

Global Journalism Education: A Missed Opportunity for Media Development?

BY CHARLES C. SELF

The recent growth of journalism education around the globe offers new ways for media development organizations to work with budding journalists in places where the media sector is struggling. Improved communications technology and emerging international standards for quality journalism mean top universities outside the United States can be partners in training younger journalists before they enter the work force.

Media development organizations have worked for many years directly with media industries to train journalists. Little of their effort has been focused on shaping the training these journalists receive before they are immersed in the media industries, which in many countries are weak and are not fertile ground for building journalism skills nor for upholding journalism standards.

But top journalism schools have now reached a quality that suggests media development organizations should begin to work more directly with the best schools. Such partnerships could substantially contribute to better professional training that many of these top schools want to offer.

The presence or absence of effective university-level journalism education represents a significant factor in assessing the health of any country's media sector. IREX's Media Sustainability Index, for example, under its objective of "supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media," lists this indicator: "Quality journalism degree programs exist providing substantial practical experience."

Training younger journalists can instill values in young entrepreneurs who may work within existing media or even create new media systems online.

The Growth of Journalism Education

Journalism education has expanded in all regions of the world (SEE FIGURE A). By most accounts it has also improved in recent years.

"Broadly speaking, the quality of journalism education in South Asia and particularly India is improving," says Peng Hwa Ang, former director of the Singapore Internet Research Center and a professor at the Kim Wee School at Nanyang Technical University. "Communication education is very popular. And the cost of setting up a program is not excessive. The course is getting better, too."¹

Governments and universities outside the United States have recognized how

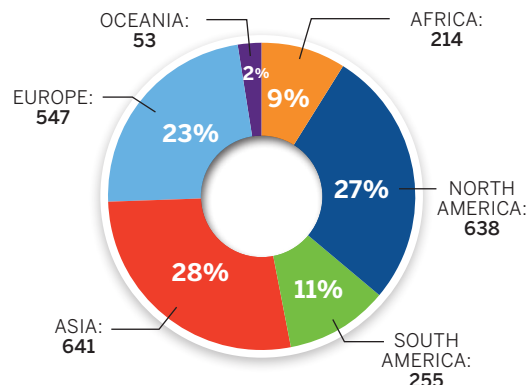



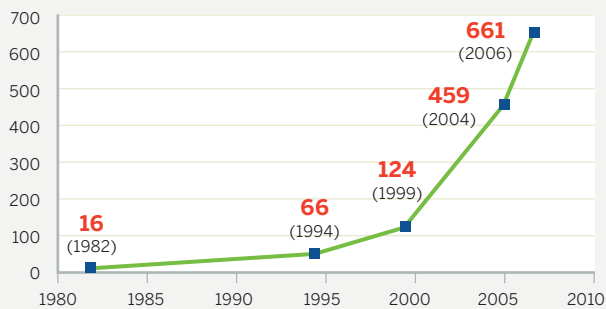
FIGURE A: Number of Schools by Region

ABOUT CIMA

CIMA 
 CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ASSISTANCE

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), at the National Endowment for Democracy, works to strengthen the support, raise the visibility, and improve the effectiveness of independent media development throughout the world.

FIGURE B: The Growth of Journalism Programs in China (1982–2006)



important journalism has become. They are investing in it. But their vision is sometimes blurred.

“Governments are more concerned about public relations,” says Leonard Teel, director of the Center for International Media Education at Georgia State University and co-founder of the Arab-U.S. Association for Communication Educators. “Communication programs are growing even more than journalism programs. Propaganda is more easily taught.”²

Still, more countries are investing in journalism education. This is particularly striking in places such as China, which consistently ranks near the bottom of global press freedom rankings,³ but it is also true in Latin America and the Middle East. A study of Chinese provinces this spring found more than 165 journalism departments at four-year colleges in China and hundreds more in communication.⁴ An earlier report found more than 600 programs across China⁵ up from just 16 in 1982.⁶ (SEE FIGURE B).

The quality varies by region, country, and even university. However, as the numbers have expanded, the quality at top institutions also has improved. “Across the board, there is improvement by leaps and bounds at the elite schools,” says Federico Subervi, provost faculty associate and professor at Kent State University. “It is a slow climb for others.”⁷

AN EMERGING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION

With this growth, a new international standard for journalism education has begun to emerge. It combines hands-on journalism skills training with principles of professionalism and social impact.

Program accreditation is one measure of that change. For example, a continent-wide accreditation process has been established in Latin America, El Consejo

Latinoamericano de Acreditación de Educación en Periodismo (Latin American Council of Accreditation in Journalism Education, <https://www.google.com/search?q=CLAEP&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8>). In addition, the U.S. accrediting agency, the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, has accredited five schools outside the United States and others are working toward accreditation.

The standards also can be seen in UNESCO’s “model curriculum,” announced in 2007. That model was designed to help developing societies and has been used in more than 60 countries⁸ and was supported for its ability to be “adapted” for developing countries and even “de-Westernized.”⁹ However, UNESCO has since promoted it for all societies. It was updated in 2013 with new, specialized syllabuses.¹⁰

“The development of the UNESCO Model Curricula—which provide frameworks for these specialized syllabi – is thus an attempt by UNESCO to set standards based on good practice internationally,” UNESCO wrote.¹¹

Quality: Improving Conditions

Many variables influence quality for these programs. Historically ideology, censorship, dependence, and conflicted ethics were problems. Those factors are still at work. But today better technology, faculty mobility, and hands-on education are improving quality.

TECHNOLOGY: “Media technology is quite available now in India,” says Jyotika Ramaprasad, vice dean for Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Miami. “Everyone has mobile phones. If the university doesn’t, the students do. Smaller programs do not have as much technology as the leading ones, but most do now. The students get lots of training for actually producing work, but they don’t get enough on asking questions and verifying information.”¹²

“Technology has helped some programs become better,” Teel says. “The students are smarter because of the connections to the outside world made possible by digital technologies. They are better communicators, although not necessarily better journalists.”

“The programs are better in the sense that there are more students who are technology savvy,” says Mohammed el-Nawawy, president of the Arab-U.S. Association of Communication Educators and editor of the *Journal of Middle East Media*. “That makes them better critical thinkers. They can go on line and Google and that makes them question. Student newspapers do not

have resources and labs, but now more schools have computers. It is getting better.”

FACULTY MOBILITY: Another transformative factor is increased mobility and rising global awareness of professors. Many senior professors have studied at universities in Australia, Europe, or the United States. The Institute for International Education said a record number of more than 850,000 international students studied in the United States alone in 2014. Of those students, 15,800 studied communication.¹³ Furthermore, in a recent study of doctoral education, the Cox Center reported that since 2000 almost 25 percent of all communication doctoral students in the United States have been from outside the United States.¹⁴ Many of these students returned to their home countries to teach in the expanding journalism education schools. They had seen how students were trained and integrated through partnerships between media systems and U.S. schools of journalism. Many of them used that knowledge to improve education in their own countries. Others participated in media development programs offered by U.S. trainers in their region or country.

“The faculty have improved without a doubt,” says Joe Foote, chair of the World Journalism Education Council and dean of the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma. “A lot of that can be laid at the feet of the West, which has given a generation of training. That has made a difference in both instruction and research coming out of these regions.”¹⁵

The World Journalism Education Council includes more than 30 representatives from journalism educator associations all over the world. Most of those associations weren’t there 20 years ago. In 2007, these representatives even developed a joint statement of the core values for journalism education. The council continues to grow as new associations are formed (SEE TABLE 1).

Many professors attend international meetings of journalism educators (SEE TABLE 2) where they rub shoulders with colleagues from all parts of the globe. These organizations have expanded, with international membership drives and regional meetings around the world.

HANDS-ON EDUCATION: The combined effect of media development training and the international experiences of faculty is beginning to shift journalism education from theoretical training toward hands-on experience, technology instruction, and social impact.

“Students in China are trained very well,” says Bu Zhong, former president of the Chinese Communication

TABLE 1: World Journalism Education Council Member Organizations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ African Council on Communication Education (ACCE) ▪ Arab-U.S. Association of Communication Educators (AUSACE) ▪ Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) ▪ Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) ▪ Association for Journalism Education (UK) ▪ Brazilian Society of Interdisciplinary Studies in Communication—Intercom ▪ Broadcast Education Association (BEA) ▪ Canadian Committee for Education in Journalism (CCEJ) ▪ Chinese Communication Association (U.S. based) ▪ Chinese Journalism Education Association ▪ European Journalism Training Association (EJTA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Global Network for Professional Education in Journalism and Media (JourNet) ▪ Israel Communication Association ▪ Japan Society for Studies in Journalism and Mass Communication (JSSJMC) ▪ Journalism Division, International Communication Association (ICA) ▪ Journalism Education Association (Australia) ▪ Journalism Education Association (New Zealand) ▪ Journalism Research and Education Section, International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) ▪ Journalism Studies Section, European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) ▪ Korean Society for Journalism and Communication Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIIC) ▪ Latin American Federation of Social Communication Schools (FELAFACS) ▪ Nigerian Association of Journalism and Mass Communication Teachers ▪ Nordic Journalism Training Association ▪ Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE) ▪ Russian Association for Education in Journalism ▪ Russian Association for Film & Media Education ▪ Saudi Association for Media and Communication ▪ Scientific and Methodological Commission in Journalism and Information ▪ South African Communication Association ▪ Theophraste Network
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TABLE 2: International Organizations of Journalism Educators

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ World Journalism Education Council (WJEC) ▪ Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) ▪ International Communication Association (ICA) ▪ International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) ▪ Global Network for Professional Education in Journalism and Media (JourNet) ▪ European Communication Research and Education Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Latin American Federation of Social Communication Schools (FELAFACS) ▪ African Council on Communication Education (ACCE) ▪ Arab-U.S. Association of Communication Educators (AUSACE) ▪ European Journalism Training Association (EJTA) ▪ Theophraste Network (France)
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Association and associate professor in the College of Communications at Penn State University. “We have a program with Shanghai. The hands-on training is very, very good, but it is more focused on what officials say, not on ordinary people. The difference is not so much hands-on training as it is control [of content].”¹⁶

“There are hands-on opportunities for students in the grad schools in India,” Ang says, but “not a whole lot.

The emphasis is on technical education. They depend on government support and this is the government priority.”

“You go to some places that are really bleak,” Foote says. “They have programs but can have poorly trained faculty and poor infrastructure and technology. The single demarcation is the connection with industry. Those with it are far ahead of those who are lecturing and teaching out of a book and nothing else. The divide is shrinking but slowly.”¹⁷

“I have tried to connect non-academic organizations with universities,” Rosental Alves, director of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas at Austin, says. “You would be amazed at the number of journalists who had not even been to the universities.”¹⁸

Quality: Challenges Remain

Despite growth and improvements, the old challenges are still there: ideology, censorship, dependence, and conflicted ethics. The quality of journalism education can still vary widely.¹⁹

IDEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: Latin America has made substantial strides in journalism education although there remains considerable variation by country, according to Alves.

“There are countries that have very good journalism education,” he says, “and others that are more communication education. In Latin America, it is important to note the prevalence of the theoretical side of communication education. The Marxist-European-sociological study of communication is more common than the study of journalism itself.”

CENSORSHIP AND CONTROL: In some regions, censorship is still prevalent and independence is in question. For example, in June 2013 China’s Central Propaganda Department directed implementation of the “buxiao gongjian” or Fudan model of joint governance. Journalism schools are being restructured to be jointly governed by administrators appointed by the Department of Propaganda. At least two-dozen top universities were restructured by 2014.²⁰ “Basically, the Chinese universities are very hierarchical,” said Zhong. “The top universities can be much better because they can get more resources from government.”

The Middle East also provides a complex picture.²¹ Almost half the journalism education programs have been established within the last 15 years; yet, their quality varies greatly.²² For example, the Minister of Education in UAE established Zayed University to educate young women. The journalism program is now

seeking recognition by the U.S. accreditation agency. Yet retrenchment from the blossoming of independence promised in the “Arab spring” calls into question which programs really have the independence to create change.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS: South Asia offers promise, but with strong cautionary notes. India has a robust media market and growing journalism education programs. But journalism in India faces many ethical challenges. “Journalism education needs stronger pedagogy in ethics and professionalism,” Ang says. Furthermore, the university fee structure in south Asian countries limits funding to improve quality, according to Ramaprasad. High tuition, particularly at private schools, means many students cannot afford to attend the best programs.

JOURNALISM EDUCATION AND MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Overall, journalism schools are better than they were 20 years ago. But most of the improvement has been in technical and skills training. Only the top schools are doing the kind of conceptual training needed: ethics, independence, skepticism, and persistence in face of resistance from sources.

These schools function within the political and social systems that enfold them. Media systems are part of the broader social fabric of the countries they serve. Even the most knowledgeable faculty members live and work within those systems. Sometimes those systems discourage or even actively block the professional independence these faculty members would like to teach.

However, the growth of digital technologies and improving university programs are creating a new entrepreneurial model for media development. The new model suggests that better university programs, better technology, and better faculty teaching technology skills, critical skills, and entrepreneurship can produce networks of skilled young journalists to be independent entrepreneurs developing alternative, online media systems and improving existing media.

It offers a new kind of partnership for media development. It is well suited for teaching entrepreneurship, skepticism, and independence. But it is also suited to fit local circumstances.

“Attention to journalism education is important because journalism does not have the monopoly anymore,” Alves says. “Technology has opened the door for everybody to commit acts of journalism. It is essential for society to understand verification and accuracy in a credible way.”

Educators have pointed out that even students who cannot find jobs in traditional news organizations have shown the entrepreneurial capabilities to

Cotton Tree News: A University Partnership in Sierra Leone

Many types of NGO-university partnerships are possible. Foundation Hironnelle offers one example.

It recently renewed a seven-year partnership with the Mass Communications Department at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, for its “Cotton Tree News” radio production and studio program. The goal was to provide high quality news for citizens and hands-on mentorship-style journalism training for young people in a country with a population whose median age is just 19.

The strategy engages “donors, university support, and community buy-in to create a sustainable youth journalism

program,” according to Anne Bennett, Hironnelle USA executive director.

Experienced producers and journalists are paired with novice reporters and journalism students as apprentices. They promote a culture of professionalism through inquiry, peer feedback, criticism, and cooperation using a code of ethical conduct and responsibility.

The station has been a leader in fighting misinformation during the Ebola outbreak. Its election coverage was commended as “balanced and neutral” by the EU’s election observer mission. It also covers family planning, rape, women’s land rights,

and other social topics.

It began broadcasting bulletins in 2007 over UN peacekeeping radio (radio UNAMSIL) and university radio (Radio Mount Aureol). It quickly became recognized as a credible, professional source of news in the country. It now also broadcasts on 26 community radios by satellite downlink.

It has been run since 2011 by Fourah Bay College with support from the University of Sierra

Leone and Hironnelle USA with a grant from the Ford Foundation.

Donors support operational costs and the university pays staff salaries. The result is the kind of commitment that can produce sustainability.

“By focusing on youth, media-strengthening partnerships can have a lasting impact on the lives of young people and can, in the end, transform the overall media landscape,” Bennett writes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE:

- <http://hironnelleusa.org/news/university-based-media-fosters-objective-reporting-in-sierra-leone/>
- <http://hironnelleusa.org/news/ebola-virus-college-radio-in-sierra-leone-fights-against-misinformation/>

operate independently using the digital technologies to create new ways of practicing journalism under difficult circumstances.

Some media development organizations have recognized these changes. They say roughly 15 percent of media training programs already involve university-based journalism in one way or another (SEE SIDEBAR ABOVE).

Dru Menaker, former senior media advisor at IREX, says there is certainly a desire to work with universities. “The challenge is human resources within the university

and whether they are able to teach a modern course,” she says. “Is the equipment there? Then, there is the entire education hierarchy and the whole sort of bureaucracy. The national universities are difficult to work with. It is just a question of picking your battles for the impact you are after.”²³

Patrick Butler, vice president for programs at the International Center for Journalists, says ICFJ has done programs at universities around the world. He cited programs in the Caucasus, China, Mexico, and Pakistan.

“The quality has begun to be better,” he says. “It has shifted from mainly a theoretical education to a more practical, hands-on approach. When we first went to Pakistan, we faced this issue. We learned they wanted more than anything people coming out ready to do the work.”²⁴ He says the same dynamic is at work in China.

“Two things are essential for success in China: 1) Find a topic or approach they want, such as business journalism, and work in those areas on professional practices, and 2) be careful about what cannot be covered. Focus where you can have an impact.”

Butler adds that digital media are changing the model: “When I want to do journalism today, the model educates students with the technology. Now students of journalism work with what journalism will be in the future. Every student should be thinking about that.”

TABLE 3: Some Top Journalism Schools

<p>LATIN AMERICA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile ▪ Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey ▪ University of Sao Palo ▪ University of Belgrano ▪ Havianna Bogata ▪ University of Antioquia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zayed University, UAE ▪ Yarmouk University, Jordan ▪ Jordan Media Institute in cooperation with the University of Jordan ▪ Petra University, Jordan ▪ King Saud University, Saudi Arabia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Huazhong University of Science and Technology ▪ Xiamen University ▪ Wuhan University ▪ Zhejiang University
<p>MIDDLE EAST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ American University of Cairo, Egypt ▪ Northern Sinai University, Egypt ▪ Cairo University of Journalism and Communication, Egypt ▪ American University of Sharjah, UAE 	<p>CHINA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fudan University ▪ Renmin University ▪ Communication University of China ▪ Tsinghua University ▪ Peking University ▪ Nanjing University 	<p>INDIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asian College of Journalism Chennai ▪ Mudra Institute of Communication ▪ Manipal University ▪ Indian Institute of Mass Communication ▪ Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media ▪ Delhi School of Communication

Conclusion

The top schools have begun to improve media systems, but mostly on the technical and skills side of things. The conceptual side of professional standards and independence is still weak in many places. While media development organizations can claim some of the credit for improving journalism education and the increased mobility of top faculty can account for some of it, these programs offer substantial additional potential for media development organizations to have more impact on the conceptual, professional side if they increase efforts to work with the top schools in the region (SEE TABLE 3).

The growth of journalism education demonstrates the increased value of media to societies everywhere. That growth has produced more journalism education and better quality at the top schools. The result is better faculty, better technology, and better curricula.

The need is to reach younger journalists by teaching better professional, technological, and entrepreneurial skills to build networks of journalism entrepreneurs and more independent media systems. Media development partnerships with universities can make sense. But partners must be selected carefully.

"Universities give the chance to build capacity," says Maureen Taylor of the University of Oklahoma. "But you have to build trust. You have to build assessment tools. Deans will take the deal but sometimes they can't lead professors who are not willing."²⁵

Top universities, carefully selected, can be a growing part of the mix for stronger media development.



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He directed the first ever census of university based journalism programs for the World Journalism Education Council and the Knight Foundation and has worked with journalism educators around the world. Self is co-author of a journalism textbook and scores of articles, book chapters and papers about journalism and journalism education.

ENDNOTES

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- 2 Interview with author.
- 3 For example in Freedom House's Freedom of the Press 2015 survey, China ranks 186th out of 199 countries. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2015#.VVJH3GfwuM9>
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- 25 Interview with author.