


The Search for Innovative Ideas: How to Save Today's Mass Communication Department

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Abstract

There is a friendly conflict between field broadcast journalists and broadcast journalism instructors. The conflict centers on the development of best instructional practices for the student journalists. This qualitative study is an attempt to bridge the gap between field journalists and journalism instructors. To accomplish this goal, first, a review of the academic literature was conducted to establish a research base. Then, interviews were conducted with field broadcast journalists ($n = 4$) to answer the following guiding research question: According to field broadcast journalists, what knowledge, skills, and training are required when transitioning from MC student into professional broadcast journalist? This study presents the findings of these interviews. Areas of focus are technology, internships, and student motivation. The study concludes with a discussion of academic advisory groups. However, the ultimate goal of the study is to get the two groups talking rather than scowling at each other from across the news desk.

Keywords

broadcast journalism education/profession knowledge gap, broadcast journalism, mass communication department, changes in higher education, changes in journalism education

Chapter I

Introduction

. . . with technology changing, now you got newspaper companies doing the same thing as TV stations, so there are many one-man-bands where newspapers are doing it and placing those stories on the website it's, all part of media today. (Respondent 1, personal communication, March 16, 2013)

Respondent 1's (R1) statement echoes through current broadcast journalism literature (Hu, 2012; Powers, 2010; Wyss, 2009). Today's broadcast journalist must be an equally strong writer, videographer, editor, and on-air talent (Hu, 2012; Powers, 2010; Wyss, 2009). This "one-person-band" approach to broadcast journalism is a new phenomenon. Ten years ago, a journalist was expected to specialize. For example, a journalist generally would work as an on-air reporter or a cameraperson, but seldom would one professional take on both duties. Today, shrinking budgets and new technology have forced reporters to become camera operators and camera operators to become reporters. The reality of modern journalism is, to be employable; one must be a master of all broadcast crafts.

The training of future journalists is, in part, the responsibility of the journalism instructor (JI). In the current era of

broadcast production, post-secondary Mass Communication (MC) Departments face a new challenge. Wyss (2009) wrote, ". . . besides the lessons of who, what, when, where, why and how are others in interactivity, multimedia, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and wikis" (p. 26). Wyss's statement addresses the need for JIs to train students using the latest technology in a quickly changing broadcast profession.

Wyss's (2009) comments illustrate an issue MC departments across the United States must understand. That problem is developing a modern, affordable, and comprehensive broadcast journalism curriculum. Modern journalists must understand how to produce news in a society where entertainment is increasingly valued over information, where social media is as important as traditional media, and where journalism teams have been replaced with the one-person-band (Mensing, 2010; Potter, 2012). As the list of changes and challenges to traditional journalism instruction continues to increase, MC departments at the post-secondary level are

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faced with a daunting task. That task and the problem this article will address is developing a broadcast journalism curriculum that reflects changes at the professional level.

Statement of purpose. The purpose of this article is to report the specific technologies and skills field broadcast journalists (FBJ) claim to be critical additions/updates to a post-secondary MC department's curriculum. The suggested curricular updates reflect ideal best instructional practices to prepare students for the transition from student into a professional broadcast journalist. Issues raised and suggestions provided are developed from current broadcast literature, site visits to news stations/production houses, and discussions with practicing journalists. This article has three areas of focus: (a) technology, (b) hands-on learning and internships, and (c) student motivation. While one article cannot serve to update an entire curriculum, this study can be viewed as an opportunity to begin the conversation between FBJs and post-secondary MC departments.

Conceptual framework. This study builds on the academic literature calling to revolutionize and revitalize broadcast journalism departments. Articles by Curry (2010), Mensing (2010), Powers (2010), and others call for broadcast journalism departments through teaching, technology, and out-of-class mentoring, to train students to become community-based journalists with a global understanding. That is to say, students need to understand the importance of reporting local news, but they must understand how that local news relates to and is part of global events.

To illustrate the global nature of community-based stories, Hu (2012) declared that broadcasting is the beginning of a news story's lifecycle. Webcasting and social media, in other words, can continually rebroadcast the story and add relevant information, making a community-based story globally relevant. An example of this is the tragic death of an Iranian protester named Neda Agha-Soltan. On June 20, 2009, Iranian police shot and killed Agha-Soltan as she peacefully protested in Tehran, Iran (Fathi, 2009). Neda's tragic death was captured on cell phones, transmitted through social media, and eventually reported in traditional mass media outlets.

Once broadcast through traditional mass media, the story took on a new life. Rest in peace (RIP) Neda videos appeared on YouTube and social media sites dedicated to her registered followers from around the world. Furthermore, to the dismay of many, webcasts of the shooting were shared/rebroadcast from website to website. While Neda's example of a community event going global is tragic, it is not unique. Today, all journalism is a global story.

Statement of problem. There is a problem facing post-secondary MC departments. That problem, specifically, post-secondary MC departments across the United States are unsure of the best teaching strategies and technologies required to prepare

post-secondary students to compete for employment in the broadcast industry (Claussen, 2011; Hu, 2012; Powers, 2012). An FBJ interviewed for this article suggested, "So you got to be ready to go and know your job, as well as to know others in this fields, because you never know what situation you are going into" (Respondent 1, personal communication, March 16, 2013). R1's statement rings throughout the literature and also through the comments of other FBJs interviewed for this article.

Significance of study. A study, such as this one, is necessary because few broadcast journalism departments routinely discuss curricular matters with broadcast practitioners. Articles written about broadcast journalism curricular updates originate from academics. Furthermore, the works cited in those academic articles reference other academics.

FBJs work with students graduating from MC programs. Through observation and industry experience, FBJs can identify strengths and weaknesses of recently graduated students. The ability to work with and observe recent graduates places FBJs in a unique position to critique the work of post-secondary MC departments.

The few articles that do highlight the FBJ's perspective ignore broadcast journalism literature. This conceptual report adds to the current literature by combining FBJs' suggestions with concepts from broadcast journalism literature. This combination is put forward not only to develop a set of suggested practices for a modern broadcast MC department but also to encourage post-secondary MC departments to open lines of communication with local broadcast media.

Research question. A primary goal of any post-secondary MC program is to graduate students who are ready to compete in the broadcast production job market. With rapid change occurring in communication information systems, technology and production practices broadcast journalism departments must determine best curricular practices to aid broadcast journalism students' transition into professional journalism. To determine best practices, this report will consider both the academic literature and interviews conducted with FBJs when answering the guiding research question:

Research Question 1: According to field broadcast journalists, what knowledge, skills, and training are required when transitioning from MC student into professional broadcast journalist?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Changes in broadcast journalism. In the field of broadcast journalism instruction, what was current and acceptable to teach 5 years ago is now outdated. A few years ago, the presence of social media sites, such as YouTube, Twitter, and

Facebook, had little impact on day-to-day journalism. Before 2011, training student journalists to communicate through social media was considered little more than a lecture side note. Furthermore, equipment such as high-definition video cameras, media capture technology, and editing software were comparatively expensive before 2011. Today, for example, most consumer-grade smartphones capture high-definition video. Before 2011, high-definition video capture required a video camera costing US\$7000.00 or more. A broadcast journalism department that developed a 5-year plan in 2011 may find itself quickly into an outdated curriculum.

While the above statements may “feel” correct, the academics reading this document may scream, “Where is the support?” In fact, the academic literature is active concerning the discussion of broadcast journalism evolution at both the industry and academic levels. Articles printed in trade magazines regularly announce declining news budgets (Arden, 2009; Mangan, 2009). Along with reduced budgets, discussions are held in the trade literature about new techniques for broadcasting. For example, reporting through social media is a common theme (Stevenson & Peck, 2011; Walejko, 2010). Mixed in with these discussions are calls for the revamping of the broadcast journalism curriculum (Hu, 2012; Mensing, 2010; Wyss, 2009).

Journalism: working professionals versus journalism instructors. There has been a long-standing conflict between FBJs and JIs. Du and Thornburg (2011) claim that the differences of opinion date back to at least the 1990s. Both sides of the debate provide valid points (to be discussed below). The result of this conflict, however, is a lack of communication between FBJs and JIs (Benigni et al., 2011; Du & Thornburg, 2011). This lack of communication has caused the education of student journalists to suffer because FBJs do not often communicate necessary job skills to JIs. When an FBJ does reach out to an MC department, she or he finds few listening.

Point of view: field broadcast journalists. FBJs emphasize practice over theory. These journalists believe that courses in media theory, communication studies, and so on are ultimately a waste of students’ time (Benigni et al., 2011; Mensing, 2010; Du & Thornburg, 2011). According to the literature, FBJs believe that students need training in the skills of writing for broadcast, capturing a story through the camera’s lens and editing (Mensing, 2010; Du & Thornburg, 2011). All other courses amount to little more than a waste of students’ time and money. FBJs claim theoretical concepts will become evident to students after they (the students) have spent some time in the field.

FBJs believe that MC departments keep students in the classroom far longer than is necessary (Benigni et al., 2011; Biswas & IZard, 2010; Mensing, 2010; Du & Thornburg, 2011). Furthermore, FBJs often feel that JIs have been out of the newsroom for too long. JIs, according to the FBJs, are out

of touch with modern concepts and technology (Du & Thornburg, 2011).

Point of view of academic journalists. JIs realize that fieldwork is crucial but argue that a college education is about more than training on equipment and technical skills. This group of journalists insists theory must accompany technical training (Benigni et al., 2011). JIs argue they are preparing students to work in the world after college (Du & Thornburg, 2011). In fact, studies show only 25% of MC graduates move on to the newsroom (Flamm, 2013). The above statistic illustrates that the majority of MC students must be ready to work in other areas of the workforce. Also, theory must be taught to prepare those students who can continue to graduate school. JIs’ arguments on this topic may be summed up as follows: JIs are not in the business of training students to be technicians working in a newsroom. Rather, the JI is teaching students concepts that will transform them (the students) into productive citizens of the world.

Strong points on both sides. Clearly both sides have strong points. JIs can be resistant to change. This resistance can lead to coursework that ignores modern practices and technologies. When modern practices and technologies are ignored, students may not graduate fully prepared to work in the broadcast field. FBJs, however, must be willing to concede that a post-secondary education is about more than instilling technical knowledge.

When a student hangs a post-secondary MC diploma on his or her wall, certain assumptions can be made about the knowledge of that student. An MC diploma represents more than an education in practice and drill exercises. Rather, an MC diploma represents the completion of courses in media law and ethics, media history, communication theory, and other scholarly courses of thought. The JI, therefore, would argue that an MC graduate is not merely a video technician. Rather, the JI may claim the MC graduate is a well-rounded media scholar.

Chapter 3

Method

The purpose of this study is to bridge the disconnect in communication between FBJs and higher education MC departments. To achieve this goal, first, the academic literature was scoured for discussions concerning the FBJs’ influence toward MC departments’ curriculum. After searching the literature, FBJs were consulted. Consultations with the FBJs were conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews. The research design for this study was naturalistic inquiry.

The naturalistic inquiry paradigm. The naturalistic paradigm is a method of investigation in which the researcher becomes immersed in the subject matter (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper,

& Allen, 1993). That is to say, the researcher meets and interviews people who have deep knowledge of the subject matter. Furthermore, in naturalistic inquiry, the researcher spends time in the research setting. During time in setting, the researcher observes how participants interact with their surroundings and with other people. The result of these interactions will be findings that hold thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve time in setting, the lead researcher conducted site visits to television news studios, local television stations, and video production studios. Interviews were conducted with experienced broadcast professionals.

Axioms. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline five axioms that define natural inquiry. While each of the axioms guided this article, one axiom worked as a focusing concept. That axiom is Axiom 4, The Possibility of Causal Linkage.

Axiom 4, The Possibility of Causal Linkage, states, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects. Axiom 4 holds prominence in this article because it illustrates the unbreakable relationship between broadcast journalism as a profession and broadcast journalism as a higher education curriculum.

A goal of broadcast journalism instruction is to train students to work as broadcast professionals. Changes at the professional level should influence change at the high education level. In turn, students graduating from college should bring new ideas into the professional ranks. Thus, each group influences and shapes the other.

Axiom 4 illustrates the importance of an article such as this one. There is an unbreakable bond between broadcast journalism as a profession and as a higher education course of study. When communication between these two groups is limited, the flow of information is affected. This lack of communication can lead to students being less prepared to enter the professional ranks and fewer innovative ideas being transmitted from universities into the broadcast profession.

Data collection. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. A semi-structured interview, according to Erlandson et al. (1993) is “. . . guided by a set of basic questions and issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor order of the questions is predetermined” (p. 86). This structure allowed the lead researcher to explore concepts brought up by the broadcast professionals. For example, the majority of interviewees discussed the concept of intense internships. The semi-structured interview format allowed for questions such as, “How would you develop an internship?” or “What skills should an internship reinforce or teach?”

Questions for each interview originated from an institutional review board (IRB)-approved list. A sample question from the approved list is, “What surprises you most about students currently graduating from MC departments?” The approved list of questions served as initial probes into the

broadcast professionals’ views. For questions/concepts where deeper inquiry was needed, the lead researcher asked to follow up or clarify questions not included on the approved list. Clarifying questions were approved through IRB process as a method of inquiry.

Data analysis. Interviews for this report were conducted during the months of March and April 2013. Each interview was tape-recorded for transcribing and coding purposes. Participants were made aware of the recording and asked to acknowledge and approve recoding of the interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Participants. For this study, four broadcast professionals were interviewed. To qualify as a “broadcast professional,” participants must earn (at the time of the interview) their living working in the broadcast industry. For this study, employment in the broadcast industry is defined as work that contributes to the production and broadcast, through a mass medium, of newscasts, documentaries or other on-air live or pre-recorded productions. Below is a description of each participant’s professional qualifications as experts for this study:

R1: R1 has worked in the broadcast profession for more than 20 years. R1 began working as a part-time photographer for news stations throughout South Texas. R1 has also worked as a news editor and segment producer. Currently, R1 is employed as the video producer for a South Texas university. In this capacity, R1 shoots and edits news stories and documentaries relating to the post-secondary. R1 also works production contracts several times a month. As a contract videographer/editor, R1 has worked with the National Basketball Association–Development League (DNBA), National Basketball Association (NBA), Texas high school football, and other sporting events. Beyond sports, R1 has shot and edited documentaries and live multi-cam events for music acts across the United States and Mexico. R1 has worked directly with acts such as Mana, Los Lobos, Jennifer Lopez, Eva Longoria, and several others.

R2: R2 has worked in the broadcast profession for more than 20 years. The first professional job R2 held was as a news photographer for various stations in the California/Nevada area. Throughout the years, R2 as worked as a news editor, writer, and newscast producer. Currently, R2 works primarily as a producer for a government access station in a large southwestern U.S. city. In this capacity, R2 works several hours each week with local and national news stations.

R3: R3 began a broadcast career in the mid-1990s. R3’s first job was master control operator for a South Texas news station. From master control, R3 was promoted to news photographer, editor, and eventually executive news producer. Currently, R3 works as a videographer/editor for a South Texas city government television station.

R4: R4 graduated with a degree in broadcast journalism from a medium size Texas post-secondary in 2011. After graduation, R4 began working, at the national level, as a master control operator/videographer for the news department of a Spanish-language broadcast outlet. Currently, R4 works as a writer/videographer/editor/producer for a medium sized city access channel in South Texas.

Chapter 4

Findings

Technology. With advancements in technology have come new responsibilities for the professional broadcast journalist. R1 stated,

. . . the times have changed, lot, back in the day if you were a videographer you carried your camera and your audio on the side. And, nowadays you have those one-man bands where a lot of stations are going. Which means you run audio, which means you are a videographer, which means you are in charge of audio, which means you have to carry out of all these items with you and know how to use them because you know what you use is not going to wait for you. (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, March 16, 2012)

R4 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013) illustrates the extent to which technology has changed since 2010: “You know when I started, we used digital tape, video cameras . . . Then we moved into the SD cards. And that was a big change.” R1 and R4 illustrate the need for post-secondary MC departments, instructors, and ultimately students to keep up with changing technology.

Technology take away

What universities are doing right. Broadcast technology, as mentioned previously in this report, is in a state of rapid change. Adapting to the constant technology updates is expensive. Each of the FBJs interviewed for this report recognize that fact and applaud universities for incorporating technological changes as quickly as possible. R2 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013) stated, “I have seen education adapting. Maybe not as fast as the broadcasters but that’s because it’s so expensive.” R1 further supported the efforts of post-secondary instructors by stating,

. . . if your division is not going to support you, not buy you one of the 15,000 or \$18,000 cameras because there are \$3000 cameras what are you going to do? You do the best you can with what you have. But it’s not teaching them that full experience. (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, March 21, 2013).

According to the interviews for this report, JIs are knowledgeable concerning current broadcast industry standard equipment.

Where universities can improve. During the interviews, the FBJs expressed that universities are not fully preparing students to work in the world of broadcast journalism. The basics need to be stressed throughout classes. Throughout the interviews, the FBJs lamented students lack proficiency in writing, videography, and editing. R3 noted, “I don’t think they’re trained. They just don’t seem ready for the world” (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). R4 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013) commented,

One thing I should’ve learned or wish we learned more about was presentation. How to stand in front of the camera, do stand-ups. What are the step-by-step’s what is the process, voice tone, where to stand. I didn’t learn all that. I wish I had. Plus things like white balance things like iris I think we need to do more of that. (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013)

Knowing how to execute basic videography and broadcast storytelling techniques are the skills that aid a student in the transition into professional broadcaster. While most post-secondary MC departments offer courses that instruct in videography skills, there is obviously an issue with students retaining instructed information.

That is to say, the students are not well rounded in the skills of writing, shooting, and editing. R2 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013) stated,

. . . writing, I don’t see enough real-world, extensive experience. They don’t get enough. Well, you got to know how to write fast and accurate. In news, you have hourly deadlines. Also, I’ve given my interns some opportunities to shoot and, I have say, “I haven’t been impressed.” Just the basics they seem to have troubles with. Things like how long you hold your shot, sequencing when to pan when to tilt, not letting the camera jiggle.

R1 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, March 21, 2013) added to the conversation by stating, “. . . what helped me be in this career was the hands-on learning in high school. I mean by the time I went in I already knew what I was going to face because I have that hands-on learning.” The FBJs’ statements were repeated throughout the interviews. Each of the interviews indicated that students needed more practice with videography and broadcast storytelling. So, although universities are stocking industry standard (or near) equipment, according to the FBJs, the schools are not utilizing the equipment. That is to say, the schools have the equipment, but the students are not gaining enough practical experience with the technology.

Technology purchases. When considering equipment purchases for a post-secondary broadcast journalism department, the temptation will be to buy less expensive, smaller gear. That temptation arises because the equipment can capture broadcast quality images and sound at a low cost. The fact is

that small high-definition (HD) cameras, inexpensive microphones, and free editing software do not prepare students for work in professional broadcast agencies.

Broadcast organizations utilize professional grade equipment. The news stations expect new hires to understand how to use that equipment. Furthermore, it is important to note that news stations still utilize studio cameras controlled through servos on full pedestals. News stations utilize multiple brands of editing software. However, free software, such as iMovie, was not seen in use during research for this study. The following are suggestions for equipment purchases:

Cameras purchased need to have manual white-balance and iris functions.

HD cameras need to shoot to media card, only. Tape is no longer utilized.

Students need to learn how to connect various pieces of equipment together. So, XLR, VGA, SDI, BNC, HDMI, and so on cables must be available and utilized during coursework.

Live production hardware and software, such as the NewTek TriCaster, will train students for work in modern production houses.

Editing software must be current.

Access to web-connected computers is necessary.

One-person band. Universities need to teach the one-person-band approach to journalism. Many students walk into post-secondary broadcast studio with dreams of becoming an anchor. Those dreams are valid and achievable. However, in the modern news station to achieve the dream of becoming an anchor, students must first master other broadcast technologies and skills. R3 made this point by stating,

The students say I want to be an anchor I want to be a reporter. Then the producer says here is your gear and the students don't know what to do it. It's as if they're too good to handle a camera they are better than to do that. But then these are the times, and you can't say you are better than that. (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013)

In other words, students need to learn all aspects of broadcasting. Assigning basic camera drills, practicing cable wrapping or teaching about encoding-frame-rates may seem, at first, like boring, busy work. Those assignments, however, teach critical tasks. The students will hate the work while in class but appreciate the knowledge when working at a news station.

The one-person-band approach to journalism, it is important to note, is not favored by FBJs. R2 called the one-person-band approach "A hard pill to swallow" (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). Each of the FBJs stated that this style of reporting leads to diminished production quality and a low level of storytelling/fact finding. R3 points out,

I guess it is good, I see where they're coming from saving money, TV stations. But at the same time you lose the visual

element. Something I have seen a lot happening lately is shaky video, on standard stand-ups, just stuff you can see this is a one-person band. You can tell the reporter doesn't know videography or editing. There are a lot of black holes in the editing. (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013)

Each of the FBJs stated that the one-person-band approach to storytelling reduces journalistic quality. Perhaps it will be current post-secondary students who bring back the news team. Or perhaps it will be current post-secondary students who perfect the one-person-band concept.

To prepare students for work as professional broadcast journalists, broadcast journalism departments must stock professional grade equipment. This equipment is expensive. However, every FBJ consulted during research for this report cited student access to professional grade equipment as a key factor in gaining and keeping employment.

Parting thought on technology. Rapid changes in technology make it difficult for broadcast journalism departments to stock the most current gear. However, broadcast journalism departments should work to maintain equipment as close to industry standard as possible. True learning occurs, according to the FBJs, when students have access to innovative lessons, passionate faculty, and current technology.

Internships and hands-on learning. The idea that students need to be competent in all areas of production (writing, shooting, editing) was repeated throughout the interviews. R2 stated, "The technology is seeing huge, huge change. You have to be able to adapt to change . . ." (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 7, 2012). Throughout the interviews, it became clear, as mentioned above, today's broadcast professionals must have knowledge of professional grade cameras, modern editing software, plus other broadcast tools to avoid difficulty in finding employment. This sentiment is echoed in the literature (Hu, 2012; Powers, 2010, 2012).

Hands-on learning and intense internships were two suggestions each of the FBJs offered for training students to become better writers, shooters, and editors. Although many universities offer both hands-on learning and internships, the FBJs did not feel the students' education was deep enough in either area.

Internships. The interviewed FBJs each recognized that most universities encourage internships. However, through the interviews, it became clear that internships should be mandatory rather than encouraged. R1 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, March 21, 2013) stated,

In the real world, people are not going to tell you "Go set up this audio system." Then take you by the hand teaching you how to do it. They expect you to know how to do it, and when they come over, everything has to be working.

R2 also stressed the importance of internships: “The school should have mandatory internships. Something that is mandatory for the students to graduate. I don’t know how many schools do that, but I think it would help” (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). Although internships at the post-secondary level are not uncommon, it is evident that many FBJs do not believe internships are being utilized effectively. Each FBJ felt a need to stress the idea that students could be better trained if internships had greater prominence in the curriculum.

Hands-on learning. Hands-on learning in the classroom was also, according to the interviewed FBJs, an area of curricular weakness. Each of the FBJs stressed the importance of using broadcast standard equipment during classroom, or lab, exercises. R3 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013) stated, “I mean you’re not going to get this without getting your hands-on equipment. You have to roll cables you have to learn how to frame a shot with the camera.” R2 added to the discussion by stating,

You (the student) need to know how to run the camera there a lot of buttons there a lot of knobs that you need to know how to work. It’s almost as if you need to be able to run your camera in a dark room, without looking. (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013)

Again, many universities do provide access to cameras, professional editing software, and so on, but the FBJs believe that training on real-world assignments is inadequate.

Internships and hands-on-learning take away

What universities are doing right. The FBJs recognized that post-secondary instructors work hard to include hands-on learning in class lessons and in helping students find internships. Furthermore, the FBJs recognized that finding an internship in today’s market is difficult. While discussing hands-on learning, R2 stated, “The students I’ve met throughout the years, I don’t feel like they’ve not had enough experience in their schooling that they are lost. I can train them” (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). On the topic of internships, R1 stated, “in reality how much is there out there for students? There is only so much. Times are changing we’ve got to find students who are willing to work hard and go out and find those internships themselves” (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). Evidently, the FBJs recognize the limitations of both class time and market internship.

Student motivation. A common complaint about today’s students is that they are less motivated and lazier than past generations of broadcast professionals. R1 states, “I know a lot of students who have the talent but don’t want to go out there and do the work” (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). Each of the FBJs interviewed felt that students often

lack passion and a willingness to take on entry-level jobs. When asked, “What surprises you most about students today?” R2 commented, “I don’t see the same level of passion today” (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). Another comment from R2 illustrates that the issue of student motivation is not limited to one region or post-secondary: “We’ve had students from the post-secondary, we’ve had students from the arts institute, and students from the community college. And they talk a big talk. But, when it comes down to it they don’t want to learn the business” (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). Pushing students to become more motivated and passionate about the hard work of storytelling may be a common topic of conversation among JIs; however, it is unsettling to hear these comments from the FBJs.

Changing times are often cited as the unofficial reason students seemingly have less passion toward the broadcast business than past generations. A change in times and technology may be a reason students seem to have less passion to learn the craft of broadcast journalism. R3 made a very insightful comment by stating,

You know back when you and I were students if someone had a camera you knew they had to be important. Today complete episodes of web episodes are shot with an iPhone so the days where being impressed by camera are gone. Well everybody has a camera, why would anybody be impressed. (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013)

R3’s comment makes a great deal of sense. Past generations may have had one to two cameras to share among an entire post-secondary department and a few editing bays with strict usage limits. Fewer than 10 years ago, access to industry standard equipment was severely limited, whereas today, HD cameras are cheap and plentiful. And editing a project can be accomplished on most laptops bought at the local big box store.

R1 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, March 21, 2013) points to another possible cause for current students’ apparent lack of motivation:

... a lot of the students, and you can talk about this in any major, they don’t know if this is what they want to do. They went 3 years into the program and they’re getting ready to finish the following year and they’re not really sure what they want to do.

R1’s comment may be extended to illustrate a situation that occurs with many experienced professionals. That is, as a person gains experience, it is possible to forget the insecurity and uncertainty of starting down a career path.

Student motivation take away

What universities do right. Current students are not unmotivated; rather, they are differently motivated. That is to say what created passion in past generations of students will not work for today’s student. The FBJs interviewed for

this report recognize the hard work broadcast journalism professors devote to the development of unique and modern assignments.

R3 was impressed with an assignment given by an instructor at a South Texas post-secondary. For the assignment, students were required to set up, shoot, and direct post-secondary basketball games. The output was broadcast live on the arena's jumbotron and through webcast. Referring to the assignment, R3 stated, ". . . students helping with the games, the basketball games are important. Helping stream basketball games and things like that helps them sharpen their skills" (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). Each of the FBJs had examples of innovative assignments. The FBJs noted that innovative assignments build esprit de corps, understanding of the industry, and motivation to improve.

The FBJs also noted the pride instructors often feel in their students. Throughout the interviews, FBJs discussed how hard JIs worked to build confidence within the students. R1 illustrated the importance of building student confidence (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013):

It's just as an instructor you have to find that thing. And as an instructor once you find that real strength, he starts changing and thinking differently because he sees something positive about himself. And all of a sudden he starts sharing with others. This automatically becomes a cycle of students motivating each other.

R2 furthered the discussion by stating, "They (the JIs) are going to show the cameras, writing, producing. I mean, there are still many jobs in television and I think the students need to be encouraged to explore many areas" (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). These comments indicate that JIs are empowering students to take charge of their (the students) educational and eventually career success.

Where universities can improve. At times, the empowerment of students, in the FBJs opinion, should be reined in. Throughout the interviews, FBJs discussed the unrealistic expectations of students. R3 stated, "You can see it; out of school students think they are going to be an anchor. And it just doesn't happen like that" (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). R2 commented, "Students have a single focus a lot. That is, 'I want to be on TV'" (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013). While the goal of becoming a news anchor or reporter is noble, current students seem to have lost sight of an important fact. That fact is, before being employed as an anchor, most journalists must first work several other (less glamorous) broadcast jobs.

The singular focus of some students can be upsetting to veteran broadcast professionals. Each of the FBJs interviewed expressed annoyance with students/recent graduates who scoffed at entry-level work. R1 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013) stated, "One thing that I've seen is that a lot of students think they know everything

because they're going through a program. So they want to tell a person with experience how to do things. And that's wrong."

While internal motivation cannot be taught, expectations can be managed. That is to say, JIs need to explain that entry-level work, even with a college degree, is often the first step to gaining employment in the broadcast industry. Instructors must make it clear that positions such as master control operator or weekend studio camera operator are important first steps to lifelong work as a broadcaster. Furthermore, JIs must explain that tasks, such as rolling cables, are critical aspects of the business. R2 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013) may have put it best by commenting, "You got to start somewhere, you have to build up a resume, make your contacts."

Parting thoughts on student motivation. To say current students are unmotivated is untrue. Rather, the students are differently motivated. Instructors, who empower their students, tend to have students more capable of moving into the profession. JIs, however, must manage student expectations. Never letting the students feel that they (the students) are too good for entry-level broadcast work.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Bridging the gap: the development of an advisory board. Broadcast Journalism practitioners are at the center of the changes discussed earlier. More important, though, it is the practitioners who will be mentoring, training, and hiring the students who graduate from the post-secondary broadcast journalism departments. There is an unbreakable bond between broadcast as an industry and as an academic course of learning. When one considers this close bond, the question must be asked, why are these two groups not working together on a regular basis? A method for building relationships, increasing industry knowledge, and developing best instructional practices is an advisory board consisting of practicing FBJs, JIs, and MC students.

Advisory board. An advisory board is a group of knowledgeable professionals who, through shared vision, work to improve not only the state of their profession but also classroom teaching techniques. Through an advisory board, experts in the field have the opportunity to increase professional knowledge, improve current practices, and create guidelines for educational standards. Benigni et al. (2011) explain one reason an MC department should establish an advisory board:

With declining budgets and shrinking job markets, academic departments must become more proactive in engaging industry leadership in order to meet departmental needs for support and

to assist their students with the transition to paid work after graduation. (p. 57)

The literature discusses the tendency of JIs to struggle in isolation (Benigni et al., 2011; Du & Thornburg, 2011). There are several reasons for this isolation. Much of the isolation is due to the JIs' busy schedules. Often overwhelming workloads force JIs to solve issues on their own rather than consulting a board (Du & Thornburg, 2011). However, there is also a tendency for educators to look inward rather than out to the community for answers.

For whatever reason JIs' isolation occurs, it must stop. The literature illustrates that MC students feel unprepared once they enter the workforce (Du & Thornburg, 2011). Clearly, it is time new tactics are put in place. One new tactic to be considered is the advisory board.

An effective advisory board can help bridge the divide between FBJs and JIs. The literature suggests the board should consist of pro-active individuals who are interested in improving the state of MC education (Benigni et al., 2011; Du & Thornburg, 2011). Benigni et al. (2011) recommend a group that includes FBJs, JIs, and students. In other words, all stakeholders should have a role in the advisory board.

Limitations of paper. The purpose of this article is to begin the conversation between broadcast journalism professionals and university broadcast journalism departments. For that reason, the sample size ($n = 4$) is small. The small sample size makes generalizability and transferability difficult.

This limitation can be expected when conducting naturalistic inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define this limitation as Axiom 3, The Possibility of Generalization. Axiom 3, according to Lincoln and Guba, states, "Only time-and-context bound working hypotheses . . . are possible" (p. 38). The author maintains that the limitation of Axiom 3 does not diminish the importance of this article. The voices of all stakeholders must be heard, acknowledged, and considered.

Topic for further study. Developing a conversation between journalism professionals and instructors requires both groups to take part in the discussion. Further study in this area would necessitate interviewing both journalism professionals and instructors. Focus groups, where both groups share perceptions and ideas, can be a method for facilitating these discussions. Future studies must also include discussions of best curricular practices. MC departments constantly update assignments and curriculums. Future studies must highlight the innovative work of the JI.

Tone of interviews. FBJs observe the end result of JIs' work. That end result is the trained broadcast journalism student/recent graduate. This fact places FBJs in a unique position to evaluate and critique the work of JIs. For that reason, the voice of the FBJ must be heard.

The FBJs' voices in this article may seem critical of educators. Where in fact, the FBJs interviewed

had tremendous respect for JIs. R2 (N. T. Taylor, personal communication, April 20, 2013) illustrated respect for educators by saying, "No doubt the professor plays an important role." A critical tone may be due to the following: (a) Each of the professionals explained that it was not uncommon for post-secondary broadcast journalism departments to disregard their (the FBJs) suggestions. So, when finally given a chance to talk, years of built-up ideas and concerns flooded out. (b) The lead researcher did not ask, "What are universities doing right?" For these reasons, the FBJs were not able to discuss areas in which the educators are successful.

Final thoughts. Changes in the broadcast journalism profession need to be addressed at the post-secondary level. Mensing (2010) argues that broadcast journalism is often taught by out-of-touch instructors who utilize textbooks with outdated information. This may be a valid argument. Journalism instructors will often claim the importance of teaching only "the basics." The problem with instructing the basics is that many of those basic rules have changed since 2010. To ensure that broadcast journalism students are competitive in the market place, JIs need to consider updating the curriculum. When updating the curriculum, instructors need to consult industry professionals

The information for this report was derived from both the academic literature and the recommendations of interviewed broadcast professionals. After considering all the information provided, this report suggests curricular updates in the areas of technology, hands-on learning, and managing student expectations. The overriding suggestion of this report, however, is the importance of working in tandem with broadcast industry professionals during the broadcast journalism departments' curricular update process.

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