



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

eCommons@AKU

Graduate School of Media and
Communications

AKU in East Africa

5-2024

Putting forward sustainability as a model for journalism education and training

Nancy Booker

Bruce Mutsvairo

Dinesh Baliah

Theodora Dame Adjin-Tettey

Lars Tallert

See next page for additional authors

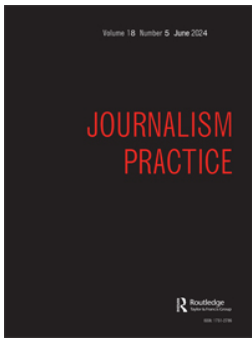
Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.aku.edu/eastafrica_gsmc



Part of the [Journalism Studies Commons](#), and the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

Authors

Nancy Booker, Bruce Mutsvairo, Dinesh Baliah, Theodora Dame Adjin-Tettey, Lars Tallert, and Jean Mujati



Putting Forward Sustainability as a Model for Journalism Education and Training

Nancy Booker, Bruce Mutsvairo, Dinesh Baliah, Theodora Dame Adjin-Tettey, Kristoffer Holt, Lars Tallert & Jean Mujati

To cite this article: Nancy Booker, Bruce Mutsvairo, Dinesh Baliah, Theodora Dame Adjin-Tettey, Kristoffer Holt, Lars Tallert & Jean Mujati (02 May 2024): Putting Forward Sustainability as a Model for Journalism Education and Training, Journalism Practice, DOI: [10.1080/17512786.2024.2344626](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2344626)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2344626>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 02 May 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 683



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Putting Forward Sustainability as a Model for Journalism Education and Training

Nancy Booker^a, Bruce Mutsvairo ^b, Dinesh Baliah^c, Theodora Dame Adjin-Tetty^d, Kristoffer Holt ^e, Lars Tallert^f and Jean Mujati^g

^aGradaute School of Media and Communications, Aga Khan University, Nairobi, Kenya; ^bMedia and Culture Studies, Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands; ^cWits Centre for Journalism, University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa; ^dDepartment of Media, Language and Communication, Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa; ^eDepartment of Media and Journalism (MJ), Linnaeus University, Kalmar, Sweden; ^fLinneuniversitetet Centre for Data Intensive Sciences and Applications – Media, Vaxjo, Sweden; ^gLinneuniversitetet Namnden for lararutbildning Vaxjo – Journalism, Vaxjo, Sweden

ABSTRACT

African journalism practice presents unique opportunities and challenges that require journalists to be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and values to engage in sustainable journalism. Training institutions play a critical role in ensuring that journalists are not only professionally-ready to execute their mandate but also that they can safeguard and promote ethical values in their everyday work. Some of these values include “truth telling, independence, objectivity, fairness, inclusivity and social justice” (Gade, Nduka, and Dastger 2017, 10). Africa, like other regions of the Global South, has several journalism training institutions that provide an opportunity to challenge “hegemonic epistemologies and ontologies of Western-centric journalism studies” (Mutsvairo et al. 2021, 993). In the context of this submission, the present study investigates the current state of sustainable journalism in Africa. We examined data based on a syllabi analysis of journalism programs in Kenya, South Africa and Ghana to appraise what role sustainable journalism education and training could play in Africa. Findings show that efforts are already in place across select learning and training institutions but also point to profound gaps in the curriculum, pedagogy and resources needed to prepare journalists for sustainable journalism.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 31 October 2023
Accepted 25 March 2024

KEYWORDS

Sustainable journalism; Africa; journalism practice; journalism education and training; journalism; Ghana; Kenya; South Africa

Introduction

More evident than ever before, the demand for a sustainable society has become urgent as the world continues to grapple with a myriad of challenges that range from extreme poverty and food security to climate change, health inequalities, pandemics and wars. Meanwhile, journalism serves various functions, the most critical of which is to help the public make

CONTACT Bruce Mutsvairo  b.mutsvairo@uu.nl

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

informed decisions through accurate and truthful reporting (Porlezza 2019). Put simply, sustainable journalism is concerned with questions on how and why journalism and sustainability should coexist. In fact, the notion of sustainable journalism is concerned with how decisions, processes, and activities will affect the possibilities for future generations to have the same opportunities as our generation (Berglez, Olausson, and Ots 2017). It is built on the assumption that journalism has the possibility to contribute better to sustainable societies while at the same time generating some revenues for media practitioners. Having been developed and theorised primarily in western journalistic cultures (Thomas et al. 2019), sustainable journalism is currently being embraced in various journalistic contexts throughout the world.

In this process, the discourse of sustainability will necessarily have to be received, interpreted, and implemented into specific journalistic cultures, contexts and practices of different countries. What happens when this discourse meets different journalistic cultures is therefore an interesting opportunity to both map what is being done in different contexts in terms of making journalism sustainable for the future, and at the same time observe differences between journalistic cultures in different political, economic and geographical contexts. Critically, in this article we focus on how the notion of sustainable journalism is being integrated into journalism education and training, providing rare insights about both the prospects for future sustainability on one hand, and particularities of different journalistic cultures, on the other. We analyse the state of sustainable journalism in three African countries, seen from a pedagogical lens using syllabi analysis to get important insights on what is being done, what could be missing and what could be a productive way forward.

Bensfia and Zaghlami propose that while there are global principles of journalism, educators also need to contextualise these principles so that they are responsive and sensitive to the socio-economic, cultural, religious as well as political realities in the continent. In fact, Hochheimer (2007, 97) encourages African journalism educators to “develop their own styles of journalism, and of education.” However, it seems like there have only been very few takers to this call, nearly two decades later. Journalism education has evolved in many parts of the world. In Africa too, as new players, new actors, and new technologies dominate the journalism landscape. Indeed, changes in African journalism education range from the rising influence of new Chinese investments into the market (Gondwe 2022, 2024), teaching focused on new actors such as fact checkers and citizen journalists (Cheruiyot et al. 2021) as well as the ubiquity of digital technologies, which is enabling educators to teach a wide range of contemporary journalism subjects including “fake news” (Mutsvairo and Bebawi 2019).

Ideologically, however, African journalism education has largely remained unchanged with the influences of Western models of pedagogy still dominant, an approach Obijiofor and M’Balla-Ndi Oelgemoeller (2023) believe could benefit from a radical shift. Attempts to decolonise journalism education in Africa (Chasi and Rodny-Gumede 2022) have gained momentum but not everyone is convinced their curricula should change. Changes are taking shape in Nigeria after a 2020 decision to split the decades-old composition of the Mass Communication degree into seven specialist areas, one of which is journalism and media studies (Mutsvairo and Ekeanyanwu 2021). Amid a widespread call for changes, it can be argued that sustainable journalism has a role to play in shaping the way a new generation of journalists are being educated in Africa.

Most organisations in society are expected to handle sustainable development (Brundtland 1987; Walker 2017), i.e., to support or become sustainable, often in the context of implementation of the 17 SDGs defined by the United Nations. This process,

however, can differ between sectors of society, and especially when we consider the fact that the field of journalism faces special conditions in relation to this overarching societal movement towards sustainability. Media organisations need to relate to a certain sustainability logic. Some argue that media organisations need to become sustainable in all aspects, from management (Sakr 2017), gender balance in the newsroom, (Eddy et al. 2023) editorial work (Kamboh Shafiq, Ittefaq, and Yousaf 2022), environmental footprint (Medranda-Morales et al. 2022) and so on. However, this is not a straightforward task, and when it comes to journalistic media organisations, the sustainability agenda has implications that makes it a special case (Picha 2015).

To begin with, private media organisations are characterised by a natural tension between management and the editorial environment, in which the first tends to be the driver developing sustainable business models, while the editorial milieu embraces values of professionalism, in which autonomy and thus independence in relation to both the management and the overall society is prioritised. Thus, many media organisations are becoming sustainable on the central level, while at the editorial level, sustainable development might be treated more as a special interest, being associated with the UN and stakeholders in society that benefit from an expansion of the sustainable development logic. In the context of African journalism, we are faced with a wide variety of complex political, cultural, religious and economic contextual setups in the different countries, and different ways in which journalism plays a part in societal life. The reception of sustainability discourse in journalism practice and education, is therefore likely to differ substantially, depending on which country is studied.

It is thanks to this background that this article investigates the integration of the discourse of sustainable journalism using the development of journalism education in three African countries as a point of departure. Drawing on syllabi analysis, the study examines the current state of sustainable journalism in the Africa context, identifies gaps, and proposes potential strategies for promoting sustainable journalism practices. By uniquely focusing on the intersection of sustainability and journalism education, this research provides valuable insights into the prospects for future sustainability and the distinctive characteristics of journalistic cultures in different political and geographical contexts. Data collection was guided by the framework initially proposed by Tallert (2021), who taking a cue from Berglez, Olausson, and Ots (2017) defines sustainable journalism as: (a) content issues covered in training (b) business models, (c) the extent to which climate change and environmental issues are covered in training, (d) inclusivity and representation, (e) research on any of the framework outlined herein and/or on the relationship between journalism and sustainability.

By addressing its main research question through syllabi analysis, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of sustainable journalism practices in journalism education and shed light on the specific challenges and opportunities within the African context. The findings can inform curriculum development, course design, pedagogical strategies, and policy decisions aimed at promoting sustainable journalism for the benefit of future generations and the overall sustainability of journalistic cultures in African countries and beyond. Furthermore, our study contributes insights that help illuminate new theoretical approaches on sustainable journalism, contributing findings from historically underrepresented African nations. The guiding research question for this study is:

RQ1: What is the current state of sustainable journalism education and training in Africa?

Since implementations of sustainability perspectives will naturally occur within frameworks of specific national journalistic cultures (Thomas et al. 2019), a closer look at the development of journalism education and training in Kenya, Ghana and South Africa is necessary in order to envision a potential role for sustainable journalism. Through this study, we learn about specific challenges that are most prominent in one country but less evident in another. In what ways does the national context (political landscape, tone of public discourse, economic driving forces in society, etc.) shape the process of making journalism sustainable? In a variety of contexts, the sustainability goals may clash in a number of ways in different national contexts. Our aim is to highlight this, making it possible to identify and provide valuable knowledge to increase the quality of journalism in practice.

Theoretical Framework: Sustainable Journalism

Sustainable journalism, as defined by Berglez, Olausson, and Ots (2017); Tallert (2021) and Adjin-Tettey et al. (2021) integrate journalism from the environmental, social and economic perspectives, regarding these three pillars as intertwined and interdependent. We argue that the global sustainability challenges of late modern society and its new complexities might show a way out and give rise to a “rebirth” of professional quality journalism, both from a business perspective (to find its way back to the consumers) and discursively (practices of reporting). Following this line of thought, vigorous journalism is a prerequisite for meeting the global sustainability crises, but it is also true that, in order to remain a socially and democratically relevant institution, journalism is in dire need of internalising and integrating these crises in their entirety.

More precisely, this argument is premised on the theoretical assumption that there is a mutual dependency between the global sustainability challenge and the journalism challenge. Admittedly, journalism might be viewed as a natural part of society’s different problems due to its commercialised and stereotypical ways of representing it (Lippmann 1922). Nonetheless, at least qualitative journalism has a pivotal role in the overall sustainable development of society since it, at least potentially, contributes greatly to the understanding, and hence the handling, challenges such as environmental problems, social inequality, armed conflicts, and financial crises.

In order to put pressure on politicians and the market as well as to engage citizens politically (Carvalho, van Wessel and Maesele 2017), advanced journalism that produces engaging and relevant stories about, for instance, climate change or internet surveillance is needed. What is also required is journalism that develops its competence to engage in the antagonism and disagreements between the peoples, nations, regions, organisations, etc. (see Maesele and Ræijmaekers in this volume; Olausson 2007; Vallance, Perkins and Dixon 2011). In turn, addressing the new conditions of journalism by seriously responding to well as robust business models, technology, education and organisations that take these challenges into account is a prerequisite for the sustainability, that is, the long-term survival of professional journalism itself; at least for the kind of journalism ideal that developed in modern society.

Accordingly, the task for media and journalism scholars is threefold: first, to highlight integral perspectives by commencing a dialogue between scholars and researchers engaged in either the environmental, social or economic challenges of journalism; second, to conduct theoretical and empirical studies that examine the underlying barriers to a journalism that is better “prepared for the future” (a future which is, however, already here through problems such as climate change) as well as already existing examples of well-working forms of sustainable journalism; third, to further develop academic input on how to implement a sustainable journalism, both in terms of business models and in terms of journalistic practice, which could be addressed to and discussed with industry representatives and other relevant stakeholders (Tallert 2021). The concept is obviously about journalism in relation to sustainable development, and departs from two contemporary sustainability crises:

- The sustainability crisis of society related to climate change, democracy, poverty, inequality, and armed conflicts.
- The sustainability crisis of journalism related to decrease in revenues, capture of the media, disinformation, clickbait journalism, and deteriorating trust in the media.

Sustainable journalism suggests that these crises are intrinsically intertwined. A sustainable society — economically, ecologically, and socially — requires a journalism that addresses the sustainability challenges facing society, and a sustainable future for journalism as a practice and business depends on its capability to do precisely that. Sustainable journalism is concerned with how decisions, processes, and activities will affect the possibilities for future generations — our children and grandchildren — allowing them to have the same possibilities as our generation.

The field of journalism faces special conditions in relation to this overarching societal movement towards sustainability, as media organisations need to relate to a specific sustainability logic, given their expected role as independent and impartial. Private media organisations are characterised by a natural tension between management and the editorial environment, in which the first tends to be the driver developing sustainable business models, while the editorial milieu embraces values of professionalism, in which autonomy and thus independence in relation to both the management and the overall society is prioritised.

Hence, media organisations can strive to become sustainable at the central level, while at the editorial level, sustainable development might be treated more as a special interest, being associated with the UN and stakeholders in society that benefit from an expansion of the sustainable development logic (Picha 2015). In the context of African journalism, we are faced with a wide variety of complex political, cultural, religious and economic contextual setups in the different countries, and different ways in which journalism plays a part in societal life. The reception of sustainability discourse in journalism practice and education is therefore different in each country. As there is no widely accepted definition of sustainability, this paper adheres to the definition presented in the UN report, *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland report, where sustainable development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (1987, 37).

The report also identifies the three pillars of sustainability as environmental, social and economic. Berglez, Olausson, and Ots (2017, XIV) make a “theoretical assumption that there is a mutual dependency between the global sustainability challenge and the journalism challenge.” They claim that

at least qualitative journalism has a pivotal role in the overall sustainable development of society since it, at least potentially, contributes greatly to the understanding, and hence the handling, of challenges such as environmental problems, social inequality, armed conflicts, and financial crises.

Furthermore, they suggest that the

global sustainability challenges of late modern society and its new complexities might show a way out and give rise to a “rebirth” of professional quality journalism, both from a business perspective (to find its way back to the consumers) and discursively (practices of reporting). Following this line of thought, vigorous journalism is a prerequisite for meeting the global sustainability crises, but it is also true that, in order to remain a socially and democratically relevant institution, journalism is in dire need of internalising and integrating the crises in their entirety.

In line with the aforementioned United Nations “Our Common Future” report, they define sustainable journalism as “journalism that meets the information needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own journalistic information needs.” Based on Berglez et al.’s definition, Tallert (2021) and Adjin-Tetty et al. (2021), members of the Sustainable Journalism Partnership, a Sweden-based pro-journalism movement that is supported and endorsed by leading journalism scholars and practitioners, some of whom co-authored this article, have investigated how this theoretical concept can be put into practice, categorising it into four different areas for potential research, education and journalistic practice. They suggest that sustainable journalism in practice should be based on:

- production and publishing of journalistic content that contributes to sustainable societies while also generating revenues for the publishing organisation;
- media business models focused on environmental, social and economic sustainability;
- environmentally and socially sustainable production and distribution of news, with a no harm and zero emission perspective;
- innovative, gender-balanced and inclusive newsrooms and organisations.

Journalism Education in Africa: A Contextual Overview

Although many African nations achieved independence and were governed by democratic, constitutional regimes by the late 1960s, the majority of them operated under neo-patrimonial regimes, with one-party administrations—some of which later evolved into autocratic presidents—and occasionally oppressive military governments (Diedong 2008). Throughout these periods, journalism in Ghana served as the “voice of the people” denouncing various abuses, and demanded openness in government.

One of the remarkable developments that bolstered journalism practice in post-independence Ghana was the establishment of one of the first media and journalism training institutions in sub-Saharan Africa, the Ghana Institute of Journalism, by the then president of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah (Diedong 2008). At the time, it was the only post-secondary

institution in the country specialising in journalism and media studies at the higher education level. Numerous scholars have contended that the restructuring of tertiary education in media and journalism in post-independence Africa was imperative due to shifts in the political landscape and the requirement that succeeding governments answer to their constituents (Prinsloo 2010). Thus, the emphasis of journalism education in Ghana and most African countries typically favoured teaching journalists to question the political class to guarantee public accountability and the appropriate use of political power (Diedong 2008), and less attention paid to sustainability-related topics.

Another common feature or component across journalism curricula in Ghana and most Sub-Saharan African journalism training institutions is media ethics, with some offering entire modules covering a variety of themes on ethical journalism (De Beer, Pitcher and Jones 2017). It has also been noted that the Ghanaian and African experience with communication theory, which tends to cover journalism and media studies theories and models, is a replication of Western norms of individualism unfamiliar to the African milieu and is inconsistent with a fundamental recognition of context or perspective (Ansu-Kyeremeh 2014), which, we argue, sustainable journalism principles attempt to erode.

Additionally, Coker (2018) found that the curricula of journalism, media studies, and communication studies programs in Ghana, which cover journalism modules, are shaped by the roles that state regulatory bodies, such as the National Accreditation Board (now Ghana Tertiary Education Council), play in monitoring and evaluating tertiary education curricula. According to Coker, these positions give rise to media-centric, instrumentalist, and developmentalist approaches, which, as we have argued, are not always concerned with sustainability issues. He argues that even the quality assurance systems in journalism education are fraught with the challenge of accountability to the government instead of being discipline-specific, taking away attention from the fact that quality assurance of the many professional communities constituting the academy needs to be discipline-specific (Coker 2018), to allow for determining current critical societal sustainability needs that must be incorporated into curricula.

For Ogola (2015, 93), the 1990s should always be remembered as an important era for African journalism. This is because the private sector, long seen as an impediment to outright state control of the newspapers, television and radio, made important gains in several African countries, finding its way into the previously impenetrable media sector. To illustrate the change, Ogola remembers that his native Kenya which only had three television stations and a couple of print media outlets had “301 radio stations, 83 TV stations, 20 monthly magazines, 6 dailies and 11 regular weeklies by 2012.” In his widely-cited article, Shaw Ibrahim (2009) champions an African journalism model, which he defined as one that is premised on oral tradition, originality, humanity and agency. Considering it alternative, he criticises the overreliance on Western conceptualisation of journalism, which he says is not in tandem with African traditions and culture. Shaw’s observations have reappeared in different shapes and forms in journalism research in Africa with others highlighting critiques ranging from Afro-pessimism (Bunce, Franks, and Paterson 2017), neo-colonialism and racism (Ezeru 2023) to dark continent (Nothias 2018) and negative stereotypes (Wasserman and Madrid-Morales 2018).

As journalism faces all kinds of changes that are mostly influenced by the emergent switch to the digital spheres (see Al Al-Rawi 2020, Matsilele and Ruhanya 2021), African

newspapers have also been forced to adapt. For a long time, African journalists have endured a sustained lack of sufficient resources disabling them from doing their work diligently. This lack of resources is even more prevalent today as media houses in the region grapple with dwindling revenue streams thereby curtailing the development of free, independent and sustainable news media and further exacerbating the “brown envelope syndrome,” the widespread practice of accepting money for news coverage (Gade, Nduka, and Dastger 2017). While support for democratisation movements along with the multiplicity and plurality of media outlets has given the African journalism landscape something positive to share, diminishing resources means African newsrooms are not well equipped to support data journalism, for example, argues Chiumbu and Munoriyarwa (2023). Authoritarian regimes in countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Sudan and many have resisted mounting efforts to embrace democracy leaving journalists and press freedom activists exposed (Cheeseman and Klaas 2018). At the same time, recent research has shown that African journalism has benefitted from readers’ ability to share and gather news on social media platforms such as Facebook (Ong’ong’a 2023). However, like everywhere else, the African journalism market is flooded with “fake news,” misinformation and disinformation, all of which are a real threat to the gains from the last two decades.

Strengthening journalism training and education in Africa in the face of these challenges presents a daunting and discouraging dilemma. Nearly two decades ago, Skjerdal and Ngugi (2007) argued that journalism education in East Africa was heavily reliant on donor funding. That trend has yet to change. For many African journalism researchers attending international conferences such as those run by the discipline-leading International Communication Association (ICA) and International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) would be impossible unless they receive travel grants from these organisations. Not even in the economic powerhouse, South Africa, are all journalism scholars guaranteed of state funding to attend these important meetings and dissemination points for international journalism research. On a continent where freedom of the press has not been universally supported, especially by those in power, state-financed African universities are forced to focus on less politically-threatening disciplines such as agriculture, mathematics or engineering.

A study undertaken by Alan Finlay (2020, 8) to map journalism centres across the continent tried to “identify trends in journalism education and training in sub-Saharan Africa, challenges and areas of creativity and teaching, and what we called centres responding to a changing environment.” The findings of the report identified gaps in training like investigative journalism, data journalism along with the need for basic journalism skills like writing and fact-checking. Unsurprisingly, given the lack of the mainstreaming of sustainability in journalism education and the industry, there is no mention of sustainability in any of its usual guises. Still, a keyword search of South Africa’s premier academic journal on journalism studies, *African Journalism Studies*, which is also a significant repository of work on journalism curricula in the country and across the continent, yields results with a focus on climate change or financial sustainability of the media. The bulk of the research published by the journal interrogates elements of journalism practice, with a focus on the journalism produced within newsrooms, funding models for journalism, or analyses journalism within a media studies framework. Other scholars like Motsathebe (2011) and Dube (2016) have posited that African journalism education needs

to “Africanise,” bringing in an overhaul to pedagogy focused on Western models. Banda (2015) also calls for an epistemological and pedagogical shift.

Methodology

This study uses syllabi analysis to draw conclusions on the current state of sustainable journalism on the African market. In particular, we deliberately decided to focus on journalism training and education as these institutions are the main providers of professional journalists in Africa. Commonly used in educational sciences (see Romero Hall and Lilin 2020 or Cañadas, Gómez, and Rico 2013, for example) syllabi analysis methodology, argues Bers, Davis, and Taylor (2000), is powerful because it provides a mirror into what happens in the classroom. Ours involved a deeper analysis into 45 course outlines from selected postgraduate and undergraduate journalism programs in Kenya, Ghana and South Africa. It started with the identification of universities that offered journalism/media studies-related courses. Across the three Anglophone nations, a total of 24 out of the 70-plus journalism education-providing universities in Kenya, Ghana and South Africa were randomly sampled for this study. Selection was based on accessibility to course outlines which resulted in an uneven number of course outlines per country. In addition, nine universities in Ghana were examined, five in South Africa and in Kenya. The disparity represents the number of journalism (or communications or media departments), based at universities in all three countries. Overall, the number of curricula examined in the three countries can be taken as a proportionally representative of what is available in that country.

Twenty-seven course outlines of nine universities in Ghana were studied. The course outlines selected for Ghana were from both Journalism and Communication Studies programmes. This is because while there are stand-alone Journalism programmes, most Communication Studies programmes in Ghana incorporate media and Journalism Studies and cover courses and modules such as Print Journalism, Broadcast Journalism, Media Ethics and Law, Media and Society, and communication theories (comprising theories of media, journalism, audience studies, strategic communications and public relations, among others) and communication research methods. Thus, communication studies has become an omnibus, overarching or an amorphous term for all communication-related fields of practice (Ansu-Kyeremeh 2014). Students who graduate with degrees and diplomas in Media Studies, Journalism and Communication Studies can pursue careers in journalism, corporate communications, marketing communications, and other communication-related fields. Conversely, journalism is a widely taught subject at Kenyan universities with most of the state’s 35 universities offering a journalism degree. Both state and private universities including Daystar University, Multimedia university of Kenya, Aga Khan University, University of Nairobi, Moi University and the United States International University-Africa offer journalism programs and from these, nine course outlines were included for analysis in this study (Table 1).

Of South Africa’s 26 universities, 6 are universities of technology which focus on outcomes-based teaching in technical fields. These were not sampled for their vocation-oriented teaching were not considered for this study as they are not cognate with the sample in the Ghana and Kenya. Of the remaining 20 institutions, not all offer journalism

through a journalism department or through media studies or communications departments which makes the five chosen for this study, a representative sample. The low number of journalism or media training centres at universities in the country is representative of the decline in newspaper titles, and a sharp decrease in journalism opportunities in the formal media landscape. South Africa's journalism training at universities has traditionally been located within humanities' or arts' faculties, linked to more established fields such as media studies or communications science.

Results: Sustainable Journalism Education in Practice — Curricular Evaluation

Interdisciplinarity

In this section, we present findings from the syllabi analysis. Four major themes emerged from the syllabi analysis: interdisciplinarity, insulation, positionality and reputation. One key finding is that across the Kenyan, South African and Ghanaian universities teaching journalism courses both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, questions of sustainability only permeate individual modules in an ad hoc fashion. That does not mean that these universities are not teaching sustainable journalism. They do it but only in relation to another study hence the interdisciplinary focus. Specifically, the Ghanaian journalism curricula is heavily dominated by this interdisciplinary approach. For example, the "Development Communication" module runs through several journalism institutions in Ghana. Along with "Health Communication" and "Environment and Health Communication" modules, it pays attention to social and behavioural change components of development as well as participatory components of broadcast and how it impacts development. These courses expose students to dialogic communication and programmes that drive development.

Similarly, Kenyan journalism modules on multimedia journalism, data journalism, mobile journalism seek to help students gain skills to be able to tell compelling news stories. Unlike the Ghanaian curricular, they take a less interdisciplinary stance even though topics such as HIV/AIDs, historical factors in Africa's underdevelopment, agriculture, health, gender perspectives in Africa's development and contemporary issues in Science take a commanding presence in, for example Aga Khan's journalism curricular. Interdisciplinarity dominates the South African and Ghanaian curricular. For example, the University of Witwatersrand's journalism honours programme remains a praxis-focused curriculum with no obvious engagements with economic, social and environmental sustainability. However, students are exposed to financial literacy, which aims to deepen their understanding of how the economy impacts the ordinary citizen but do not venture into the space of media sustainability.

Certificate courses in Development Communications are available at the University of Witwatersrand but they focus on the nexus between government communicators and the media. What this means is that sustainable journalism has already gained a footing in all three countries, but no one calls it out loud on their syllabi. It is possible some are teaching it without referring to it as sustainable journalism or in some cases, not even noticing they are teaching it. Generally, the courses' orientation is development-focused and speaks to some of the ideals of sustainable journalism, some of which are environmental considerations, innovation and adaptation, coverage of development-oriented issues,

Table 1. Curricula breakdown of selected universities in Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa.

Country	University	Courses identified	Content issues covered that speak to the study's indicators of sustainable journalism	Duration of the programme	Programme level
Kenya	Aga Khan University <i>(Master of Arts in Digital Journalism)</i>	Media Development for Social Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media, Society and development, • Media and development in Africa, • Media and Social impact, • Media and policy making, • Designing for impact, • Social media for social impact, and • Measuring media impact 	2 years	Postgraduate
		Developing your Editorial Speciality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts for discerning and extending best practices, • Best practice in specialist reporting — oral, visual & written, • Choosing your specialist area, doing beat reporting, and focused reading, • Emerging trends and keeping ahead - journalism and the fragmenting public. • Keeping ahead of your competitors - Introduction to enterprise journalism, and • Ethical and legal considerations for specialist reporters. 		
		Media Leadership in Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding leadership, • Motivating yourself & your team, • Understanding digital media work and its workforce, • Entrepreneurship, • Planning & project management, • Managing & promoting innovation, • Understanding your audience and your market, • The economics of networks, • Marketing & research, and • Legal and ethical issues for media leaders. 		
		Specialist Reporting Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner works with an academic advisor and a journalism mentor to develop a digital journalistic project in their chosen area of editorial specialisation. 		
	Aga Khan University <i>(Executive Masters in Media Leadership and Innovation)</i>	Entrepreneurship and corporate renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the Strategic Context: the changing nature of audiences and media consumers in Africa, • Imagining new media products and ventures, • Theories and approaches to entrepreneurship: the process and practices, • Conceiving new business models, • Getting buy-in for your new venture, and • What success looks like: Measuring impact and success. 	2 years	Postgraduate
	Multimedia University of Kenya Moi University	Introduction to Development Communication and Social Influence Communication and Gender		4 years	Undergraduate Undergraduate

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Country	University	Courses identified	Content issues covered that speak to the study's indicators of sustainable journalism	Duration of the programme	Programme level
Ghana	African University College of Communication	Data Journalism Science Journalism Science and Technology in our Lives	• The application of science to everyday life. • The foundations of scientific thought • The application of science and technology and demands of changing societies for scientific and technological advancement Earth Resources,	4 years	Undergraduate
		Introduction to Development Communication	• Participatory component of broadcast and how it impacts development, • Dialogic communication, • Social and behaviour change • Stories/programs that drive development, • radio drama for development • component of development • phone-ins	4 years	Undergraduate
	Blue Crest University College	Science Reporting Development Communication	• • Diffusion of Innovation • What's Development • Development Communication and its objectives • History of Development Communication • The Media, Communication Technologies and Development Communication • Communication and social change, social justice	4 years 4 years	Undergraduate Undergraduate
		Christian Service University College	Science and Technology in our Lives	• Geohazards, • Chemistry and Life, • Food and Nutrition in everyday life, • Everyday Physics, • Animals as Friends of Humans • The course presents some of the basic principles of physics • The laws of motion and how principles of mechanics are applied in everyday objects such as seat belts and airbags. • The properties of semiconductors and their application to microelectronics • Renewable and non-renewable energy • Electricity, and electrical safety measures	4 years
	University of Media, Arts and Communication (UNIMAC)/ Ghana Institute of Journalism	Development Communication	Similar to UNIMAC's course structure	4 years	Undergraduate
		Introduction to Community Journalism	• The basics of Journalism and its practice • Conceptual framework for defining journalism and news • Journalism and science • Principles of modern journalism • Journalism as a profession will be discussed	4 years	Undergraduate
		Development Communication	• Theories, concepts, principles and debates of development • Principles of human communication in the context of sustainable livelihoods. • Conceptualisation of international development and communication processes • Social, economic and political forces that shape people's access to communications technology and infrastructure	4 years	Undergraduate

	Introduction to Environment and Health Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human communication as a primary tool of health. • Applying environmental and health issues in communication using interdisciplinary approaches. • Reporting and communicating basic health and environmental factors that affect the health and overall ecological imbalance of societies 	4 years	Undergraduate
	Globalisation and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaning of development • Core issues in development and globalisation. • Debates about globalisation and development • How nations rise or fall in the global economy • How national development issues are shaped by powerful international organisation (like the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO), transnational corporations • Technological change • The impact of globalisation on the quality of life • The interplay between the strategies of global, national, and local actors. • Winners and losers in the globalisation process 	4 years	Undergraduate
	Gender and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and minorities in both traditional and new media. • Diversity and socio-cultural inequity in mass communication analyses • Public discourse surrounding gender and development (such as stereotypes, implicit assumptions, role images and marginalisation). • Mass media's contribution to the social construction of gender, race, and class • How the media can influence social construction of gender 	4 years	Undergraduate
Jayee University college	Development communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to UNIMAC's course structure 		
	Introduction to Economics & Business		4 years	Undergraduate
	Global and national science issues		4 years	Undergraduate
	Health, Legal and Ethical Issues in Sports		4 years	Undergraduate
	Conflict in African States		4 years	Undergraduate
	Global and national health/medical issues		4 years	Undergraduate
	Environmental Reporting		4 years	Undergraduate
	Health/Medical Reporting		4 years	Undergraduate
	Science and Technology in Our Lives		4 years	Undergraduate
Methodist University College Ghana	Mass Media and Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major social transitions in Africa and Ghana • Social transitions and their interaction with the communications system • Industrial transformations of the traditional media and communication imperatives (such as the newspaper and the 	4 years	Undergraduate

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Country	University	Courses identified	Content issues covered that speak to the study's indicators of sustainable journalism	Duration of the programme	Programme level
		Media and Global Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> telegraph) • The evolving impact of the new media technologies on society • Effects of the communication system on community, society, and democracy. • Culture: Definition, Functions, Characteristics, Elements; What is Global Culture? Communication and Culture • Global Media: Globalisation; Definition, history, types, & contributory factors; What is new about Current Globalisation?; Cultural Globalisation/Transnational Culture • Media & Cultural Globalisation • The Challenge of Fundamentalism and Nationalism to Cultural Globalisation • Role of transnational media in cultural globalisation of Africa. 	4 years	Undergraduate
	Pentecost University College	Development Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development communication theories • Communication strategies • Ethics in Development communication • Project management • Community, Stakeholder Engagement • Corporate Social Responsibility. 	4 years	Undergraduate
	Wisconsin International University College	Development Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominant development discourse: Modernisation theory; Globalisation • Mass media and communication in modernisation • Critical perspectives on the dominant development discourse • Communication and social justice; social change • Communication models in development programmes and processes for change • Basic Principles of Dev. Comm • The media, Communication technologies and Dev Comm • Media & Communication for empowerment • Participatory communication processes and strategies 	4 years	
		Health Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of Communication for the study of health • Levels of health communication • The role of mass media in Health communication • New Media and Health communication • Social media and health communication • Health promotion 	4 years	Undergraduate
	University of Ghana	Media Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Media Management. Media management as a distinct field of management, its scope and rationale. • Classical management theories and application in media. • Key areas of (media) management - leadership, decision making as a management function. • Sustainable journalism in practice: Media and the green economy. • Entrepreneurship venturing and management • Gender and Media Management 	1 year	Postgraduate
		Media and Information Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope and importance of Media and information literacy • Media and Information Literacy: Field of Knowledge, Concepts and History. • Transformation in News media • News media in 	1 year	Postgraduate

South Africa	University of KwaZulu-Natal	Writing for the Media	the digital age • Understanding News making, the Media, and media structure. • Media structure and how the media works • Truth and Post-truth • Information Disorder • Making sense of the news among the noise - Information verification Cyber security and (data) privacy on the internet. • -Cyber security and data privacy on the internet -Online safety. • Ethics in the Digital Era -What is digital ethics?; Information Ethics in a digital age • Ethical Use of Information as an MIL Skill • News Reporting and the Power of Representation • The power of image in news reporting • Medium and message	3	Undergraduate
		Journalism, Media theory and ethics	• Journalism practice with a focus on writing • Explores the relationship between the journalist and the reader	2	Masters/5th year
		New media studies	• Journalism ethics in the practice of news production • Ethics in the construction of cultural identity through news production	3	Undergraduate
	University of the Witwatersrand	Journalism Practice A	• Digital media in society • Telecommunications • Broadcasting	1	Honours/4 th year
		Journalism Practice B	• Offered to mid-career students and career-entry • Journalism fundamentals • News reporting and writing • Sourcing and interviewing • Ethics of journalism practice • Media law • Practical skills in video and audio production, visualisation, social media content production and web design • Court reporting	1	Honours/4 th year
		Journalism Studies B	• Feature writing which extends to specialists beats like health, finance and climate change • Research skills including archival • Advanced multimedia skills	1	Honours/4 th year
		Financial journalism	• Indepth reporting project • Equivalent of Honours research project • Scope for timely projects like climate change, xenophobia etc.	1 year fulltime or 2 years parttime	Honours/4 th year and Masters/5th year
	Rhodes University	Communication for social change	• Numeracy • Financial literacy • Financial metrics and understanding operations and role of critical financial entities	1 year fulltime or 2 years parttime	Honours/4 th year and Masters/5th year
		Journalism and Media Studies 1	• Communications in a developmental context•	3	Honours/4 th year and Undergraduate
		Journalism and Media Studies 2	• Introduction to journalism, media studies, cultural studies and communications • Understanding media and mediation • Media law • Media studies in a digitised world • Interviewing • Multimedia storytelling	3	Undergraduate
		• Combination of media studies and media production • Multimedia production skills • Media's role in the construction of meaning • Includes modules like History of South Africa media, making of meaning, and audio storytelling			

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Country	University	Courses identified	Content issues covered that speak to the study's indicators of sustainable journalism	Duration of the programme	Programme level
		Journalism and Media Studies 3	• Media law and ethics • Public communications • Understanding the self in relation to social media content and production • Digital media and public debate • Specialisations in communication design, photography, writing and editing, television and audio	3 years	Undersgraduate
		Journalism and Media Studies 4	• A year of journalism focus after the three year undergraduate BA degree • Digital media and society: a southern perspective is the core module • Media studies • Critical trends in the media • Specialisation options in a variety of media or formats • Includes an internship at a media company or a self-directed project as part of the experiential learning component	1	4th year
		Afrofuturism and the anthropocene	• Humans and their relationship with the earth • Representations of nature, technology and the future • Impact of colonialism on the modern world • Explores animal and cyborg consciousness • Life in a high-tech ecologically damaged world • Speculative thinking in imagining a new world	1	Postgraduate
	Stellenbosch University	Journalism Practice	• Writing and editing for print, online and social media • Includes an internship at a media organisation		Honours/4th year
		Media entrepreneurship	• Skills focus with a view to students establishing themselves outside the	1	Honours/4th year
		Multiplatform journalism	• Journalism practice and production • Multimedia production	1	Honours/4th year
		Media Studies	• Role of media in society • Media ethics • Media and society	1	Honours/4th year
	University of Cape Town	Media, Power and Culture	• Political economy of the media • Power relations between media and society • Audience research • Critical thinking • Visualisation • Globalisation • Networked media and algorithms	3	Undergraduate
		Multimedia production	• Multimedia storytelling • News production • Interviewing, research, news writing and news production • Introduction to media law and ethics	3	Undergraduate
		The media in South Africa	• Freedom of expression • Regulatory, ethical and legal parameters for media operations • How large media entities operate within the regulatory framework	3	Undergraduate
		Honours in media theory and practice	• Narrative literary journalism • Political journalism • Media and the Public Domain • South African Public Rhetoric	1	Honours/4th year

community engagement initiatives tailored towards development and social impact initiatives.

Positionality

Positionality, defined as the “interplay of space, context and identity” (Bayeck 2022, 1) also emerged as an important factor in our syllabi analysis. Journalism is taught from an African perspective and in some cases this includes African languages. Multimedia University in Kenya, for example, offers a course titled “Kiswahili for Journalists aimed at empowering journalists with linguistic and cultural skills that align with their roles and responsibilities in the East African region, where Swahili is largely spoken.” This proficiency enables the students to engage with diverse communities and sources in Swahili-speaking communities, addressing issues such as social justice, human rights and development, while also effectively bridging the language barriers. The presence of topics such as gender, health, development and environment in journalism modules shows the power of positionality because these modules are developed to reflect on issues that are important to the African context.

In Ghana, the “Global and National Science Issues” module introduces students to issues of global and national interest in health and sciences while “Science and Technology in our Lives” course is a mandatory course that is hosted by the Computer Science Department of Christian Service University College. It exposes students to the basics of science and technology as well as the purpose and role of science and technology in human development. While courses in Environmental Reporting, Science Reporting, Health/Medical Reporting of Jayee University college speak to journalistic routines (i.e., story identification, sourcing and development) and writing component of reporting health, medical, science and environmental issues, they also expose students to reporting techniques, research skills, and ethical considerations when covering environmental, science and health issues. Students on this course are encouraged to explore topics such as climate change, conservation, pollution, disease outbreaks and communicable diseases, issues that are certainly relevant to the sustainability discourse.

Also, the “Digital Inequalities in Africa” module at Rhodes University in South Africa is another positionality-oriented course that explores a pertinent but oft ignored reality of the digital divide and its impact on African societies. The course expects students to “contribute with an in-depth exploration of digital inequalities across domains (education, political participation, economic activity, etc.) and different dimensions (gender, race, (dis)ability, etc.),” (Rhodes 2024), demonstrating an intentional engagement with issues of social sustainability. Another South African University, Stellenbosch’s fourth year programme remains focused on the practice of journalism. A module on entrepreneurship aims at equipping students with “the essential skills to enable them to think about a career beyond traditional mainstream media” (Stellenbosch University 2023).

This objective speaks volumes about the university’s power and positionality in choosing to invest in journalism sustainability in direct response to the decline of traditional newsroom jobs (Garman and Van der Merwe 2017). Positionality is also vital for Kenyan journalism scholarship. The Media Development for Social Change module offered to graduate students at the Aga Khan University in Kenya addresses sustainable journalism by providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the media landscape in

Africa, including the historical and socio-political contexts, while also exploring the theories that underpin the role of media in development and social change in emerging democracies such as Kenya. The course analyses various pressing socio-economic and political issues facing African countries and institutions such as youth unemployment, economic and healthcare inequalities, ethnicity and how it impacts resource distribution, development and governance and corruption, and how media can be used to address these challenges.

Insulation

The curricula of all sampled institutions at first glance, do not deploy sustainable journalism as a holistic concept. In Finlay's mapping of journalism schools, (2020), none of the sampled South African, Kenyan and Ghanaian institutions showed any obvious focus on sustainability as a key thematic area with the emphasis remaining on traditional professional praxis linked to newsrooms and a newer focus on platform-specific content production. This is consistent with the assertions of Berglez, Olausson, and Ots (2017) that journalism studies treat issues of sustainability "disjointedly" (xi). Berglez, Olausson, and Ots (2017) organises these disjointed issues into three broad categories of environmental, social and economic sustainability. The journalism curricula under examination are treating issues of sustainability in silos or "disjointedly", in the words of Berglez, Olausson, and Ots (2017).

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (2023) (UKZN), for example, offers undergraduate modules incorporating individual elements of journalism practice with video production modules at postgraduate modules. Overall, their programme, once focused solely on media studies, is now a mix of journalism theory, ethics and some practical training with no thematic elements that would allow questions of sustainability to exist in significant depth in the curriculum. The UKZN curriculum has changed significantly. For example, the inclusion of the MECS 707 — Journalism, Media Theory & Ethics module clearly journalism is incorporated in the curriculum. Similar trends can be found in Kenya and Ghana. In Kenya for example, most undergraduate programmes such as those offered by Multimedia University, Riara University and Moi University, all incorporate various elements of journalism practice with courses on data journalism, multimedia storytelling, news reporting and writing while also combining journalism and theory, ethics and law and practical sessions. Henceforth, sustainable journalism is being taught but more in a hybrid form that speaks to issues that are important to the local context in these countries.

Reputation

Universities that have a longstanding reputation in journalism education offer courses directly grounded in sustainability. For example, a number of postgraduate elective modules offered by South Africa's Rhodes University and Kenya's Aga Khan University, Moi University and Multimedia University are rooted in questions of sustainability which have the potential to stimulate research around sustainable journalism. These universities are among a few that offer degrees majoring in journalism. Rhodes' Afrofuturism and the Anthropocene course, for example, (Rhodes University 2023), contemplates the

“present reality of living in a high-tech ecologically damaged world.” The course is fundamentally grounded in principles of sustainability and offers journalism students an opportunity to directly engage with social, financial and environmental sustainability holistically. Another of the postgraduate electives offered at Rhodes is Chronicles of the media and its history in South Africa which examines the social history of the country through the lens of its media, and looks at those who have remained underreported or on the periphery of reporting, (Rhodes University 2023).

Reputed journalism-offering universities in Ghana and Kenya also offer programmes rooted in sustainable journalism. Aga Khan University’s courses in Digital Journalism equips students with skills and knowledge required to excel in a rapidly evolving field in the digital era. In these courses, students examine, among other topics, audience engagement and analysis, digital ethics and responsible reporting and verification and fact-checking in the age of information overload and misinformation. Similar topics and modules are offered across the syllabi analysed for Moi and Multimedia Universities and University of Ghana’s Media and Information Literacy and Media Management courses.

Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, our research shows soaring engagement with questions of sustainability in various ways. However, there is still less evidence pointing to a concerted move towards sustainable journalism as conceptualised by Berglez et al. For example, in 2023, Dr Enock Sithole, a journalism lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, undertook a significant research project with support from Fojo/Linnaeus University in Sweden, which looked at climate change reporting. The participants at a webinar discussing the research result and which included academic colleagues from Rhodes and Stellenbosch University, strongly argued in favour of a summit of sorts which would allow the nascent ideas around the teaching of sustainability as part of the journalism curriculum to crystallise.¹

In analysing journalism education in South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana, distinct cultural influences emerge. South African programs grapple with integrating sustainability, often side-lining environmental journalism due to curricular constraints. Kenya’s approach, particularly at Aga Khan University, emphasises digital journalism’s ethical dimensions, preparing students for the information era’s challenges. Conversely, Ghana’s institutions exhibit a growing interdisciplinary approach, borrowing from science departments to supplement their traditional journalism courses, yet struggle to tailor these lessons to journalistic needs. Across these regions, the pressing demand for sustainable journalism underscores the need for significant educational reform. Further research should drill deeper into these differences in journalism cultures (Thomas et al. 2019) across the African continent, highlighting the diversity of societal and cultural settings in which sustainable journalism can be developed.

While all the journalism curricula sampled did not have a stand-alone course on climate and environmental reporting/communication, issues surrounding climate and environmental journalism education are covered under special topics or in courses where students choose an area of journalism to specialise in. Other institutions such as the Graduate School of Media and Communications at Aga Khan University in Kenya have supplemented their education with professional development courses in health

reporting, climate change and environmental reporting, and students are encouraged to apply for these specialised short courses. The school also runs two excellence in reporting fellowships focusing on health and on climate change and environmental reporting where fellows are trained and mentored and then provided with a reporting grant on these critical issues on sustainable journalism.

The journalism curricula of all five institutions under examination in South Africa, with their strong, traditional, emphasis on journalism as praxis, lack room for thematic content foci like climate change or social sustainability. Traditionally, the teaching and learning of thematic content areas has happened in specialised undergraduate courses in the social sciences such as geography, anthropology and sociology. Specialisation of the kind that sustainable journalism requires, needs to find space in already crammed curricula and requires a rethinking of journalism curricula to adequately tackle the sustainability challenge. Some of the newer courses such as those at Rhodes University show a promising shift to the inclusion of sustainable journalism in HEI curricula but remain tangential. Theoretical shifts in journalism studies as represented by the data from search for the words, “sustainable journalism,” in the journal, *African Journalism Studies*, show a continued focus on traditional journalism studies without no pivot to the concept of sustainable journalism. We believe African media and journalism journals should encourage sustainable journalism research by running special-themed issues focusing on this topic.

In Ghana, similar evidence supporting the scant inclusion of environmental and climate science reporting in curricula was found. To fill the void and to expose students to current environmental and scientific issues that can pique students’ interest in reporting on them, a few universities, like the Christian Service University College, have a special arrangement with other departments of their universities for students to take courses like Global and National Science Issues and Science and Technology in our Lives from those departments. Even while it is a good initiative, it might not be able to satisfy the requirements for including sustainable journalism in curricula. The reason for this is that the departments that offer these courses may not always alter the course’s content to suit the demands of journalism students.

Additionally, there are initiatives in the fields of science, health, and medical reporting that try to equip students with the reporting abilities needed to cover such topics, albeit in a small number of institutions. Courses that provide both a theoretical grounding in comprehending climate and science concerns and the necessary journalistic abilities for reporting on them are needed.

In conclusion, this paper, inspired by and following the footsteps of previous studies that sought to understand differences in journalism education and training in different countries, including for example the United States and Canada (Josephi 2010) or the United States and the Netherlands (Ibold and Deuze 2012), France and the United Kingdom (Barlow 1936) or China and Australia (Tang and Chand 2021) with the exception that ours focused specifically on sustainable journalism in Africa. Through a syllabi analysis, we have shown the continent’s unique circumstances and experiences with sustainable journalism by analysing how educators in Kenya, Ghana and South Africa are incorporating sustainability in their teaching materials. We believe that our analysis can serve as a guide to other institutions seeking to improve the quality and their approaches to sustainable journalism. It points to the gaps in the current offerings and also suggests the different aspects of sustainable journalism that should be included in the curriculum.

It is a good starting point for any curriculum review, re-design and adaptation and the need for journalism programmes to evolve and incorporate new skills, knowledge and competencies relevant to the changing mediascape. We have also demonstrated Africa's contribution to the ongoing debates focused on sustainable journalism. The study could be a springboard for the creation of synergies regionally, but also internationally particularly among institutions interested in (sustainable) journalism education and training.

The study explored the concept of sustainable journalism and its crucial role in shaping journalism education within different African contexts. Despite the growing need for sustainability in journalism, evident through various global challenges such as poverty, climate change, and health disparities, the integration of sustainable practices in African journalism remains in its nascent stages. Naturally, this study faces several limitations. First, it assesses a narrow selection of universities, potentially overlooking diverse educational approaches within these countries. The reliance on curriculum analysis without observational insights into actual teaching practices or direct feedback from students and educators might skew interpretations. In response to this limitation, we have already collected data based on interviews with journalism educators in Ghana and Kenya. The South African phase follows next once our ethics application has been approved. Second, the study does not account for the rapidly evolving journalistic landscape influenced by digital transformation and global events, which could necessitate real-time curriculum adaptations.

Third, data were collected in Anglophone countries only, a decision which Marie-Soleil Frere would have criticised. The Belgian journalism scholar Frere (2022) left a lasting legacy through her work, which showed massive differences between the state of journalism in Francophone and Anglophone Africa, arguing very little was known about developments, challenges and opportunities for journalism in French-speaking Africa. Lastly, the focus on sustainable journalism, while pertinent, risks overlooking other critical journalistic competencies, thereby not fully capturing the holistic needs and developments in journalism education.

Having said this, we argue that our study contributes significantly to the academic field by illuminating the current state of journalism education in African universities, particularly focusing on sustainable journalism. By examining specific curricula and educational structures, the study sheds light on the integration of sustainability and environmental reporting within journalism programs, a previously underexplored area. It highlights the innovative approaches universities are employing, balancing traditional journalistic principles with emerging sustainability challenges. Furthermore, the research underscores a critical need - rethinking journalism education to encompass global issues like climate change, offering insights that could shape future curriculum development. By identifying gaps in current educational practices, it provides a foundation for academia, and possibly policy makers, to push for more comprehensive journalism education that prepares students to effectively report on complex, interdisciplinary topics. Ultimately, this study marks a step towards understanding and potentially catalysing a shift in journalism education to address global sustainability challenges.

Finally, our recommendation for journalism practitioners and educators in Africa is to intensify the integration of sustainable journalism into their curricula, addressing the urgency of climate change and environmental crises, while at the same time taking the issue of making journalism itself sustainable and financially viable into account.

Collaborations with scientific and environmental departments within universities can enrich reportage credibility, ensuring journalists have a robust understanding of these complex topics. Additionally, continual professional development through workshops or short courses in sustainability reporting is advised. Newsrooms should also be encouraged to allocate resources and create specialised positions or desks dedicated to environmental reporting, thereby elevating the prominence and regularity of sustainability content in media outputs. We also see a role for Africa-focused journalism and media journals in promoting sustainability by encouraging special-themed issues focused on sustainable journalism.

Note

1. See <https://journalism.co.za/wcj-webinar-climate-change-journalism-in-south-africa/>

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Bruce Mutsvairo  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7520-9739>

Kristoffer Holt  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2017-1117>

References

- Adjin-Tettey, Theodora Dame, Anthea Garman, Franz Kruger, Ulrika Olausson, Peter Berglez, Lars Tallert, Guy Berger, and Vilhelm Fritzon. 2021. *Towards Sustainable Journalism in sub-Saharan Africa: Policy Brief*, 2nd ed. Växjö, Sweden: Fojo Media Institute.
- Al-Rawi, Ahmed. 2020. *News 2.0: Journalists, Audiences and News on Social Media*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ansu-Kyeremeh, Kwasi. 2014. "Critically 'Trending' Approaches to Communication Theory and Methods of Inquiry in Ghana." In *Changing Perspectives on the Social Sciences in Ghana*, edited by Samuel Agyei-Mensah, Joseph Atsu Ayea, and Abena D. Oduro, 221–238. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Banda, Frankson. 2015. *Teaching Journalism for Sustainable Development: New Syllabi*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Barlow, Reuel. 1936. "French and British Schools of Journalism: With a Comparative Analysis." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 13 (2): 157–168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769903601300>.
- Bayeck, Rebecca. 2022. "Positionality: The Interplay of Space, Context and Identity." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 21 (1): 1–9.
- Berglez, Peter, Ulrika Olausson, and Mart. Ots. 2017. "What is Sustainable Journalism? An Introduction." In *Sustainable Journalism. Integrating the Environmental, Social and Economic Challenges of Journalism*, xi–xxvi. New York: Peter Lang.
- Bers, T., B. Davis, and B. Taylor. 2000. "The Use of Syllabi in Assessments: Unobtrusive Indicators and Tools for Faculty Development." *Assessment Update* 12 (3): 4–7.
- Brundtland, Gro. Harlem. 1987. "Our Common Future: Report of the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development." United Nations, Oslo 1–59.
- Bunce, Mel, Suzanne Franks, and Chris Paterson. 2017. *Africa's Media Image in the 21st Century from the "Heart of Darkness" to "Africa Rising."* London: Routledge.

- Cañadas, María. C., Pedro Gómez, and Luis. Rico. 2013. "Structure of Primary Mathematics Teacher Education Programs in Spain." *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education* 11 (4): 879–894. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10763-013-9422-z>.
- Carvalho, Anabela, Margit Van Wessel, and Pieter Maesele. 2017. "Communication Practices and Political Engagement with Climate Change: A Research Agenda." *Environmental Communication* 11 (1): 122–135.
- Chasi, Colin, and Ylva Rodny-Gumede. 2022. "Decolonial Journalism: New Notes on Ubuntu and the Public Interest." *Journalism Studies* 23 (13): 1625–1637. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2083006>.
- Cheeseman, Nic & Klaas, Brian. 2018. *How to Rig an Election*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Cheruiyot, David, Siguru Wahutu, Admire Mare, George Ogola, and Mabweazara Hayes Mawindi. 2021. "Making News outside Legacy Media: Peripheral Actors within an African Communication Ecology." *African Journalism Studies* 42 (4): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2021.2046397>.
- Chiumbu, Sarah, and Allen Munoroyarwa. 2023. "Exploring Data Journalism Practices in Africa: Data Politics, Media Ecosystems and Newsroom Infrastructures." *Media, Culture & Society* 45 (4): 841–858. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231155341>.
- Coker, Winston. 2018. "The Governmentality of Journalism Education in Ghana." *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 29 (1): 132–161. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ljh.v29i1.6>.
- De Beer, Arnold S., Sandra Pitcher, and Nicola Jones. 2017. "Journalism Education in South Africa: Taking on Challenges for the Future." In *Robyn S Goodman and Elanie Steyn. Global Journalism Education in the 21st Century: Challenges and Innovations*, 175–197. Austin: Texas.
- Diedong, Africanus. 2008. "Establishing Journalistic Standards in the Ghanaian Press." *African Communication Research* 1: 207–232.
- Dube, Beverly. 2016. Rethinking Journalism Education in African Journalism Institutions: Perspectives of Southern African Journalism Scholars on the Africanisation of Journalism Curricula" 6 (1): <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC187757>.
- Eddy, Kirsten, Amy Ross Arguedas, Mitali Mukherjee, and Nielsen Rasmus Kleis. 2023. *Women and Leadership in the News Media 2023: Evidence from 12 Markets*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/women-and-leadership-news-media-2023-evidence-12-markets>.
- Ezeru, Chikaire Wilfred Williams. 2023. "Africa's Global Media Image in a Digital World as an Exclusive Western Preserve?" *International Communication Gazette* 84 (5): 379–400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485211063789>.
- Finlay, Alan. 2020. *Mapping Journalism Centres in sub-Saharan Africa*. Växjö: Fojo Media Institute, Linnaeus University. Accessed July 30, 2023. <https://fojo.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Final-Africa-Training-Centres-Version7-02-Dec.pdf>.
- Frere Marie-Soleil. 2022. *Politics and Journalism in Francophone Africa: Systems, Practices and Identities*. London: Palgrave.
- Gade, Peter, J., Emmanuel-Lugard Nduka, and Shugofa Dastger. 2017. "Developing Sustainable News Media in Africa: A Professionalisation Model to Curtail 'the Brown Envelope' and Other Corrupting Influences." *Journal of Media Business Studies* 14 (1): 5–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2017.1292713>.
- Garman, Anthea, and Mia Van der Merwe. 2017. "Riding the Waves: Journalism Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* 72 (3): 306–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077695817720679>.
- Gondwe, Gregory. 2022. "African Journalists at Crossroads: Examining the Impact of China, US, and the UK's Short-Journalism Training Programs Offered to African Journalists." *Journalism Studies* 23 (13): 1654–1668.
- Gondwe, Gregory. 2024. "Journalistic Narratives Amid the US and Chinese Media Expansion in Africa: What it Means to Tell an African Journalistic Story." *International Communication Gazette* 86 (2): 109–123. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485221134182>.
- Hochheimer, L John. 2007. "Journalism Education in Africa. From Critical Pedagogical Theory to Meaning-Based Practice." *Critical Arts* 15 (1): 97–116. <https://humanities.uct.ac.za/cfms/postgraduate/honours>.

- Ibold, Hans, and Mark. Deuze. 2012. "Comparing Experiences in Journalism Education: The Netherlands and the United States." In *Didaktik der Journalistik. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften*, edited by Beatrice Dernbach, and Wiebke Loosen, 405–417. Dordrecht: Springer-Verlag. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-93447-1_32.
- Joseph, Beate, ed. 2010. *Journalism Education in Countries with Limited Media Freedom*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Kamboh Shafiq, Ahmed, Muhammad Ittefaq, and Muhammad. Yousaf. 2022. "Editorial Journalism and Environmental Issues in the Majority World." *International Journal of Communication* 16: 2646–2668.
- Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Matsilele, Trust, and Pedzisai Ruhanya. 2021. "Social Media Dissidence and Activist Resistance in Zimbabwe." *Media, Culture & Society* 43 (2): 381–394. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720957886>.
- Medranda-Morales, Narcisa, Roberto Sánchez-Montoya, Ayuy Cevallos, V. Josselyn, Soria Rojas, and A. Joselyne. 2022. "Challenges for the Construction of Environmental Journalism in Ecuador and the COP26 in Digital Media." *Sustainability* 14 (20): 13173. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142013173>.
- Motsaathebe, Gilbert. 2011. "Journalism Education and Practice in South Africa and the Discourse of the African Renaissance." *Communicatio* 37 (3): 381–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2011.605372>.
- Mutsvairo, Bruce, and Saba Bebawi. 2019. "Journalism Educators, Regulatory Realities and Pedagogical Predicaments of the 'Fake News' Era. A Comparative Perspective on the Middle East and Africa." *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* 74 (2): 1–15.
- Mutsvairo, Bruce, Eddy Borges-Rey, Saba Bebawi, Mireya Marquez Ramirez, Mabweazara Mellado Claudia, Mahwindi Hayes, Marton Demeter, Michal Glowacki, Hanan Badr, and Daya. Thussu. 2021. "Different But the Same: How the Global South is Challenging the Hegemonic Epistemologies and Ontologies of Western-centric Journalism Studies." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 98 (4): 993–995. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990211048789>.
- Mutsvairo, Bruce, and Nnamdi T. Ekeanyanwu. 2021. *Media and Communication in Nigeria: Conceptual Connections, Crossroads and Constraints*. New York: Routledge.
- Nothias, Toussaint. 2018. "How Western Journalists Actually Write About Africa Re-assessing the Myth of Representations of Africa." *Journalism Studies* 19 (8): 1138–1159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1262748>.
- Obijiofor, Levi, and Marie M'Balla-Ndi Oelgemoeller. 2023. "Journalism Education, Research, and Practice in Africa: Toward a Transformative Approach." *International Communication Gazette* 85 (6): 439–458. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485221126344>.
- Ogola, George. 2015. "African Journalism: A Journey of Failures and Triumphs." *African Journalism Studies* 36 (1): 93–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2015.1008175>.
- Olausson, Ulrika. 2007. "The Ideological Horizons of Citizenship: National Media as Discursive Bridge." In *Ideological Horizons in Media and Citizens Discourses: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches*, edited by Birgitta Höijer, 51–74. Gothenburg: Nordicom.
- Ong'ong'a, Daniel. 2023. "Unveiling African Narratives on Facebook: Media Posts and Audience Engagement." *Journal of African Media Studies* 15 (2): 199–216. https://doi.org/10.1386/jams_00100_1.
- Picha, Edwardsson M. 2015. "Towards a Sustainable Media System: Explorative Studies of Emerging Media Consumption Trends and Media Processes for Content Production." Doctoral Dissertation, KTH Royal Institute of Technology. Stockholm. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:805749/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.
- Porlezza, Colin. 2019. "Accuracy in Journalism." In: Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication, Oxford University Press. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. <https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-773>.
- Prinsloo, Jeanne. 2010. "Journalism Education in South Africa: Shifts and Dilemmas." *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research* 36 (2): 185–199.
- Rhodes University. 2024. Postgraduate Electives. Accessed January 23, 2024. <https://www.ru.ac.za/jms/curriculum2023/postgraduateelectives/#d.en.299290>.

- Romero Hall, Enilda, and Li Lilin. 2020. "A Syllabi Analysis of Social Media for Teaching and Learning Courses." *Journal of Teaching and Learning* 14 (1): 13–28. <https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v14i1.6246>.
- Sakr, Naomi. 2017. "Managing for Sustainable Journalism Under Authoritarianism: Innovative Business Models Aimed at Good Practice." In *What Is Sustainable Journalism?: Integrating the Environmental, Social, and Economic Challenges of Journalism*, edited by Peter Berglez, Ulrika Olausson, and Mart Ots, 295–313. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shaw Ibrahim, Seaga. 2009. "Towards an African Journalism Model: A Critical Historical Perspective." *International Communication Gazette* 71 (6): 491–510. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048509339792>.
- Skjerdal, Terje, S., and Charles, M. Ngugi. 2007. "Institutional and Governmental Challenges for Journalism Education in East Africa." *African Journalism Studies* 28 (1–2): 176–190.
- Stellenbosch University. 2023. "BA Honours in Journalism." Stellenbosch University. Accessed July 25, 2023 <https://journalism.sun.ac.za/en/ba-honours/>.
- Tallert, Lars. 2021. "From Traditional Journalism to Sustainable Journalism." Global Investigative Journalism Network. Accessed August 14, 2023 <https://gijn.org/2021/05/13/from-traditional-journalism-to-sustainable-journalism/>.
- Tang, Cimei and Asha Chand. 2021. "Panda Meets Koala: A Comparison of Journalism Education Practices in China and Australia." *Global Media Journal: Australian Edition* 15 (1).
- Thomas, Hanitzsch, Hanusch Folker, Ramaprasad Jyotika, and Arnold S. de Beer, eds. 2019. *Worlds of Journalism: Journalistic Cultures Around the Globe*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- University of KwaZulu-Natal. 2023. "Centre for Culture, Communication and Media Studies." University of Kwazulu-Natal. Accessed July 25, 2023. https://ccms.ukzn.ac.za/resources/cultural-studies_copy1/.
- Vallance, Suzanne, Harvey C. Perkins, and Jennifer E. Dixon. 2011. "What is Social Sustainability? A Classification of Concepts." *Geoforum* 42 (3): 342–348.
- Walker, Peter. 2017. "Sustainability: A Discipline and a Political Agenda?" *Environmental Hazards* 16 (2): 93–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17477891.2017.1296810>.
- Wasserman, Herman, and Dani. Madrid-Morales. 2018. "How Influential Are Chinese Media in Africa? An Audience Analysis in Kenya and South Africa." *International Journal of Communication* 12: 2212–2231. 1932.