

The kids are alright: blame the bosses

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Two big TV news rivals have combined to defend young journalists and launch an attack on corrupt management and a hostile press. The [BBC's Director of News Helen Boaden](#) and Editor in Chief of ITV News [David Mannion](#) were speaking at their old journalism school, the [London College of Communication](#), as part of a debate celebrating 30 years of broadcast training at the pioneering Elephant and Castle journalism department. [Polis is a joint project between the LCC and the LSE].

The issue up for debate was whether ITV boss Michael Grade was right to blame the recent scandals over TV fakery on under-trained young people in the TV industry who “don't understand that you do not lie”.

Boaden pointed out that TV news had largely been unaffected by any serious allegations. She said the disputes over ‘noddies’ was a manufactured controversy. She said that “The written press are using this debate to undermine broadcasters by focusing on a few technical details. Audiences are sophisticated. They understand the need for production techniques.” But she said that where mistakes were made, the bosses should take responsibility and ask if they are providing the right leadership and the right training.

David Mannion also dismissed accusations that editing techniques were deceitful. He said that the decision by Five News to ban noddies and walking shots was a “nonsense...a cheap stunt that won't last the distance.” But he reserved more deeply-felt wrath for his superiors high up at ITV who he said allowed young producers to deceive viewers in the TV phone-in scandals:

“Deception for financial gain is appalling practice..it is criminal fraud. And it seems to me that some senior people still don't realise the seriousness of what they presided over. Don't blame the kids, blame the senior executives who have been paid bonuses to fleece the audience.”

This is strong stuff and what every journalist wants to hear from their bosses. But two journalistic questioners from the floor may have been less impressed. When one network BBC hack asked Helen Boaden why his department was being run down and cut back he was told that the public would not be impressed by his ‘whinging’. And Helen Boaden was honest enough to admit to another questioner that the BBC was not giving enough training or support to the many freelancers and independent production staff who now have to step in to the breach at the BBC.

This was an evening to celebrate a College which has produced some great news journalists like Carole Walker, Jon Sopel, Steve Richards, Kim Catcheside and Mark Pugatch who were all there to remember student days. But it also reminded us that the current crop of graduates are entering a broadcasting environment that is going through upheaval. They will need to be even more tough, resourceful and trustworthy than their illustrious predecessors.

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