Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

The International Conference on Communication and Media 2014 (i-COME'14), 18-20 October 2014, Langkawi, MALAYSIA

Journalism Education Curriculum in Malaysia: A Preliminary Study in a Malaysian Public University

Norizah Aripin[a]*, Awan Ismail[a], NorhafezahYusof[a], Rizalawati Ismail[b], Noraihan Mohamad[a]

[a]*School of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, 06010, Kedah, Malaysia*
[b]*Department of Communication, Kulliyyah of IRKHS, International Islamic University Malaysia, Gombak, 53300, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

Abstract

The research aims to develop an instrument on perception and expectation of journalism students in Malaysia. The pilot study employs survey research method. The questionnaires were distributed to 30 journalism students in Universiti Utara Malaysia. The data was analyzed based on reliability, validity and descriptive analysis. The findings indicated the instrument is valid and reliable. The majority of the respondents perceived that knowledge and expectations of journalism education are pertinent in developing knowledge and skills of journalism students. Nonetheless, facilities offered need to be enhanced to match the minimum requirement of journalism learning.

Keywords: Journalism; perception; expectation

1. Introduction

Journalism education in Malaysia has been established more than 40 years. With the advancement of knowledge and technology in media landscape, it is timely to revisit the current journalism curriculum. Studies in journalism education curriculum at this juncture have been lacking to offer the new perspective on current perception and expectation of journalism studies in Malaysia. Thus, this study aims to develop an instrument on perception and

—————

* Corresponding author. Tel.:+6049285905; Fax: +6049285804.
E-mail address: noryzah@uum.edu.my

expectation of journalism students in Malaysia.

1.1. Literature review

Journalism education in Malaysia has been conceptualized and realized based on various Western and Eastern models (Hirst, 2010; Mensing, 2010; Poynter, 2013). Most of the journalism schools and departments scholars have been educated abroad especially in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and European countries. In addition, journalism is a practicing field whereby most professionals tend to prefer to practice rather than working in educational institutions.

In this study, it is a collaboration of two perspectives, education and journalism disciplines. From educational perspective, the need to review curriculum is intense especially nowadays with the introduction of Outcome Based Education (OBE) (MQA, 2007; COHECS, 2010; MoHE, 2011). Outcome based framework as propagated by Biggs and Tang emphasizes on the need to reflect on student learning experiences (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Thus, it is a vital need to embed the OBE principles in the journalism education. Journalism education has been debated on the suitability of its 'practical' nature and the need to remain theoretical from academic perspective (Little, 2006; Mensing 2010; Broaddus, 2012). For this study, journalism education perspective is derived from Poynter (2013). The dimensions involved in the framework are: (1) knowledge, attitude and personal features; (2) news gathering skills; (3) news production; and (4) technical/multimedia skills. These dimensions are incorporated into the instrument development of this study.

Journalism has been a popular field of study – there is an increasing number of students study journalism and increasing numbers of universities offer journalism as a field of study – yet the education and training of journalists is much debated and rarely researched. And if there is any, most of the studies on journalism education tend to be either too normative, or that it remains overtly descriptive (Becker et al., 2003; Hirst, 2010; Poynter, 2013). In Malaysia, a recent study on media and communication studies has been conducted by the Council for Heads of Communication Studies (COHECS) – a working committee established by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia in 2006. Its book titled "*Hala Tuju Pengajian Komunikasi dan Media di Malaysia*" was published in 2010 which generally reported on the employability of media and communication graduates in Malaysia. It extracted feedback from 60 media and communication professionals on their perceptions and expectations on media and communication graduates. It also mapped out the state of media and communication studies in all Malaysian public universities. However, it did not critically discuss in-depth on the curriculum of each program.

Therefore, this study basically attempts to evaluate the Malaysian journalism education curriculum within the context of perception and expectation of journalism students in Malaysia.

2. Methodology

This study employs survey research method. The instrument was designed based on the literature review involved and had been validated by an expert in item development. After the expert's review and validation, the questionnaires were distributed to 30 respondents for pilot testing. The respondents' criteria are: (1) students from journalism disciplines and (2) students who have undergone journalism curriculum for at least two years. Thus, the researchers only selected the respondents who match the stated criteria. The data was analyzed based on validity, reliability and descriptive analysis.

2.1. Research instrument

There are 5 main parts of the instrument, namely: (1) Demography (15 items); (2) Perceptions towards the need of knowledge and skills in journalism (42 items: 24 items on the characteristics of a good journalist; 7 items on the news gathering skills; 6 items on the news production skill; and 5 items on the technical or multimedia skills); (3) Perception towards the journalism education (12 items: 5 items on the writing skills; and 7 items on the university facilities); (4) Expectation towards journalism education (13 items on the professional journalism development); and (5) Journalism career opportunities (4 items). This paper only focuses on 4 parts excluding the dimension v (Journalism career opportunities). The items are based on Likert Scale range from 1 (Not very important) till 5

(Very Important); 1 (Not adequate at all) to 5 (Highly adequate); 0 (None) to 5(Highly adequate); 0 (Had not) to 5 (Very useful). The sources of the instrument are derived from Poynter (2013).

3. Validity and reliability

3.1. Validity

There are two types of validity in this study:

3.1.1. Content validity

Content validity was undertaken to ascertain whether the content of the questionnaire was appropriate and relevant to the aim of the study. Content validity indicates a complete range of the attributes under study and is usually undertaken by seven or more experts (Pilot & Hunger 1999; DeVon et al. 2007). To estimate the content validity of this study, the researchers clearly defined the concepts by undertaking a thorough literature review and seeking expert opinion. Once the concepts was established, purposely chosen five experts in the areas of journalism, were asked to review the 71-items to ensure the instrument was consistent with the concepts. Each reviewer independently rated the relevance of each item of journalism education curriculum concepts using a 4-point Likert scale (1=not relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=relevant, 4=very relevant). In line with the practices of content validity, the Content Validity Index (CVI) was used to estimate the validity of the items (Lynn, 1996).

3.1.2. Face validity

Face validity indicates the questionnaire appears to be appropriate to the purpose of the study and content area. It is the easiest validation process to undertake. It evaluates the appearance of the questionnaire in terms of feasibility, readability, consistency of style and formatting, and the clarity of the language used (Haladyna, 1999; Trochim, 2001; DeVon et al., 2007). Thus, face validity is a form of usability rather than reliability. To determine the face validity of the journalism education curriculum, an evaluation form was developed to help respondents assess each question in terms of:

- The clarity of the wording,
- The likelihood that the target audience would be able to answer the questions,
- The layout and style.

Thirty journalism students were involved in the pilot study for face validity. All items indicated satisfactory reliability. Respondents also understood the tested items in the questionnaire.

3.2. Reliability

According to Sekaran (2004), a Cronbach's alpha value of 1.0 is considered high reliability. Whereas, the value of below 0.60 is considered as weak. Thus, the value of 0.70 is often used to determine the reliability and it is considered as an acceptable reliability value. Overall, there are 3 main dimensions were analyzed. Firstly, for perception towards the needs of knowledge and skills in journalism (1) characteristics of a good journalist; (2) new gathering skills; (3) new production skills; and (4) technical of multimedia skills, the alpha values range from 0.913 till 0.868. Secondly is the perception towards the journalism education (writing skill and university facilities), alpha values range from 0.736 till 0.878. Finally, for the expectations towards journalism education, the alpha value is 0.933. Refer to table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Test (N=30)

Item	Total Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Perception towards the needs of knowledge and skills in journalism	42	
(i) Characteristics of a good journalist	24	0.913
(ii) News gathering skills	7	0.868
(iii) News production skills	6	0.858
(iv) Technical or multimedia skills	5	0.900
Perception towards the journalism education	12	
(i) Writing skills	5	0.878
(ii) University facilities	7	0.736
Expectation towards journalism education		
(i) Professional journalism development	13	0.933

4. Finding

4.1. Demographic profile

A total of 30 valid responses were collected for this study. It consisted of 30 students (93.3% female and 6.7% male). In terms of ethnicity, Malay represents the highest percentage (80%), followed by Indians (16.7%) and others (3.3%). Meanwhile, for age distribution, majority of respondents (80%) are 23 years old, followed by 22 years old (16.7%) and 24 years old (3.3%). For education level, all of respondents had STPM/STAM qualifications (100.0%). All of them are not married (singles).

4.2. Descriptive analysis on journalism education curriculum

There are three dimensions on journalism education curriculum. For perception on knowledge and skills in journalism dimension, there are four sub-dimensions. Firstly, the mean score of characteristics of a good journalist is 4.46 and standard deviation is 0.35. Secondly, the mean score of new production skills is 4.63 and standard deviation is 0.48. Thirdly, the mean score of technical or multimedia skills is 4.33 and standard deviation is 0.67. Finally new gathering skills mean score is 4.30 and standard deviation is 0.57. This indicates that the majority of the respondents perceive that knowledge and skills in all the four dimensions are important to them). In term of perception on journalism education dimension, there are two sub-dimensions. Firstly, the mean score of writing skills is 3.41 and standard deviation is 0.79. Secondly, the mean score of university facilities is 1.93 and standard deviation is 0.86. For writing skills, the majority of the respondents perceive that writing skills which are offered during the study are moderately adequate. In addition, for university facilities, majority of the respondents perceive that the facilities are not adequate for the journalism learning. For expectation on journalism education, the mean score is 3.72 and the standard deviation is 0.96. This indicates that the university is able to offer useful professional development activities for journalism education. Refer to table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis perception on journalism education curriculum (N=30)

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Perception towards the needs of knowledge and skills in journalism				
(i) Characteristics of a good journalist*	4.64	0.35	3.46	5.00
(ii) News production skills*	4.63	0.48	3.00	5.00
(iii) Technical or multimedia skills*	4.33	0.67	2.80	5.00
(iv) News gathering skills*	4.30	0.57	3.29	5.00
Perception towards the journalism education				
(i) Writing skills**	3.41	0.79	1.60	4.60
(ii) University facilities***	1.93	0.86	0.71	3.57
Expectation towards journalism education				
(i) Professional journalism development****	3.72	0.96	0.23	4.85

Note: *Likert scale 1-5 (1: not very important to 5: very important; ** Likert scale 1-5 (1: not adequate at all to 5: highly adequate)
***Likert scale 0-5 (0: None to 5: highly adequate); ****Likert scale 0-5 (0= Had not to 5: very useful)

5. Discussion and conclusion

Based on Poynter (2013) framework which emphasizes on: (1) knowledge, attitude and personal features; (2) news gathering skills; (3) news production; and (4) technical/multimedia skills, this study incorporates similar features in the instrument development. The findings indicated that knowledge and skills in journalism education is important for the respondents. Moreover, professional journalism development is useful for the respondents to facilitate their learning experiences. However, writing skills support is moderately adequate for journalism education. To add, facilities offered are not adequate to support their journalism learning and education.

This preliminary study has shown that it is important the students to have the knowledge and skills in journalism. Professional journalism development is useful for students to develop their future careers. However, writing skills need to be enhanced and basic facilities for journalism education need to be met.

Thus, this finding supports previous findings which indicated that perceptions and expectation of students are important to enhance their professional development and the curriculum stature of the respective universities (Little, 2006; Mensing 2010; Broaddus, 2012). Indeed, this is a preliminary study of journalism education curriculum in Malaysia. Therefore, the researchers will continue to develop the instrument for the enhancement of journalism education in Malaysia.

Acknowledgements

References

Becker, L. B., Huh, J. & Vlad, T. (2003). Predictors of diversification of journalism & mass communication faculties 1989-1998. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 26-48.
Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university* (4th. ed.). Bershire: England Society for Research in Higher Education and Open University Press.
Broaddus, M. B. (2012). *Students' Writing Self-Efficacy, Motivation and Experience: Predictors in Journalism Education*. (Doctoral Dissertation).University of Tennessee.
COHECS. (2010). *Hala tuju pengajian komunikasi dan media di Malaysia*. Bangi: UKM Press.
DeVon, H. A., Block, M. E., Moyle-Wright, P., Ernst, D. M., Hayden, S. J., Lazzara, D. J., Savoy, S. M., & Kostas-Polston, E. (2007). A psychometric toolbox for testing validity and reliability. *Journal of Nursing scholarship, 39*(2), 155-164.
Haladyna, T. (1999). *Developing and validating multiple-choice test items*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
Hirst, M. (2010).Journalism education "Down Under". *Journalism Studies*, *11*(1), 83-98.

Little, J. (2006). Perspective on assessment practices in Australian journalism. *Australian Studies in Journalism.* University of Queensland.
Lynn, M. R. (1996). Determination and quantification of content validity. *Nursing Research, 35*, 382-385.
Mensing, D. (2010). Rethinking (Again) the future of journalism education. *Journalism Studies*, *11*(4), 511-523.
MoHE. (2011). Retrieved from http://www.mohe.gov.my.
MQA. (2007). *Malaysian qualification framework*. Retrieved from http://www.mqa.gov.my/
Pilot, D., & Hunger, B. (1999). *Nursing research: Principals and methods*. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
Poynter. (2013). *State of journalism education 2013*. News University.
Sekaran, U. (2004). *Research methods for business*. (3rd. ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
Trochim, W. M. K. (2001). *The research methods knowledge base*. Cincinnati: Atomic Dog.