Glocalization of Journalism and Mass Communication Education: Best Practices from an International Collaboration on Curriculum Development

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Abstract : Glocalization is often defined as the practice of conducting business according to both local and global considerations – this epitomizes the curriculum co-development collaboration between a journalism and mass communications professor from a university in the United States and the Uganda Martyrs University in Uganda where a brand new journalism and mass communications program was recently co-developed. This paper presents the experiences and research result of this initiative which was funded through the Institute of International Education (IIE) under the umbrella of the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFP). Vital international and national concerns were addressed. On a global level, scholars have questioned and criticized the general Western-module ingrained in journalism and mass communication curriculum and proposed a decolonization of journalism curricula. Another major criticism is the concept of western-based educators transplanting their curriculum verbatim to other regions of the world without paying greater attention to the local needs. To address these two global concerns, an extensive assessment of local needs was conducted prior to the conceptualization of the new program. The assessment of needs adopted a participatory action model and captured the knowledge and narratives of both internal and external stakeholders. This involved review of pertinent documents including the nation's constitution, governmental briefs, and promulgations, interviews with governmental officials, media and journalism educators, media practitioners, students, and benchmarking the curriculum of other tertiary institutions in the nation. Information gathered through this process served as blueprint and frame of reference for all design decisions. In the area of local needs, four key factors were addressed. First, the realization that most media personnel in Uganda are both academically and professionally unqualified. Second, the practitioners with academic training were found lacking in experience. Third, the current curricula offered at several tertiary institutions are not comprehensive and lack local relevance. The project addressed these problems thus: first, the program was designed to cater to both traditional and non-traditional students offering opportunities for unqualified media practitioners to get their formal training through evening and weekender programs. Secondly, the challenge of inexperienced graduates was mitigated by designing the program to adopt the experiential learning approach which many refer to as the 'Teaching Hospital Model'. This entails integrating practice to theory - similar to the way medical students engage in hands-on practice under the supervision of a mentor. The university drew a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with reputable media houses for students and faculty to use their studios for hands-on experience and for seasoned media practitioners to guest-teach some courses. With the convergence functions of media industry today, graduates should be trained to have adequate knowledge of other disciplines; therefore, the curriculum integrated cognate courses that would render graduates versatile. Ultimately, this research serves as a template for African colleges and universities to follow in their quest to glocalize their curricula. While the general concept of journalism may remain western, journalism curriculum developers in Africa through extensive assessment of needs, and focusing on those needs and other societal particularities, can adjust the western module to fit their local needs.

Keywords : curriculum co-development, glocalization of journalism education, international journalism, needs assessment