

COMMENTARY

Difficult Questions: Trends in Communication Studies – A South African View

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Speaking from the viewpoint of *Communicatio* (1975–) and other South African communication journals this contribution highlights three trends: lack of control over – and concerns with – media representation; a move from a sense of being *in Africa not from Africa* to ‘I am a African’; and increased efforts to understand how internationalising processes play out in specific contexts not just read from trends in the media-saturated North.

Trends in research are towards asking difficult questions and moving beyond complaint to effecting social betterment. South Africa’s isolation in the African continent is giving way to reappropriating the idea of Africanization from misuse and looking at Africology in relation to global processes and to theorising from clearly articulated African positions. Activist perspectives in media studies are looking to practices geared to resistance and promotion of social change through highly specific tactical interventions at a time when the Media Appeals Tribunal and the Secrecy Bill in South Africa have both led to fears of a return to apartheid-era-type control. Journalist registration and suppression and the promotion of sunshine journalism have provoked an appeal not to Western values but universal values of freedom but with a recognition that these cannot be applied identically in different contexts.

Keywords: South Africa; freedom; Africanization; social change; activism; control of media



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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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