not factually correct, resulting in unfair and unbalanced reporting. It was specifically emphasized that although skills training can play an important role to alleviate this situation (or at least remove some irritation in this regard), it is only part of the solution and it should not be done only to keep government happy. Deeper-rooted issues were identified as playing perhaps an even more significant role (see earlier). Linked to this is some media's stance that a report based on fact (but inevitably implying race, gender or social group) is not necessarily a negative reflection on the person or institution per se. It should rather be seen as positive reporting, exposing wrongdoing in order to contribute towards nation-building.

The fact that junior journalists are in many cases required to work on the level of senior staff members leads to a situation where a lack of experience limits the quality of output. To a certain extent, this also limits junior staff members' critical abilities and accountability to the reports they submit. The changing nature of emerging media also makes it easier for reporters to be factually inaccurate and 'get away with it'. Electronic on-line media (and to a smaller extent radio) enables reporters to 'kill' their mistakes almost immediately. Although this does not mean that reporters need to be less accurate, mistakes can be rectified quicker than in the 'traditional' media.

Although editors and news editors expressed concern about the lack of accuracy, it was not found to be one of the major issues hampering reporters' output. As figure 29 below

⁴⁶ In a news context where juniorisation seems to be the trend of the day (according to media management), there is not much interaction between junior and senior journalists whereby juniors can mirror their story ideas or facts against the experience of senior staff members. In such a flattened structure, stories not being submitted print-ready by junior reporters tend to bottleneck with, for instance, news/sub-editors during deadline periods. These editors do not necessarily have the time to verify all aspects of the story, hence stories appear to overall be of a 'low standard'.

⁴⁷ This contributes towards a lack of guidance from peers. Subsequently they often need to cover beats for which they do not have sufficient background of experience and for which they do not get informal support. In many cases this is also encouraged by the fact that many reporters tend to leave the office for home as soon as a story has been 'dropped', preventing themselves from obtaining guidance and feedback from colleagues that are more senior. One element, which could contribute to this situation, is the electronic news process in newsrooms which makes it more difficult for a reporter to 'stay' with his/her story. Moreover, with the electronic system it has also become more difficult for a reporter to later recall a story written and determine where problem areas in the story were addressed by news editors or sub-editors. In a lighter vein, one editor forlornly described this situation as being due to the fact that reporters 'do not visit the watering hole' as a social group anymore – at least not as much as they used to do! More seriously, this comment reflected on the lack of the traditional process of mentoring where juniors could also learn from seniors in a more social environment outside of an immediate work relationship.

At some media, it was stressed that this situation is counteracted as much as possible. Editors and news editors indicated that reporters would stay behind in the newsroom until all the relevant discussions around their stories have taken place. Moreover, should they leave the office and a crisis around their stories arises, they would be phoned at home to obtain the information needed or to verify information given.

This is also addressed at a major media group in Durban where restructuring is resulting in a combined newsroom for a number of publications. In the proposed team system, junior reporters will work on the same team with more experienced reporters, hopefully providing them with the relevant feedback and support to gain more insight into their stories.

illustrates, news editors rated less than 10% of reporters' stories as not being factually accurate.

6.1.9 Sources

This issue touched upon the extent to which reporters lack the skills to use the best possible or most credible sources for a story, whether they have double-checked/verified those sources, or whether they have attributed the information to those specific sources.

The most important area of concern for this issue was not found to be attaining credible sources. For instance, Durban reporters were found to have the lowest skills levels in doing this, as 19% were said to not obtain the best possible sources for the story. Reporters in Cape Town were rated best in achieving this (only 3% were rated as being average on this issue), while in the country as a whole 8% were rated as being 'average' or worse. However, during the interviews, editors and news editors expressed more concern over this issue than was quantitatively found.⁴⁸

An issue, which quantitatively appeared to be a bigger problem, was double-checking sources (see figure 28). Johannesburg reporters were found to be the least likely to double check information (38% of reporters were assessed as not being good on this issue), while in Port Elizabeth it did not seem to be as big a problem. Reporters in the country as a whole seemed to struggle with this issue, as 23% were rated as being average or below. Editors and news editors throughout the country expressed concern about this issue, indicating that serious attention should be given to address the situation.

Linked to the above, as well as to the issue of editorialising and expressing their own views in news reports, is the issue of attributing information to sources. Although reporters were evaluated as being more skilled in this area, low skills levels were for instance still found in Johannesburg (16% scored below average), while Port Elizabeth reporters again rated the best on this issue (see figure 28).

⁴⁸ A number of editors expressed their concern that little thought is overall given to sources and to an effort of making it clear to reporters that a one source story only gives one perspective to the reader/listener/viewer. There seemed to be an overall trend to only cover stories from one perspective, something that is encouraged by the briefness of radio and television reporting. Whereas a political view might not be clear from the specific source contacted for information, journalists generally do not tend to canvas other sources as well. This leads to poor contextualisation throughout newsrooms.

In an independent broadcasting medium, however, the news editor expressed their policy of aiming to get the people who make the news on the news bulletin. He indicated that this resulted in news bulletins and information being perceived by their audiences as much more credible.

Figure 28: Lack of critical abilities and accountability

6.1.10 Stories being fair and honest in terms of balance and completeness

Stories, lacking perspective from a number of sources, could also not be considered fair in terms of balance and completeness. It was indicated throughout the interviews (but especially in the broadcast media) that reporters were discouraged to be unfair and unbalanced in their reporting. However, the need remained to address this issue more definitely.⁴⁹ Many editors also highlighted that they encourage feedback from their audiences, as this could on the one hand give them a more balanced perspective to a story, while on the other also provide new angles to a story.⁵⁰

Problem areas among reporters were specifically highlighted in Durban (14% of reporters were rated below average in being fair and honest in their reports) as well as in Johannesburg (18% were scored below average on this issue). Again, this lack of skills could probably be traced back to a lack of experience, as well as a lack of proper research and deadline pressure, although this should not prevent reporters from being balanced and fair in their comments.

6.1.11 Sensitivity towards the incident and people involved

As was indicated earlier, and highlighted again in figure 28, reporters included in the sample do not have high skills levels as far as sensitivity for South African issues is concerned (at least not in terms of the relevant questionnaire questions). While reporters displayed their lack of sensitivity skills in their individual questionnaires, this was supported by the results obtained from the news editors' assessment questionnaires. Different input was, however, received from editors and news editors during the interview situations.⁵¹

As in previous cases, Durban reporters showed the highest lack of skills in this area (27% were rated as below average), with Johannesburg based reporters displaying an equal lack of sensitivity skills (23% were rated below average). As was found in the questionnaires, this is a problem for reporters in the country as a whole, and should receive urgent attention.

⁴⁹ The need was expressed that students should also be taught on the role of media within society, and especially on issues such as media policy. This should include the argument that so-called 'objective truth' does not exist, but that all media to a greater or lesser extent adhere to certain policies and align themselves with other societal forces. Junior reporters seemed to be unaware of this.

⁵⁰ News editors and editors alike expressed a strong view that reporters should be trained with life skills equipping them with the mindset of being credible, fair, responsible, committed and responsible in reporting not only major, but all news issues. This could be extended further towards reporters realising that mutual respect is needed for the people with whom interviews are conducted, the audience, and especially when gathering news and talking to sources telephonically. Students should be taught that news does not occur within a vacuum, and they should be encouraged to read on broader news issues, be pro-active in obtaining information relevant to the news stories they write, and build international contacts.

The need for typical journalism skills not necessarily being taught in content-based courses was also emphasised. This would, for instance, include reaching deadlines on time, basic rules of courtesy, arriving at appointments on time, adhering to a specific dress code, having respect for others, conducting yourself professionally at all times, as well as personal presentation.

⁵¹ Agreement was found at almost all the media visited that sensitivity is an element receiving proper attention in the newsrooms. Not only did editors and news editors indicate that adequate focus was being put on this issue throughout the news process, but they also stressed that reporters were continuously made aware of where, when and how they did not adhere to this policy. Implementation and focus on this issue was done on both a formal and an informal basis (e.g. living with Aids, women being rape survivors and not rape victims, and not mentioning a news person's race unless it is absolutely necessary for comprehension of the news story).

6.1.12 Personal accountability towards the content of the news report

The lack of enterprise and commitment on behalf of reporters discussed earlier, inevitably led to a lack of personal accountability towards news content.⁵² Although exceptions were again found in individual cases, it was an overall problem among reporters working in the South African media.

The issue of by-lines was highlighted throughout as a problem related to personal accountability.⁵³ This could in turn be closely linked to reporters increasingly obtaining (and wanting to obtain) celebrity status in the media.⁵⁴

Editors' and news editors' sentiment was that a younger generation of reporters has to a large extent lost their enthusiasm and accountability towards their jobs.⁵⁵ This was

⁵² As was indicated earlier, issues like time restraints and a lack of commitment to find the best angle or to check and re-check stories within the time and deadline constraints hampered reporters to take personal accountability for every single story. Together with other factors discussed earlier, this led to a situation where the bulk of the work was often left for others to do, with junior reporters not adding any value to their work. Some of the possible solutions highlighted for this situation were creative solutions, new production methods, a more efficient and performance focused working environment, and optimum staff utilisation.

⁵³ A trend was picked up of especially junior reporters insisting to a large extent on getting by-lines for the stories they write. This was the case irrespective of how long/short the story is, whether the reporter stuck to the story until it was finally published, or how many gaps and errors still occurred in the story when it was submitted. In a number of cases editors (and especially news editors) pointed out that the final story was often not closely the same as the story submitted by the reporter. When by-lines were not given, reporters' personal accountability towards the story further decreased. News editors pointed out that they often experience a credibility problem from reporters when by-lines were not given.

A number of editors pointed out that the publication of by-lines again helped reporters with their networking in the communities, as well as with moving on the same levels as political figures, celebrities and other major role-players. Being known to these people was reporters' way of taking personal responsibility for stories and events in that they have better access to information and more credibility than if they were not known to them.

In other publications, this attitude was completely discouraged. One news editor indicated that reporters only get by-lines for lead stories. Their policy is that if a reporter has not put in a specific level of research to come up with the news product needed, he/she did not need his/her name to be published. They argue that a lead story required more work, and the reporter should subsequently feel proud of the place his/her story has received in the publication.

By-lines are in general not given to reporters if they could be targeted by the public or the government for taking a specific stance in a news report (e.g. for instance as far as a political issue is concerned, or where a reporter has not been 'loyal' enough to a specific sports team or sports person).

⁵⁴ The more frequent allocation of by-lines often led to a feeling that reporters wanted to establish themselves much more as celebrities than reporters committed to the broader policy of the medium. Their mindsets were more driven by becoming a celebrity and finding a career with more than adequate financial rewards. Although some news editors indicated that this element did not necessarily impede negatively on reporters' work and their commitment to their job, the importance thereof was underscored by the fact that when reporters felt they did not receive enough recognition in their particular news medium, they might move on to a next one.

⁵⁵ Older generation editors and news editors alike were of the view that a basic enthusiasm and commitment has to a certain extent been lost in the present generation of young reporters. They experienced a lack of passion for staying on a story until it is completely and correctly dealt with. Due to the easy manner in which by-lines are handed out, reporters do not follow the progress of their stories through previously hierarchical structures, but leave the office as soon as their stories have been 'dropped' into the electronic system. Although exceptions were highlighted throughout, a general trend discernable among junior reporters not being as loyal to their group and their company as was the case some decades ago. Instead, junior reporters were found to be more loyal and responsible towards their personal lives and the challenges that go with that, without sacrificing their professionalism.

However, another view was expressed by a group of younger generation management staff. They felt very strongly about the fact that the younger generation reporters could be regarded as a 'less worried' generation, although this should not be interpreted as them being 'don't care'. They did admit that their generation of reporters were not willing anymore to work long hours under unacceptable working conditions without being paid for their skills, their experience and their contribution. They also admitted that the younger generation

illustrated by the way in which reporters were quantitatively assessed (see figure 28). Almost one third of all reporters evaluated were considered to be average and below in terms of their personal accountability. The situation was found to be the worst in Johannesburg (29% were rated less than average), with Durban again showing poor performance in this area (22% were rated below average). Again, reporters in the country as a whole were not considered skilled in this area of reporting.

Through the feedback from editors and news editors, it seemed as if this issue should be approached more as a management issue than merely a skills issue.⁵⁶ This will be highlighted in the recommendations of the report.

6.1.13 Possible errors/imbalance being brought to the news editor's attention

Of all the elements rated as far as reporting skills were concerned, this was the one where the largest number of errors occurred. More than half of the reporters were found not to bring possible errors to the news editors' attention. This was the worst in Durban (57%) and Cape Town (57%), although Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth rated equally high (39% of reporters did not focus their news editors' attention on possible errors – see figure 28).

This situation could probably be linked to the following issues discussed earlier:

- a lack of skills and experience to identify possible errors;
- a lack of commitment to stay with the story until everything has been addressed;
- a sense that other people in the newsroom will address issues lacking within the story;
- a lack of skills and experience to use sufficient sources.

In turn it can be brought about by issues such as:

- deadline pressure;
- lack of feedback on stories written and possible problems with these;
- lack of interaction with senior colleagues in the newsroom.

Irrespective of what the causes for this situation are, it should be addressed as one of the most important areas where skills among reporters are lacking.

reporters are not focussed as much on the 'cause' of their specific medium as was the case some decades ago. Although the older generation would probably not agree with this stance, younger reporters see themselves as becoming more professional, working within a give-and-take relation with their employer. This does, however, not always take away from them their passion for their jobs and for their profession.

⁵⁶ Although there might be exceptions to this, the majority of younger reporters are of the opinion that their skills and expertise can/should be 'bought' for a specific price, and that they will render a specific level of performance for the company/organisation in return. Although there is an overall lack of the type of commitment found among journalists of yesteryear, reporters' commitment and work ethic has become focused on another level of pride towards their work. As one news editor put it: *Journalism has lost its social cause. It used to be about making a difference, now it is about getting rich.* Apart from this, news editors pointed out that the younger reporters need to be treated differently than a generation ago – they did not want to be told what to do continuously, they were not interested anymore in working day and night without being remunerated adequately, and they wanted to work more independently than in the past. This posed the challenge of managing an emerging generation of reporters in a different way ensuring improved levels of output in the media.

6.2 Writing and accuracy skills

Figure 29 indicates the level on which reporters' skills for organising the story and reporting facts correctly were rated (figures indicated as percentages)

6.2.1 Organising the story

Writing and accuracy skills were found to be even more lacking than reporting skills. As far as properly using the 5W's and the H (question 1) is concerned, for instance, more than one third of reporters included in the audit were rated as being below average (38%).⁵⁷ This situation was even worse in Durban, where 45% of reporters did not use this method to organise the information for their stories. Despite the fact that media organisations in Cape Town, for instance, indicated that they regularly update reporters with these skills through short courses and make them aware of ways in which they have not utilized them, there still seems to be a dire lack of skills in this area.⁵⁸

Although fewer reporters were found to be lacking the skills to utilise the basic news values in writing their reports (question 2), the absence of guidelines, or the lack of using them, was still high, especially in the Durban sample. Almost half of respondents evaluated in this area (40%) were rated below average in applying basic news values. Percentages were lower in Johannesburg (13%) and Cape Town (16%), but still very high for the country as a whole (23%).

⁵⁷ This was the finding despite the fact that a number of media institutes focused the research team's attention on the fact that they encouraged writing and accuracy skills by means of a unique stylebook. The nature of these stylebooks varied between a few guidelines put down in a guide to a complete checklist of correct and incorrect ways of doing things. However, due to a lack of time and human resources explained above, the degree to which individual organisations apply these stylebooks differed. The media generally expressed a concern about limitations to introduce and apply this, as they are aware of the improvement these style guides could have on reporters' overall skills.

⁵⁸ At Media24, for instance, it was pointed out that reporters are regularly guided through courses focusing their attention on specific elements of writing and accuracy. Apart from this, they have also implemented an extensive in-house training programme through which issues related to writing and accuracy are communicated to reporters in the group via an intranet system called scoop.net.

Figure 29: Lack of skills to organise the story and facts correctly

6.2.2 Facts reported correctly

When looking at the low level of skills found in terms of correctly reporting dignitaries' titles, positions etc. (question 3), one can sympathize with the government's irritation with this issue.⁵⁹ An especially low level of skills was found in Cape Town as far as the correct use of names, titles, and positions is concerned. More than one third of respondents (35%) were rated as not having the skills to correctly report on these issues. This result might tie in well with president Thabo Mbeki's problem with reporters being unable to correctly report facts concerning the government. Although lower in other areas of the country (13% in Durban, 10% in Johannesburg, 8% in Port Elizabeth), this issue should be addressed if the overall level of skills and journalism output in the country wants to be improved.

Linked to this is the issue of correct reporting of events (question 4). Again, the majority of reporters found lacking in this area were in Durban (22%). Slightly fewer reporters were found to lack these skills in Johannesburg (20%) and in Cape Town (19%). For the country as a whole, 19% of reporters were rated below average.

6.2.3 Copy tightly and vividly written

As was highlighted by editors and news editors, junior reporters lack the skills to write news reports in a concise, clear, and well-understood fashion. They indicated that there is a general lack of skills to take a number of issues or perspectives and compile those into a report clearly communicating the intended message. An interesting finding was that the majority of Cape Town reporters were evaluated as lacking the most skills in this area. Figure 31 illustrates these findings.

⁵⁹ What should not be underestimated is the responsibility governmental spokespersons have to also provide the media with the correct information. It would not be fair from government's side to criticize the media for not reporting facts accurately if the information they provide contains incorrect details. As was pointed out by one magazine's managing editor, government cannot expect reporters to never make a mistake on this issue if the information brochures/booklets published by government itself contain incorrect names, incorrect pictures for cabinet positions and incorrect titles. Often the media needs to rely on government information provided, and if this information is not correct, it puts media in a difficult position.

Figure 30: Lack of skills to write a story tightly and vividly

In summary, the following can be stated on these findings (figures given as percentages):

- **Effective introductory paragraph:** almost half of reporters in Durban who participated in the audit were rated as lacking the skills to properly write introductory paragraphs (52%). Although this was lower for the rest of the country, Cape Town reporters were also rated equally high (47%) on a lack of skills to effectively communicate the message to their audiences in the introductory paragraph;
- **Clear and concise sentences:** more than half of respondents from Cape Town (56%) were rated as lacking the skills to write clear and concise sentences. For the country as a whole, almost half of respondents (44%) were not rated as performing satisfactorily in this area. One possible reason for this could be attributed to the situation discussed earlier that other people in the newsroom take responsibility for rewriting stories.⁶⁰ This might result in reporters not concentrating as they should on producing the type of product which is acceptable and up to standard even in their initial attempt;
- **Use of active voice:** the fact that the majority of reporters do not write news reports in their mother tongue, might contribute to a lack of skills to write in active voice. Cape Town reporters were again rated the lowest on this issue (more than half of them lacking the skills to write in the active voice – 55%). However, this seemed to be a problem for the country as a whole, as almost half of respondents included in the audit (40%) were rated below average on this issue;
- **Level of skills on technical subjects (e.g. science, medicine):** despite news editors' indications that reporters are more skilled on technical aspects than in the past,⁶¹ very high numbers of reporters were evaluated as lacking these skills. This

⁶⁰ Although a given situation, this often causes unnecessary tension in newsrooms because of political reasons. African reporters would for instance develop an aversion to white sub-editors or staff members constantly rewriting their stories.

⁶¹ The largest majority of news editors and editors pointed out that junior reporters working within their mediums were more skilled on technical aspects of their jobs than in the past. This specifically related to computer skills and issues surrounding IT. As far as their skills for reporting on technical subjects were concerned, the view was overly expressed that it largely depended on the individual reporters. Although not all reporters might have the technical skills to scientifically report on these matters, their knowledge is easily updated by information available on, for instance, the Internet, and through interaction with their peers in the newsrooms where time and

issue was predominant in Johannesburg, where almost half of respondents (47%) were rated on average or below (43% of these were even rated as unsatisfactorily low). As with the above issue, this again seemed to be a countrywide problem (38% being rated average or lower). This might also be linked to the fact that newsrooms are becoming smaller and that inexperienced reporters are often required to report on technical aspects even though they might not have the background or the experience to sufficiently do it. Their lack of general knowledge skills also do not improve this situation;

- **Functional length of paragraphs and sentences:** except for Port Elizabeth, all areas of the country scored more or less equally on this issue. The highest skills levels were found in Port Elizabeth (although 15% were still found to be lacking sufficient skills on this aspect). In the rest of the regions (and the country as a whole) between 32% and 41% of reporters were rated as only having average skills in writing paragraphs and sentences of functional length.

6.2.4 Grammatical errors

Throughout the interviews with editors and news editors it was pointed out that reporters overall lack language and grammar skills.⁶² Again, in some cases this situation was attributed to the fact that reporters did not write in their mother tongue, making it more difficult for them to deliver the expected level of output. It was also found through editors' comments that a new style of writing might be developing among younger reporters where the correct use of verbs, punctuation etc. has become less important than in the past. A trend was also identified where some reporters are moving towards writing in a 'township' language spoken by a younger generation.

Figure 31 outlines news editors' quantitative rating of grammatical skills measured (figures given as percentages):

human resource constraints allowed this. There was, however, some concern about the ability to do in-depth reporting on technical subjects, although it was stressed throughout that the constraints of time and deadline pressure created a situation where the media (especially short inputs made for radio, television and on-line news) did not require or permit in-depth analysis and discussion on technical subjects.

⁶² Besides basic reporting skills, grammar and general language skills were the two areas mentioned by all editors and news editors as being the major problem areas.

Figure 31: Lack of grammar skills

6.2.5 Spelling and typing mistakes

This issue can be linked to grammatical errors above. Figure 32 illustrates the extent to which reporters were found lacking in skills to correctly spell and type (figures given as percentages).

As illustrated by the figure, the most important problems related to the following (this was also confirmed during interviews with editors and news editors):

- **Computer spell checking programme:** Although formal policy in some newsrooms, informal or formal agreements were found in others that reporters were not allowed to use the computer spell-checking programme. The sentiment was that often the spell-checking programme contributed towards reporters not taking adequate care of their stories and the correctness of spelling themselves. Reporters rather relied on the computer to double-check for them. In some of the other language media (e.g. Zulu or Afrikaans), computer spell checking programmes were not available for all reporters to use. Where computer spell checking programmes were used, these could also be responsible for not picking up homonyms were they are incorrectly used; and
- **Correct spelling of names:** Although in the minority, some reporters would write a story on a specific person/institution, without knowing the correct spelling of people's names. There also seemed to be confusion between the identities and names of certain prominent people in especially South African politics. In a number of newsrooms, the team identified notices being put up with 2 pictures, stating below, for instance, that 'this is Mr X Naidoo' and 'this is Mr Y Naidoo'.

Figure 32: Lack of spelling and typing skills

7. Conclusions

The brief of the audit focused on determining the level of reporting, writing, and accuracy skills among reporters with between 2-5 years experience working in the mainstream media in South Africa. After completing the audit and working through the data in the different questionnaires, the focus of the conclusions was highlighted by the issues reporters themselves identified in question 23 of the Questionnaire for reporters (see Addendum A). These were illustrated in figure 2 and discussed in the subsequent section.

These issues will be used as the basis for conclusions, and mainly focus on:

- tertiary training issues; and
- management issues.

7.1 Issues to be addressed on tertiary training level

1. **the lack of basic practical skills (including reporting and writing skills):** some of the most important problems to be addressed are a lack of accuracy, interviewing techniques, research methods, multi-skilling, spelling and punctuation;
2. **the lack of language skills:** a general lack of language skills was identified, as well as the importance of acquiring a third language (preferably an African language, as this would also contribute towards reporters becoming more multi-skilled);
3. **the lack of conceptual skills:** although training institutions generally refer to the fact that they provide students with conceptual skills, little concrete indication could be found as to what this would include. From the audit, however, it was found that conceptual skills are considered to be very important for improving reporters' skills levels. These would include analytical and critical skills, stimulating creativity, and the dire lack of

- general knowledge among reporters. Apart from this, reading skills and a culture of reading should also be part of interventions planned;
4. **the lack of life skills:** this was one of the main findings of the audit. This was not only stressed by editors and news editors, but especially by reporters themselves. The acquisition of practical skills (writing and reporting skills) and conceptual skills should obviously not be neglected in the process, but life skills were found to be of the utmost importance in the new culture within which reporters function. In the past, very little attention was devoted to the issue of life skills in training. If this aspect is, however, not addressed urgently in training and education, reporters would not be in a position to adequately implement practical and conceptual skills. These would include communication skills, motivation, professionalism and work ethic in general (also see 7.2);
 5. **media ethics and media law:** while media ethics has a connection to life skills and conceptual skills, there is a critical need for the teaching of media ethics and media law. This need was especially highlighted by the serious deficiency displayed in the information obtained through the questionnaires;
 6. **centres of excellence:** one of the objects of this audit when it started out was to identify 'centres of excellence' for education and training in journalism. What follows should not be seen as the first or last word spoken on this issue, but as a very impressionistic evaluation of what the researchers found in their interviews with the editors and news-editors regarding the question: "From which tertiary institutions do you get your best beginner-reporters?" While other university and technikon departments were mentioned a few times, two university departments and one technikon department stood out nationally: Rhodes University, University of Stellenbosch, and Pretoria Technikon. On a more regional level the following universities and technikons received favourable comment (some more so than others): Western Cape: PennTech; Eastern Cape: PE Technikon; Natal: Natal Technikon and M.L. Sultan Technikon. Most of these universities and technikons have more or one of the following aspects in common: structured or at least regular interaction with the media; internship plans; advisory boards; and students who can 'fall in and start producing right away' or at least find their feet within a month or three.

7.2 Issues to be addressed on management level

This issue was not part of the initial brief or the initial purpose of the audit. It was, however, found that improved management might be a key success factor in the process of improving reporters' skills. Despite this, implementing adjusted management styles and management approaches might even be the main contributing factor towards improving reporters' commitment, enthusiasm, motivation, and loyalty to their jobs and their profession.

The management culture within the media has changed. This has far-reaching implications for the management of both news and the human resources component of the media. The following were identified to receive urgent attention:

1. **management style:** an awareness is needed that the traditional top-down management styles (where these still exist) are no longer acceptable within organisations, including news media. These styles do not motivate, commit,

or make staff more loyal. The challenge is now to find new non-hierarchical and non-bureaucratic management styles that would instil loyalty, motivation, and commitment. This does not mean, however, that news media should sacrifice devoted work ethic in the process;

2. **management of news:** the problematic issue of defining news within a developing democracy and the need to develop news policies that would be transparent and easy to implement. With continuous changes in economic, social, technological and political environments, this issue does not become less complicated;
3. **management of human resources:** issues such as affirmative action, mentoring, peer input, and general support structures should be addressed urgently;
4. **personal development:** reporters increasingly expect the news media to take responsibility for their human resource development. They also expressed a need for personal development, although this would have to be supported by the policies and structures within the organisations where they work. Moreover, throughout the research project it was clear that reporters do not only want, but also absolutely expect media organisations to offer mid-career training and short courses to enrich their news abilities as well as accompanying elements such as communication and people skills. This would include creating means for personal growth and to be put in a position where they can exercise personal traits such as enthusiasm, creativity, and self-motivation for their profession.

Without successfully addressing these management issues it would be rather futile to put the main responsibility for improving reporting skills on the shoulders of training institutions.

8. Recommendations

Based upon the results and conclusions given above, the following recommendations are made:

- **Sanef should organise workshops between major role players in the media and tertiary institutions in the individual regions to discuss the results and findings of the audit.**

Pertinent issues to be put on the agenda would include:

1. **Reporting, writing and accuracy skills:** As was initially anticipated, these issues were found to be the areas to which urgent attention should be given;
2. **Improved interaction:** It is of major importance that a system should be put in place for continuous and structured interaction between the media industry and tertiary institutions (see for instance footnote 1). Following from this, the following should receive attention:
3. **Internships:** A well-regulated system of internships can vastly improve skills training. Presently, the system is working on an ad hoc basis (with a few exceptions), with overall no clear indications for remuneration, timeframe, mentorship and feedback to the tertiary institutions;
4. **Training the trainers:** There is real concern about trainers not having the necessary (recent) skills to adequately train students. A system should be put in place where trainers could work in the media for periods of up to three months to obtain the necessary skills;

5. **Contents of tertiary programmes:** There is a serious gap of what is happening on tertiary level and what is expected in the media and/or what transpires in the newsroom. For instance, more than 90% of training institutions indicated that they teach practical skills and media law (see Section B of the report). However, in both the news editors' evaluations and reporters' feedback on areas where they would like to see skills improvement, these featured the strongest. Serious concern should be given to those subjects that reporters now obviously lack knowledge about. These would include language skills (especially for second and third language speakers), general knowledge skills, media law (including court reporting) and media ethics. It is important that reporters should not be taught these skills in a vacuum. Reporters should be taught that these skills should be implemented within the context of news policy and news management. South Africa has a unique role to play as a developing country with a free market media. This inevitably causes tension between different factions on what is news and what type of journalism tertiary institutions should teach. This would include insight into the problems related to typical/traditional Western knowledge for journalism training *vis-à-vis* indigenous knowledge;
6. **Life skills and changing work environment and culture:** It is of paramount importance that recognition is given to the new style of management within a non-hierarchical system which poses new challenges for training reporters. The need for development and life skills should now become part of tertiary training programmes. This would also include courses in interpersonal and intercultural communication, previously shunned as not being applicable to journalism training;
7. **Accreditation system:** Given the large number of private training institutions offering short certificate courses in journalism (and related fields) and the unorganised way in which universities as a whole approach journalism training *vis-à-vis* the inroads already made by the technikons through their Certec system, it is crucial that a proper accreditation system is developed. It is no longer possible, relevant or ethical to promise students journalism training leading nowhere. The successful system already implemented in the USA by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) should seriously be considered as a basis for accreditation within the South African situation;
8. **Centres of excellence:** The present un-coordinated, ad hoc, financially expensive, and also the mushrooming, of journalism courses should be seriously investigated. The main issue should be whether a few (already well-established?) departments should be further strengthened to enhance their capacity, or whether the present situation should continue with all kinds of institutions promising aspiring journalists the stars, while not necessarily offering training that will not stand the test of time in the mainstream media. On the other hand, the issue of the community press and radio needs urgent attention where reporters may not have the financial means to attend four-year university or technikon programmes. This aspect also needs serious attention. One way of addressing this problem would be through a process of accreditation, e.g. a small number of departments could offer journalism courses leading to the main-stream media, whilst other, specialising in for instance, development communication, could offer special journalism courses geared towards this specific media segment;
9. **Mid-career training:** Relations with institutes like the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) in Johannesburg should be strengthened and expanded in order to make its know-how available to a wider spectrum of reporters across the country. It is important that Sanef discuss this issue with

media owners (or at least those controlling funding) for them to realise that training of reporters is of the utmost importance and to properly invest in the development of human resources. This does not necessarily, however, only mean higher remuneration to reporters, but rather improved training opportunities and opportunities for personal development. It should be noted that reporters themselves have rated remuneration as such quite low on the scale of requirements to improve their working conditions;

10. **Sub-editing:** Due to juniorisation and the gap between junior and senior reporters, a plan should be implemented to train and develop a new corps of sub-editors;
11. **MAPPP Seta, Saqa/ETA and other role players:** Though there was an clear awareness of the Mapp-Seta training levy, the researchers did not get the impression that editors and news editors were all fully informed on the role these organisations play, or need to play in the developing of courses in journalism and the setting of standards. There was also a certain degree of uncertainty about how the levy system would impact on training at each particular medium (e.g. one editor said they would make their levy available for outside training in the community media, while others want to use the levy for their own purpose, but did not know what it would amount to). The role of these and other similar bodies in the future of journalism education and training, as well as their interaction with training institutions and the media, should be clearly spelled out. Sanef should also involve other role players like the Media Diversity and Development Agency, journalist organisations, and an organisation such as the South African Communication Association (Sacomm) which represents university teachers and researchers in the field of communication, but also journalism and media studies.