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Can universities make good journalists?

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Journalism education in the UK has experienced a pattern of explosive growth since the 1970s without agreement over the range and scope of the subject as an academic discipline. Taught mainly by journalists who move into academia later in life, alongside skills of reporting and knowledge of law and public affairs, students can be required to develop complex sets of qualities, skills, behaviours and dispositions without detailed consideration of the attributes and behaviours they may involve. Driven by a mistrust of the critical approach of media studies to the practices of the occupation, academic qualifications are still viewed with suspicion by some practitioners who consider an aptitude for journalism temperamental and innate rather than a set of behaviours that can be taught. This action research project critically integrates academic literature on journalism and higher education with primary data from interviews conducted with a newspaper editor, two academics and a focus group of students. Data gathered suggests that a university education can develop qualities and behaviours such as curiosity, scepticism, tenacity and "news sense" through appropriate tuition by academics with professional experience and exercises that mimic the workplace experience. It identifies a role for journalism education in extending knowledge beyond the subject area and the increasing importance of ethics.

Forms of tacit knowledge within the occupation are identified and incorporated into a model of skills, knowledge and qualities required of a good journalist and the dispositions and predispositions that underpin them in order to illuminate, facilitate and develop journalism education and promote further discussion among academics and practitioners about the value of higher education in journalism.

"The only qualities essential for real success in journalism are rat-like cunning, a plausible manner and a little literary ability" (Tomalin, 1969).

Since journalism emerged as a modern academic discipline in the UK at Cardiff University in 1970 it has experienced a pattern of explosive growth (Hanna & Sanders, 2007).

A search of the UCAS and UKPASS websites suggests that British universities are currently offering 273 single and joint undergraduate degree courses and 123 postgraduate courses involving instruction in journalism (Graduate Prospects, 2014; UCAS, 2014). In the academic year 2012-13, 12,025 students were studying journalism at British universities, 10,140 of those as a first degree (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2014). Despite its popularity there remains considerable scepticism in sections of industry about the value of higher education to journalism, the former editor of The Sun, Kelvin MacKenzie, suggesting that all journalism colleges should be closed down (MacKenzie, 2011).

In higher education, there is no commonly agreed range and scope of the subject area of journalism and ways of thinking or practicing within it (Holmes *et al.*, 2013). Teaching, curricula and assessments are designed by journalists who generally move from practice to teaching later in life and are employed for experience in the workplace rather than experience in HE or a capacity for academic research (Greenberg, 2007; Harcup, 2011). These "hackademics" [1] bring with them from industry particular intuitive and subjective ways of thinking and practicing. Journalism texts require students to "make contacts", "scrutinise" "subvert" or "hold a mirror to society" (Randall, 2011; Smith, 2007) sometimes without detailed consideration of the attributes, personal knowledge and ways of thinking and practicing this might involve. Students who fail to exhibit these qualities or attributes can be written off as lacking necessary talents or "not suited" to journalism.

This action research study will critically integrate educational treaties on learning in higher education with texts on journalism and gather primary data from students, academics and an employer in order to identify, categorise and model requirements demanded of a "good journalist". It will seek to establish whether they could be developed in higher education and how universities must achieve that. Its purpose is to illuminate, develop and facilitate learning and teaching practice in journalism education. By challenging MacKenzie's idea that good journalists are born and not made it will endeavour to establish more clearly the value of a degree in journalism.

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1   This hybrid term between academic and "hack" (a slang term for a journalist) is thought to have been coined by Matthew Engel in the British Journalism Review in 2003 (Harcup, 2011)

Context

Journalism is a historically diverse and undefined activity that has been variously conceptualised as a profession, a craft, an industry, a literary genre, a culture, a social practice, a community or an ideology (Deuze, 2006; Mensing, 2011). Journalists' perceptions of themselves are multi-dimensional and may involve roles as informers, interpreters or advocates (Willnat *et al*, 2013) but there is no single body to which journalists are answerable and no way of preventing anyone from calling themselves a journalist (Holmes *et al*, 2013).

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) publishes no subject-specific benchmark statements for journalism, instead including the subject area under the cover of "Communication, media, film and cultural studies", which frames the subject in terms of the theoretical examination of the effect of cultural and communicative activities on society rather than a set of skills and values (QAA, 2008).

In addition, the occupation of journalism has undergone and continues to undergo an unprecedented period of upheaval. Traditional media face declining advertising revenues and audiences (Holmes *et al*, 2013) and the emergence of activities referred to as "citizen journalism" has blurred boundaries between journalism and other forms of public communication and between journalists and their audiences (Willnat *et al*, 2013; Tumber & Prentoulis, 2005). The collapse of old business models and career paths is presenting particular challenges to the motivation, purpose and orientation of journalism education which has been trying to keep up with the conflicting demands of industry (Deuze, 2006).

Challenges to the business of journalism are being mirrored in challenges to the purposes of higher education in the new information space where knowledge is more prolific, complex, fast and ambiguous (Land, 2013). The role of universities as gatekeepers of knowledge and learning has been eroded and academics are being encouraged to change the character of their learning spaces (Barnett, 2010). As universities come under increasing pressure to update their own practices and relevance, since journalism courses are already actively engaged in confronting similar issues they could be positioned to become leaders by virtue of necessity (Mensing & Franklin, 2011).

Debate about the value of higher education in training journalists was ignited by the suggestion of the former editor of The Sun, Kelvin MacKenzie, that he would "shut down all journalism courses":

> *"No amount of academic debate is going to give you news sense, even if you have a PhD. It's a knack and you've either got it or you haven't" (MacKenzie, 2011).*

Putting these remarks into context, they were made shortly before a somewhat cavalier appearance before the Leveson Inquiry at which he declared that he was not bothered about issues of ethics or privacy and if a story sounded right he would "lob it in" to his newspaper (Leveson, 2012). What his remarks do reflect however is a belief that aptitude for the occupation is a singular "talent" rather than a set of skills and behaviours that can be learned. They reflect a traditional scepticism in industry about the value of academic study and qualifications in journalism and the view that universities are places of "debate" rather than training and development. The industry training body, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), remained opposed to first degrees in journalism until the late 1970's, arguing that accredited training in further education ensured a better quality of recruits (Hanna & Sanders, 2007) and today the Society of Editors states that "most trainee journalists are trained to degree level: editors do not necessarily regard

journalism degrees as having more weight than those in traditional subjects" (Society of Editors, 2013).

This study then faces a number of challenges. In order to identify the skills, knowledge and behaviours required of a good journalist it will first have to address the question "what is a good journalist?" and indeed "what is journalism?"

Journalism: the public function and the set of skills

In addressing the question "what is journalism", Brian McNair suggests:

> *"For some it is a set of technical skills – a craft, to be learned and practised according to traditions handed down over the centuries. For others it is a noble profession, with a special responsibility to defend democratic processes, and an associated set of core ethical values. For others still, journalism is a creative medium, an art form even, as dependent upon fertile imagination and aesthetic sensibilities as a technical knowledge of shorthand or interviewing techniques". (McNair, 2005, p.42).*

McNair suggests that journalism is required to be at least three things, often at the same time:

> *A supplier of information*
> *A resource for, support to and participant in public life and political debate*
> *A medium of education, enlightenment and entertainment (McNair, 2005, p.28).*

Whilst these can all be considered recognisable functions of journalism, none of them can be seen as defining characteristics. Rather they reference what can be described as the wider societal function of journalism in the 'public sphere' (Habermas, 1989) or the function of journalists to serve citizens or consumers as invoked in the expanding body of literature on the public journalism movement in the United States (Deuze, 2006; 2008). In order to identify a defining function of journalism it is proposed to separate the public function of journalism from the "set of technical skills" described by McNair as involving the production of "mediated reality" (McNair, 2005): what journalists would recognise as the function of reporting.

Further evidence of these two separate but connected notions of the public function of journalism and journalism as a reporting function can be observed in texts on journalism used in learning and teaching in universities. David Randall, for example, lists "the right attitudes" which make "a good reporter". These include attributes like keen news sense, determination to find out, a passion for precision, empathy with readers and a sense of urgency [2] (Randall, 2011).

In addition Randall contends that good reporters share a belief in what the job is about: to question and as a result to:

> *Discover and publish information that replaces rumour and speculation*
> *Resist or evade government controls*
> *Inform and empower voters*
> *Subvert those whose authority relies on a lack of public information*
> *Scrutinise the action of government and business*

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2   The others are "never make assumptions, never be afraid to look stupid, be suspicious of all sources, be resourceful, leave your prejudices at home, realise you are part of a process, the will to win, take pleasure in beating the opposition, be professional and individuality"

Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable (Randall, 2011, p.3).

In general, it can be seen that Randall's "attitudes" tend to be connected to the narrower definition of journalism as a reporting function whilst his "belief" and its imperatives connect to the wider public function.

On one level Randall's "belief" and its imperatives could be seen as an explicit expression of values and assumed values prevalent in the organisational culture of the news business (Schein, 2010), a set of ideological values deployed to define journalism as an ideology and keep outside forces at bay in the debate about the future of journalism (Deuze, 2006) or connected to a process of socialising students in the practices of the occupation (Mensing, 2011). Certainly journalism can be viewed as a community of practice in which identity, meaning, practice and community are constructed through doing, being, belonging and becoming (Wenger, 2009). Underlying this "belief" and its imperatives however are fundamental behaviours of enterprise, subversion and scrutiny, which are essential to the function of reporting.

This idea of separate notions of the reporting function of journalism and its function in the public sphere can also be observed in a cross-national study of journalistic competencies which cited three roles of journalists:

Report news quickly
Provide analysis of events
Be watchdog of government (Willnat et al, 2013).

What emerges here is a traditional reference to speed as a defining characteristic of journalism, an aura of immediacy stressing the novelty of information as its defining principle (Deuze, 2006). It should be noted, though, that while speed remains important in some sections of the news business, in an information space increasingly shaped by social media other sources are often faster in reporting news.

Journalists in different countries and cultures tend to put more emphasis on particular requirements such as 'reporting news quickly' or 'providing analysis of events' depending on institutional, cultural or political situations in their own country. In countries such as Brazil, Germany or Japan, where there are close ties between journalists and government officials, journalists are unlikely to place importance on "being a watchdog of government" (Willnat *et al*, 2013, p.174).

It should be noted that the terms "profession" and "professionalism" are contentious when associated with journalism. Since engagement in this debate was not considered helpful for the purposes of this study, journalism is referred to where possible as "an occupation". However the term "professional" may be used in two specific contexts:

1; In the educational context of "professional learning": a process involving acquisition of specialised, cultural and often tacit knowledge

2; Referring to a paid occupation: the antithesis of "citizen journalism": a term used to refer to a variety of unpaid activities that generally involve members of the public getting involved in newsgathering and reporting but may also involve publication of opinions rather than facts (Gowing, 2009).

It is clear then that notions of success and achievement in journalism can be attached to a number of overlapping requirements and may depend on political, social and cultural factors. It is proposed to concentrate this pilot study on the definition of the "good journalist" in its narrower sense as a reporting function for the following reasons:

Reporting skills are the defining function of journalism. They remain the main distin-

guishing feature of the occupation of journalism.

Defining the good journalist in terms of the public function involves making a number of contested political and societal judgements about neutrality, objectivity, fairness, autonomy, freedom and independence for example, which could detract from the purpose of this study in illuminating, developing and facilitating learning and teaching practice (Deuze, 2006).

Journalism education in the UK is focussed primarily around training students to work in traditional news organisations and development of skills and knowledge required for the practice of journalism, usually in entry-level media jobs (Mensing, 2011).

Journalism as a set of behaviours

Traditional consensus around skills and knowledge involved in practical journalism is typified by the vocational Diploma in Journalism offered by the NCTJ, which is focused on "the vital skills of finding and telling stories accurately and to deadline". Alongside their requirements for examination in "essential media law" and "essential public affairs" knowledge the NCTJ list a number of other qualities and behaviours under a section entitled "Want to be a Journalist?":

"Journalists, photographers and photojournalists have to be confident. They have to be ready to knock on doors and talk to strangers in the street. They must be inquisitive and they have to be ready to get the most out of their working day" (National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2013).

The NCTJ Guide for Trainee Journalists includes a further list of requirements including knowledge of "the world around you", your industry, sources of information and codes of conduct and an extensive list of "character, attitude, knowledge and skills" you need to be a good reporter. These are categorised into "those you can work on" and "those you are born with". The latter includes curiosity, an interest in people, intelligence, health, courage, belief in yourself, out-going (an ability to get on with all sorts of people), enthusiastic, determined, accurate, sceptical, thick-skinned and innovative (Smith, 2007).

On examination it's a somewhat strange list: many highly successful journalists have notoriously unhealthy lifestyles; notions of courage, self-belief and determination can be identified with the acquisition of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1994) and in most workplaces people often have to give at least an impression of engagement with colleagues and/or members of the public. However, in the NCTJ's list, the Randall list, and other similar lists, it is possible to identify requirements connected with curiosity, scepticism and enterprise that support the practical function of journalism as well as the activity of learning.

In order to categorise requirements such as these it is necessary to examine whether there is any distinction or difference between what are variously described by journalists as instincts, personality traits, qualities, talents, values, attitudes, beliefs, character or dispositions and examine how they might relate to each other.

Reference was first made to the hierarchy of six "neuro-logical" levels at which learning and change can take place, developed by Robert Dilts and widely used in Neuro-Linguistic Programming: environment, behaviour, capability, beliefs, identity and spiritual (Dilts, 1990).

Although not universally acknowledged scientifically, the Dilts logical levels suggest

categorisation between more outward facing behaviours involving reactions to situations and surroundings to deeper internally focussed beliefs: from "a passion for precision" on the Randall list, for example, to his 'belief in what the job is about'.

In educational literature too, Lynda Stansfield distinguishes between internally focussed attributes and social attributes which are focussed externally. In her conceptual model, derived from an empirical study of self-managed learners, she categorises a hierarchy of knowledge and skills that are easy to change and attitudes and personality traits that are more difficult to alter without a degree of willingness, effort and time (Stansfield, 1999). Ronald Barnett discusses the role of the higher education curriculum in personal development with regard to notions of 'knowing and becoming'. He distinguishes between *dispositions (*such as the will to learn, engage, listen, explore or go forward and tendencies to engage with the world) and *qualities* (such as resilience, integrity, self-discipline, confidence, enthusiasm and suspicion). Barnett contends that whilst they overlap in character, dispositions supply the energy to go forward, whilst qualities are more subject-specific and find expression in the way a student goes about their studies. At a deeper level they connect to ideas of being and becoming, will and authenticity. Without appropriate dispositions, learning and acquisition of skills is impossible (Barnett, 2007).

Beneath these discussions and the proposition that "a good journalist is born and not made" lie wide ranging philosophical debates about nature versus nurture referenced by geneticists in concepts of heritability and in social and political sciences in structure versus agency. These are considered beyond the scope of this study. Instead it is proposed to focus on the notion of "pedagogical being" defined by Barnett in a student by curricular settings and pedagogical relationships. A student's pedagogical being is connected to the student's more general identity involving "being as a human being" but is peculiar to the learning setting (Barnett, 2007 p. 28).

Similarly it can be imagined that being a journalism student will involve "being and becoming a journalist": a further developing identity which infuses and is infused by other identities but will be peculiar to their function as a journalist. Examining this literature around this subject area suggests that the performance of a student or a journalist could be assessed at a number of levels. A tutor might try to directly measure their skills (the learned ability to perform a specific task) or test their knowledge (a range of information or practical understanding) but practitioners such as Kelvin McKenzie might also make judgements about qualities or dispositions they exhibit as the student goes about his studies or the journalist goes about his occupation.

In order to categorise these requirements, a taxonomy is proposed which distinguishes between behaviours and qualities that are immutable in students or journalists (the predispositions) and those that are not (the dispositions). The predispositions might be typified by attributes such as those involved in the "Big Five" or "OCEAN" dimensions: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism which have been shown to exhibit a high degree of stability among working age adults and across cultures (Digman, 1990). In the proposed taxonomy these predispositions underpin internally focussed dispositions such as self-efficacy and determination which supply energy and motivation. The dispositions in turn underpin externally focussed qualities typified by curiosity, confidence and enterprise which are evident in the way the student goes about their studies or the journalist goes about their occupation.

Articles

News sense

Most of the requirements of a good journalist discussed above can be mapped onto this model apart from the notion of 'news sense' cited by Kelvin McKenzie and Randall: "knowing what makes a good story and the ability to find the essential news point in a mass of dross" (Randall, 2011, p.4). Practitioners such as Randall, MacKenzie and Smith consider news sense a defining requirement of the occupation of journalism:

> *"You will come across journalists who tell you this is something you either have or you haven't ... but we are all born with it to some degree. Nobody walks past a blazing house without thinking it worth mentioning when they get to the pub" (Smith, 2007, p.6).*

On examination 'news sense' or 'knowing a good story' is a process of prioritising news agendas by making judgements informed by factors such as knowledge of previously published material, empathy with an audience, awareness of a commissioner's agenda and identification of key elements such as conflict, involvement of celebrity, human interest or innovation, for example (Holmes *et al*, 2013; McKane, 2009). These are the sort of skills and instincts identified by Eraut in his theories of professional learning: rapid, intuitive understanding or response, knowledge constructed from aggregation of episodes and transfer of knowledge from one situation to another. Knowledge is embedded in taken-for-granted activities, perceptions and norms and activities involving the acquisition and use of tacit knowledge (Eraut, 2000). Eraut describes a journey from competent to professional involving a series of ill-structured problems and shifting goals, during which the student acquires two types of knowledge: codified, explicit knowledge and personal, tacit knowledge. Acquisition of tacit knowledge in the workplace involves activities such as asking questions and getting information, locating resources, listening and observing, learning from mistakes, giving and receiving feedback and activities located within processes such as supervision, mentoring, coaching, and site visits (Eraut, 2007). Tacit knowledge is also categorised as a form of "troublesome knowledge" associated with threshold concepts which characterise ways of thinking and practicing in a subject area and can be used to benchmark curricula (Meyer & Land, 2003).

News sense then has many of the characteristics of tacit knowledge and for the purposes of this study will be categorised as such.

Development of qualities and dispositions in higher education

There is a considerable body of pedagogic literature suggesting that higher education can affect profound change in students. Self-efficacy beliefs for example can be developed through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, modelling influences and social persuasion. Whilst self-efficacy beliefs are easily undermined by failure, experience in overcoming obstacles, seeing others succeed and contact with proficient models who possess competencies to which students aspire can develop beliefs which can positively affect life choices, quality of functioning and resilience to adversity (Bandura, 1994). Within subject disciplines, exposure to threshold concepts in the form of troublesome knowledge can change the way a student thinks about their subject producing transformative and irreversible change. Identification of threshold concepts can illuminate ways of thinking and practicing in a subject area (Meyer & Land, 2003).

Barnett suggests a relationship between knowledge and being, in which dispositions and qualities may be developed through engagement with knowledge and "encounters with

strangeness", a process characterised by language involving "delight" and "wonder". The process of becoming is delicate and can easily be injured or lost forever but can be life-transforming: it is not unusual on the occasion of a university graduation ceremony for the proud graduate to say that 'this course has changed my life'" (Barnett, 2009, p.435).

Further evidence of the potential of universities to develop the individual through the acquisition of knowledge is suggested by the former head of the BBC College of Journalism, Kevin Marsh. Marsh describes a "character, an attitude and a mindset" in successful journalists who are alert and alive to everything going on around them. They question everything they come across, listen properly and have a type of memory that gathers everything "like grannies used to collect bits of string":

> *"In the general run of things, the value of a degree to me as a prospective employer wasn't in the content of the degree itself. It was how everything involved in completing the course had opened the candidate's eyes to the world" (Marsh, 2011).*

Marsh's comments echo discourses within the wider educational community about the reconfiguration of education in an information connected world (Land, 2013; Siemens, 2004). Universities are being urged to develop different skills in students to deal with information abundance, network distribution, intense competition and a communication process that is interactive and asynchronous (Mensing, 2011). Proponents of this viewpoint contend that in an age of 'supercomplexity', where knowledge is growing exponentially and the half-life of knowledge is shrinking, learning and knowledge may rest in diversity of opinions and learning increasingly involves connecting nodes of information (Siemens, 2004; Land, 2013; Barnett, 2009).

Social media, multimedia and interpretative skills are increasingly required of journalists. Journalists in several countries now believe that interpretation is one of their most important roles (Willnat *et al*, 2013). Any model of the good journalist then should acknowledge a facility to connect to, interpret and critically analyse a wide range of sources of information.

Whilst there will always be a proportion of students who do not respond to philosophies of self-development, studies show that appropriate support structures involving models of capabilities, development goals, guiding frameworks, mediating artefacts, documents and activities can help students develop the required capabilities (Eraut, 2007; Stansfield, 1999).

The study proposes to gather data from stakeholders in journalism education in order to:

Clarify and classify the skills, knowledge, qualities and dispositions required in the occupation of journalism.

Explore whether or how journalism education might develop those behaviours.

Methodology

The study has been conducted in the interpretative research paradigm since findings are likely to be personal and subjective and involve interpretation of specifics rather than generalisations (Sharp, 2009). Since the project is being carried out by the teacher as researcher with the purposeful intent of improving learning, it adopted the form of illuminative action research. In particular, it was thought that given the collaborative nature of the project, the interrogation, deconstruction and decentring of knowledge involved in action research would make it particularly appropriate to the research question which depends

on questioning assumptions underlying practices and situations (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009).

Data was gathered through a paired interview with two journalism tutors, a focus group of third year students and a semi-structured interview with the editor of a national magazine. Both tutors were journalists with extensive industry experience employed as academics: one was a course leader (A1) and the other had two years experience in HE (A2). Both had experience of higher education as students: A2 had studied journalism at postgraduate level. The editor (E) had previous experience of national newspapers at associate editor level and as a student studied journalism at postgraduate level.

Findings and discussion: can universities make good journalists?

Data from participants supported the suggestion that a university education could mould, engender or encourage qualities and dispositions traditionally associated with good journalism. The editor discussed her own experience in acquiring news sense in the workplace and in a postgraduate journalism course. She suggested that the same sort of instincts could be acquired in simulated workplace situations provided by the university newsroom:

E: "I think it's certainly something that you can learn. I would say I learned more from people in a newsroom on the job than I did at university doing my training course but if the people who are teaching you at university have experience themselves, sound experience, then they can obviously help young people start to understand what makes for a news story".

Data from students suggested that qualities like scepticism, tenacity and confidence had developed during their university education. S6 felt that one of the most important skills he had acquired was the ability to judge whether a story was true or not:

S6: "Three years ago I could have believed in everything you could have told me. Now I'm saying OK but what are your sources".

S5 felt that practical exercises which required him to secure interviews with sources of information in the community had developed personal qualities in him:

S5: "When you have to talk to strangers you develop skills that are not just applicable to journalism but to your own life like tenacity and confidence".

Academic A2 said that his postgraduate diploma in journalism had taught him how to be a "professional journalist":

A2: "I wouldn't have got a career in journalism without it. I was hopeless. I had done some writing for university papers and stuff and I thought I could do it but I didn't really know much at all".

This data suggests a number of processes could be taking place: development of self-efficacy beliefs and hence resilience in students through mastery experiences (Bandura, 1994) acquisition of tacit knowledge by the editor in a simulated workplace experience (Eraut, 2000) and the tutor "becoming" a journalist (Barnett, 2009). More importantly it suggests that higher education had the capacity to affect qualities and dispositions, particularly scepticism, tenacity or determination, resilience (being "thick skinned") and confidence: requirements categorised by some practitioners as "qualities you are born with" (Smith, 2007, p3). Similarly data from the tutor and the editor suggest development of news sense in simulated workplace exercises and in the workplace, challenging the suggestion that "you've either got it or you haven't" (MacKenzie, 2011).

The data does acknowledge a variation between students in the capacity for acquiring those skills connected to a deeper set of predispositions. A1 considered qualities like "curiosity, tenacity a sense of irreverence and fun and a questioning disposition" were "temperamental":

> A1: "You can try to nurture or develop or provoke ... those qualities in individuals but I think some individuals are blessed by nature with more of them than others";

A2 suggest that,:

> A2: "Journalism courses can give you the kit of parts to become a journalist: the attributes are harder to endow but I think you can develop them, you can hone them".

This supports the proposal that any model of the qualities and behaviours demanded of a good journalist needs to acknowledge a distinction between predispositions, which are "temperamental", and dispositions, which may be affected by experiences such as education.

University - a place of practice and reflection

Data from the participants suggested that practical journalism exercises, particularly newsroom simulations or newsdays could play a central role in developing the "the good journalist". Students S1, S3 and S5 cited production exercises in the university newsroom, an investigative journalism module in which they had been tasked with identifying and investigating an empty building, and the final year long-form journalism project in being formative of their skills and behaviours. All required students to approach and secure interviews with sources of information in the community: as student S5 put it "talking to strangers". S5 described the initial prospect of a first year assignment in which he was required to write three stories, each with two original interviews as "quite overwhelming" but said that "having to get out and do it and not just doing it over the phone or over the internet" as having developed qualities of tenacity and confidence.

A1 highlighted the importance of resilience to the good journalist, suggesting that barriers to success in journalism in particular involved fear of failing, "failing to get the right interview for example":

> A1: "If they feel more able to fail they will learn. I've just done a course myself and it reminded me how very unsettling and difficult it is to learn things because you have to confront your ignorance and incapacity".

S1 said that an investigative journalism module had "pushed him" into acquiring skills which had been formative of his professional practice:

> S1: "I learned more from failing. The skills from that module: I am applying them to all my work this year".

The experience of student S6 (an non-native English speaker) suggested that resilience might be a particular problem. When confronted with exercises involving "talking to strangers" he reported a feeling that he was going to "screw things up".

Barnett highlights the fragile nation of the pedagogical being and the importance of providing a setting where students can "have a go - intellectually, practically or personally" without experiencing harm (Barnett, 2007 p. 147). This emphasises the need for close supervision, direction, management and support by tutors to ensure that students are provided with a safe place for practice, mastery experiences, modelling influences, vicari-

ous experiences and social persuasion: experiences described by Bandura as developing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). The editor, too, considered practical exercises that "got students animated enough to get involved" and required them to "use their skills" had value, particularly in the acquisition of "news sense":

> E: "If you're getting people to run their own website: put out a magazine. It depends on the staff as well: how much are they capable of running an exercise that mimics the working world".

The suggestion here then is that practical journalism exercises which mimic the working world can encourage professional learning to take place in a higher education setting, where tacit knowledge like news sense could be acquired by students (Eraut, 2007). The idea that experiential learning in practical journalism exercises can develop required qualities and dispositions in students is supported by a study at the University of Sheffield which highlights its role in growing student confidence, encouraging group organisation, conquering anxiety and enabling students to feel more confident about the prospect of working in a real news environment (Steel *et al*, 2007). The experience of A1 suggested that historically it was possible to go through these processes and develop those behaviours and qualities without the support of higher education. She said she had "minimal formal instruction in journalism", a degree in English literature and what she described as "a lot of life experience" and had learned on the job "sitting next to Nellie".

Tutor A2 also considered experience in industry important, comparing it to "driving test and theory". He said "you could hear the clicks of the light bulbs going on" when second year students who had been studying only theory experienced the workplace for the first time. However, he said that "rigorous, systematic feedback" and space for reflective analysis through instruments such as reflective logs, which were essential element of the higher education setting, were not provided in the same way outside journalism courses:

> A2: "You can see them beginning to reflect themselves on what makes a good journalist, and "am I good enough" and "what can I do to improve" and without courses you don't get that in a concentrated way".

This highlights the requirement for a process of reflective observation in the cycle of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Feedback, mentoring, and an appropriate level of challenge are central to the process of professional learning alongside development of confidence, commitment and a sense of achievement (Eraut, 2007).

The data suggest that practical exercises which "mimic the working world" and involve "talking to strangers" can not only develop skills such as writing and interviewing but can also engender qualities and dispositions required of journalists. Students need access to tutors who can provide feedback, mentoring and modelling experiences. Effective exercises need to provide an appropriate level of challenge and should be designed to provide mastery experiences, room for reflection and vicarious experiences through social models.

University as developer of networks

Data from the study highlighted a further requirement of the good journalist and hence a further role for universities: development of networks with industry and with sources of information. Data from students suggested that exposure to working journalists as guest speakers, on field trips and on work experience had profoundly affected their development. In particular, S1 and S2 and S3 discussed one successful fashion journalist who had been employed as one of their tutors:

S1: "It was really good to have a journalist who was successful in one particular field who was that passionate about that field".

S3: "She told us how she got there. She showed us her blog for example and she really inspired us to do it ourselves. She showed us how we could make it successful if we wanted to".

S2: "Some of the guest speakers we had in boost your confidence so much. When you see someone who is passionate and successful tell you how great the job is it boosts you ... we've had the chance to hear from so many successful informed people; we've had a chance to learn from them".

Student S1 described how access to a prominent investigative journalist who had been brought in as a guest speaker had changed his mind about his future career: "My hero! Meeting people like X was a big turning point for me".

This data supports the suggestion that contact with successful journalists can develop self-efficacy beliefs in students through modelling experiences, vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1994). In addition, it highlighted the potential of networks of industry contacts in delivering coaching and mentoring to students, two of the recognised learning processes connected to professional learning (Eraut, 2007). Students could also be considered to be going through a process of being socialised into the occupation of journalism (Mensing, 2011).

Evidence from the editor highlighted the importance of universities in developing capacity for innovation, particularly keeping students up to date with changing industry practice:

E:" (Universities)...can be very useful I'd say in bringing people bang up to date with innovation and really understanding the opportunities that technological change can make to journalism"

Student S3 said that contact with industry through work experience and guest speakers had emphasised the importance of innovative working practices:

S3: "Employers are looking for you to be able to do everything, so we can do online, we can do the TV, the radio, and we're a lot more flexible to employers and a lot more valuable to them I think"

Whilst social media skills are increasingly important for communicating with existing audiences, building new audiences and building communities (Holmes et al., 2013) reporters are still required to get to know people in their area to find out what is going on, what is likely to happen and to develop news stories (McKane, 2009). Tutor A2 suggested that development of contacts with sources of information in the community was a process that "did not come naturally" to students who are increasingly more used to contact through email and social media:

A2: "Students these days ... are so used to doing everything on Facebook that they don't actually talk to people so and I think that after they have done work experiences and when they have been out on the streets looking for stories themselves .. they begin to see that one contact leads on to another".

Students S2, S3 and S4 acknowledged the importance of "talking to people" and "making contacts and connections":

S3 "Contacts are really important. You can't be rude to someone because you might need that person whether it's a few months or a few years down the line you might need to back to them."

S2: *"Every small conversation you have you will take something new away from."*

S4: *"Another thing about being a good journalist is that you have to be a people's person and the way you are with people can either get a story from someone or cannot work so you have to be confident and good with people".*

The comments from the students reference Smith's requirement for a reporter to be "able to get on easily with all sorts of people …. being a good listener, sensitive to people's feelings, and appearing sympathetic even when you disagree with what you are being told" (Smith, 2007, p4).

On one level this requirement to be "a people's person" could be viewed as a set of interpersonal skills and taught as such, as communication skills are taught to professional helpers through techniques such as empathic presence and active listening (Egan, 2010).

The evidence of the editor however suggests that a deeper set of skills is required of successful journalists involving knowledge of human behaviour. She cited two examples from her own career in which she had secured interviews by telephoning a chief executive to congratulate him on his appointment and by sending flowers to an artist who had been questioned by police about using human body parts in a contemporary art exhibition.

She cited as "one of the best things she had learned on a local paper" how a photographer had obtained a photograph of a defendant "scurrying away" from a court case by shouting "good luck", prompting them to turn round:

Editor: *"Some people may say that's unethical but ... I'm just using that example to show how people in the media use their knowledge of human beings and use their experience and get what they want".*

At one level, practitioners might consider this an illustration of the "plausible manner and rat like cunning" identified by Nicholas Tomalin alongside "a little literary ability" in his much-quoted self-deprecating article about journalism published in the Sunday Times in the 1960s (Tomalin, 1969). However the transformative effect of this knowledge on the editor, its linkage to experience and its proposed identification as a core concept to the subject area suggests that "knowledge of human behaviour" is a form of tacit knowledge, a taken-for-granted activity acquired on the journey from competent to professional, linked to ways of thinking and practicing within the discipline of journalism (Meyer & Land, 2003; Eraut, 2000). As a result it is proposed to classify "knowledge of human behaviour" as such.

Ethics: The good journalist –v- the bad journalist

Data from students suggested that a requirement of ethical behaviour in journalists and hence an ethical dimension to journalism education was of particular importance:

S2: *"It's been really good to be able to .. learn from the mistakes of journalists in the past and it makes you think about how you would act as a journalist".*

Student S1 said a media law and ethics module had highlighted pressure on journalists from 24 hour news and the internet to get stories and the importance of taking a "moral standpoint": "to believe in something".   He didn't believe it was possible to "teach someone right from wrong", feeling it was "something you were raised with", but suggested that journalists might still "go against that to get the story". This further suggests the emergence of an ethical or moral dimension to the dispositions and qualities previously discussed. Barnett distinguishes between dispositions as the tendency, inclination

or potential to act in a certain way and qualities that can be influenced by reason or strong forces, suggesting dispositions may be tarnished or undone by its qualities leading to harmful or unethical outcomes (Barnett, 2007). Hence ethical behaviour could be considered a quality like curiosity, confidence or tenacity, underpinned by ethical dispositions. The student's suggestion that ethical values could be taught or learned again references the capacity for exposure to troublesome knowledge to affect dispositions (Barnett, 2007).

The editor too thought that education about "professional ethics" was important. Discussing "the best journalists she knows" she said they:

> "...really understand the importance of both being close to your contacts but also sometimes knowing that you are going to have to upset them – but treating them decently".

These remarks should be considered against the background of cultural change in journalism. Editors of mass-market tabloids traditionally considered ethics an irrelevance (Randall, 2011; Leveson, 2012). Randall suggested that traditionally putting the words "journalism" and "ethics" together into the same sentence would risk "reducing the listener to helpless laughter" (Randall, 2011, p.145). Since then however, the Leveson Inquiry "sparked by public revulsion about a single action - the hacking of a mobile phone of a murdered teenager" has called for an independent self-regulatory regime for journalists (Leveson, 2012, p3).

Marsh too believes that there is a requirement for ethical education beyond mass-market newspapers into organisations like the BBC who now employ more than 10,000 casual and freelance workers, many of whom, he says, come to the organisation with no more than a hazy idea of the principles of the BBC's journalism. He believes journalism education should increasingly be providing awareness of the "ethical landscape in which the unregulated press, the web, campaigning NGOs, freelance and independent documentary makers operate, as well as the regulated broadcasters" (Marsh, 2011).

This study proposes to distinguish, then, between ethical qualities and ethical dispositions in the model of a good journalist in order to reflect the argument discussed.

University as extender of knowledge

Data from the study suggested a further requirement of the good journalists in terms of knowledge beyond the subject area of journalism. Students discussed a class discussion that took place which some students had difficulty understanding:

> S1: "People on this course do not have a basic grasp of history or major events that have happened…"

> S5: "It's not even about history: it's about the present. Knowing what's going on around you".

Tutor A1 suggested that some students "don't have enough knowledge to recognise a good story". A1 cited a lack of reading of journalism and literature in general as a major problem in universities: "if you don't read enough you cannot become a good writer". Student S1 expressed admiration for student S6 who had studied in Italy:

> **S1:"** (He talks) .. about art, society, he has always has input because he has that general understanding".

Student S6 contrasted his education in the UK which was "too practical" compared with his education in Italy because "it doesn't make you study books". Student S2

initially disagreed:

S2: "This course is training you to be a journalist not a historian"

S6: "To be a journalist you need to know history"

S6: "During high school I hated studying Latin but after five years it opened my mind and I didn't know it"

S2: "You're right actually because in political and campaigning journalism I only did that because I didn't want to do fashion or sport but I really enjoyed that"

S6; "You never known when you can use that"

Whilst the discussion between S2 and S6 echoes debate about the balance between academic and practical content within journalism courses, the data in general emphasises the importance of the requirement for "knowledge of the world around you" referenced by practitioners:

"You need to know a bit about a lot, have a good general knowledge and an understanding of the society you live in and be up to date on current affairs. Only then can you judge what is newsworthy" (Smith, 2007, p.7):

"In order to perform their functions journalists need an education which enables them to put themselves and their society in perspective; find out anything and question everything" (De Burgh, 2003, p110).

Beyond that however it should be noted that acquisition of knowledge might be useful to a journalism student at a number of deeper levels. Acquisition of deeper and broader knowledge could inform and develop the interpretative skills increasingly required of journalists in the new media landscape where they are more important that the dissemination of information in some cases. (Willnat *et al*, 2013).

In addition, it is through strangeness and encounters with knowledge that a student's pedagogical being is developed and dispositions and qualities are developed such as curiosity and the will to learn, engage and go forward (Barnett, 2007). In order to do that, curricula need to be sufficiently demanding, offer contrasting insights and perspectives, require presence and commitment, student engagement and encouraging and enthusing pedagogy which requires students to give of themselves (Barnett, 2009).

Historically, journalism courses have been under fire from both practitioners and academic for focusing too much on teaching of skills and techniques (Mensing, 2011). Barnett contends that in a world of super-complexity where all significant matters have become inherently disputable a genuine higher education cannot content itself with a project of skills or knowledge or both but has to do with "being" (Barnett, 2009). Employers in general are calling for a broader set of skills from "global graduates" involving global knowledge of issues such as geography, conditions, issues and events, understanding of historical forces and complexity and interdependence of world events (Diamond *et al*, 2011). In response some US universities are already launching Global Citizen Programmes for undergraduates (Webster University, 2013).

Data from this study suggests students may acquire many forms of knowledge of the world around them in settings both inside and outside the classroom. Tutor A2 cited the transformative effect that a trip to a magistrates' court had on his students ability to "recognise a story". Tutor A1 cited an activity in which a high profile MP was brought in to

the university to hold a press conference for students as being a particularly successful learning experience:

> A1: *"It was such a shock to a lot of them: his naked ambition and facility and the fact that he gave them no quarter. It woke them up to the fact that there are loads of stories out there … in the wild panoply of human behaviour".*

This study suggests then that in order to become good journalists students are required to acquire a range of knowledge beyond that of news and current affairs and traditional offering of media law and public administration. Acquisition of such knowledge through exposure to people, ideas, contrasting insights and perspectives can also develop the required dispositions and qualities.

Journalists make journalists

This data suggests that journalism tutors may take on a complex variety of roles including provider of feedback and social persuasion, extender of knowledge and facilitator of reflection, access to networks and workplace exercises that mimic the real world. They are also likely to take on associated academic functions of assessor and quality assurer: they may also have a role in socialising students into a community of practice (Mensing, 2011) and provision of what Barnett calls "a pedagogy of inspiration", through which new being is formed and new connections are formed in mind and being (Barnett, 2007, p115).

Data from students and the editor suggested in order to perform these roles effectively tutors need to have practical experience of the workplace. Students S2 reported a conversation with a student studying at another university where academics had no workplace experience of journalism:

> S2 *"I was shocked. How can they know? How can they teach you? All of our teachers are journalists. From that we've had the chance to hear from so many successful informed people".*

> S3: *"The skills that you've got individually you can then pass on to us".*

> S2: *"You can tell us instances where you've used this in the real world and how they've helped you with your job".*

The editor too had contact with a course where tutors more familiar with the academic study of journalism than workplace practice:

> Editor: *"Their view of journalism was entirely negative: 'you can't trust journalists because they lie all the time'. I don't think that's a constructive place to start if you're running a course which will lead to journalism going out into the workplace".*

Whilst the editor's remarks suggest evidence of the intense animus identified between practitioners and media studies academics, her view was supported by a survey of British journalism tutors in which they expressed near-unanimous support for the proposition that practical experience was essential in a journalism tutor (Greenberg, 2007). Three reasons were given: that it gave the course credibility since students respect experience, it was vital to explain why "things are done the way they are" and it provided a "vision of best practice".

In addition, data suggests that tutors with workplace experience bring with them tacit knowledge attached to ways and thinking and practicing in journalism.

Conclusion

Data gathered during this study suggested that it is possible for universities to develop dispositions and qualities required of good journalists, such as curiosity, scepticism, tenacity and "news sense" which are considered by some practitioners to be innate. Whilst some predispositions may remain immutable in individual students, data suggests it is possible to develop other dispositions and qualities through the learning process, particular through exposure to strangeness and troublesome knowledge. Practical reporting exercises, with an appropriate level of challenge, particularly those which mimic the working world and involve "talking to strangers", can engender self-efficacy beliefs and hence confidence and resilience.

News sense, considered "a quality you a born with" is a form of tacit knowledge which can be acquired in simulated workplace experiences. Development of interpersonal skills and tacit knowledge of human behaviour was also important, especially to students more used to communication through social media and online.

The study suggested a role for the journalism course as an extender of "knowledge of the world around you" through exposure to people, ideas and experiences beyond the traditional subject area. Students and practitioners considered instruction in ethics especially important in an increasingly casualised industry and a changing social climate around the occupation of journalism.

Students need to have access to tutors with appropriate workplace experience to secure access to industry networks, provide modelling influences and socialise students into ways of thinking and practicing in the occupation. Tutors should make provision for rigorous, systematic feedback and reflection and be aware of their various roles such as social persuaders and models of good practice.

The figure below represents a proposed model of the requirements of "the good journalist", designed to promote discussion around the functions of journalism education and to inform, illuminate and facilitate curriculum design. Reference was made to the qualities, skills and knowledge required by the NCTJ and the personal qualities cited in literature and by participants in this pilot study. Examples of each group of requirements are attached to their representation.

Qualities are underpinned by dispositions that in turn are underpinned by predispositions or character traits. Ethical behaviour is expressed as a quality underpinned by ethical dispositions. News sense and knowledge of human behaviour are presented as forms of tacit knowledge that are acquired through professional learning. Expression is given to development of networks, and development of qualities and dispositions through acquisition of skills and knowledge, both of which are essential to a capacity for innovation. Attributes near the top of the chart are easier to mould and more subject specific, towards the bottom of the chart are generic and more difficult to influence.

This model is designed to encourage further discussion between practitioners, academ-

ics and students. The model will then be used to inform a further cycle of action research during which it could be further tested and developed by students and staff. Further research is needed to determine whether it is generalisable or exportable to other vocational courses in higher education.
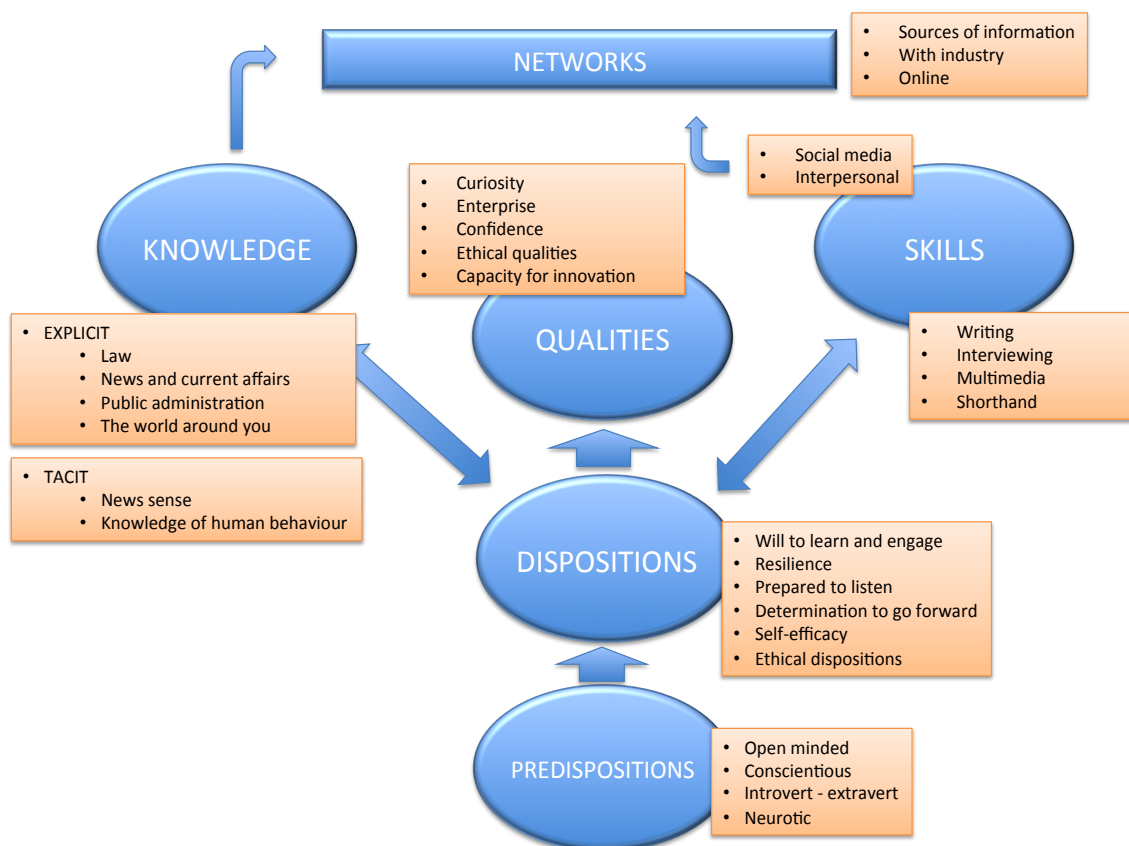
FIGURE 1: Requirements of "the good journalist"

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