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Journalism Education and Inclusive Society

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Abstract: When journalism fails to reflect diverse communities and perspectives it fails in its mission to serve society through accurate and ethical storytelling. Consequently, journalism students must develop inclusive practices to ensure representative and accurate coverage, from reflecting on their biases and auditing their work to embracing humility and building relationships with the communities they serve. This stream discusses what we as journalism academics are doing to model and teach inclusive practice, as well as ways we can develop more inclusive curricula and advocate for improved diversity, equity and social justice within our academic and media institutions.

Introduction

The epistemological underpinnings of knowledge in today's world were shaped during colonial times for purposes of social control. For the majority of people in the world, particularly those in the global South, what is learnt, understood, and how the world is viewed have been structured by coloniality. Education was imagined and functioned as a mechanism for sustaining colonial empires. This has also been the case with developing Journalism curricula world-wide. Efforts to reform have been attempted over the past couple of decades. Amongst these, 'De-colonising the University' a radical student movement, which started in South Africa (2011), challenged this status quo. The Black Lives Matter protests are also a key challenge to white-centric voices and academic coloniality, which have so far silenced and marginalised other epistemological perspectives. The tendency to privilege Western thought, practice, and values obscures from view other journalism practices and renders Western models of journalism desirable, replicable, and transplantable to any part of the world. However, what started as a radical and well-intentioned movement is increasingly semantically stabilised and often inadvertently, pays lip service to the urgency of initiating and sustaining change in the journalism education curriculum.

The presentation will offer some thoughts on ways in which "taken for granted" disciplinary canons that have been embedded into the journalism curriculum, can be reviewed and challenged.

Questions

How do we move beyond facile articulations of 'curriculum de-westernisation' and decolonisation'?

What needs to happen to subvert and unsettle the 'westernising' processes of knowledge production and move towards a more inclusive journalism?

How do the diversity goals and vision of the university as an institution impact on the journalism curricula?

How do we move towards achieving 'culturally competent' journalism teaching and culturally competent journalism students and practitioners?

Discussion

The predominance of western-centric approaches to journalism has broad implications. It affects what is taught, what is perceived as quality journalism, and how journalism ethics are framed. Furthermore, it has implications for the kind of research that is conducted and seen as valid, and the kinds of journalism that are practiced and seen as legitimate. Researching and practicing journalism from non-Western perspectives, often requires framing experiences in terms of how they compare with or differ from Western values and practices.

If we are to challenge what is an established model of journalism education, which privileges specific voices and specific understandings of what needs or is important to be covered, change has to encompass a range of factors, including building knowledge and understanding about the relationship between and among nations, and between and among cultures.

Taylor (2004) states that challenging the established western-centric curriculum requires the creation of a different 'social imaginery'. It requires to shift the established hegemony around curriculum design and student learning. For Taylor (2004, p.24) the *'social imaginery'* encompasses the common sense *ways* in which people see themselves in relation to others'. It also encompasses challenging the already existing common sense assumptions on knowledge production that have become hegemonic at discipline and institutional levels. Such a change requires an understanding of the diversity of cultures that exist both at the global and local levels. It also requires an understanding of the diversity of cultures within countries, communities, and institutions.

For Leask (2011), the challenge facing educators and trainers that seek to internationalize the journalism curriculum, is to design a set of experiences that will develop students international and intercultural perspectives to foster the knowledge, skills, and self-awareness they need, so they can participate effectively as citizens and professionals in a global society characterized by rapid change and increasing diversity.

Rizvi (2008) links the predominance of the western centric imagination in the education curriculum to the dominance of the neo-liberal imaginary which privileges a 'set of neo-liberal assumptions that are assumed to be universally applicable' (p. 88). The universalization of neo-liberal principles in education, promotes the establishment of a western centric knowledge production system, while it simultaneously marginalises local or other alternative systems of knowledge production. It also puts 'enormous pressure on educational systems … to align education with the alleged requirements of the global economy" (p. 77). The outcome according to Rizvi (2008) has been the standardization of university curriculum, the reduction of choice for students, the increased bureaucratization of curricula and the curtailment of academic autonomy.

Challenges to the western-centric model of journalism have resulted in calls to change the journalism classroom into a 'learning by doing model' that would allow students to respond to change and develop stories fast (Newton, 2013), to incorporate more teachers from marginalized backgrounds into the classroom (Alemán, 2014), or journalists from minorities or underprivileged backgrounds in the newsroom. However, such calls for change have been criticized of overemphasizing current working practices, or the often superficial diversity measures within organizations (Young and Giltrow, 2014; Douglas, 2021) and not questioning systemic obstacles to change (Rizvi, 2008; Leask, 2011: Aleman, 2014; Callison and Young, 2020).

It is therefore important to initiate change at different levels of knowledge production for effective change.
For Leask (2014), three steps are required for change:

1. To challenge the relevance of the hegemonic model of journalism education within a **disciplinary context**.

2. To question how the institution (University and School) implements change: **The institutional context**

3. To bring about change on how students see themselves and how this understanding shapes their thinking, actions, and learning. How educators develop practices that challenge monocultural and universalising models of journalism education through their teaching and practices: **The level of imagination and practice (students and staff)**

The Disciplinary Context

A number of scholars (Hafez, 2009; Chalaby, 1996; Wasserman and de Beer, 2009) have written extensively on the failure of the journalism curriculum to acknowledge and reflect non-Western journalistic practices, cultures, and traditions. This western-centric journalism curriculum not only misrecognises the value of non-western journalism traditions and practices, but it also marginalises representation and coverage of issues that are understood as not fitting with approved and hegemonized agendas and priorities.

They have also argued that although the western developed ideals of journalism may have

influenced the origins of other forms of journalism, the "dominant Anglo-American view of journalism is being challenged by studies showing up the gap between theory and practice" (Wasserman and de Beer, 2009, p. 428).

Given the different professional practices in various countries, Fitch and Desai (2012, p. 64) argue that changing the journalism education curriculum to reflect the many different contexts in which journalists work and journalism practices develop, requires education designers to tackle the ethnocentric and monocultural predispositions of the discipline (see also Harari, 1992; Haigh, 2002; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010; Rhoads & Szelényi, 2011). Fitch and Desai (2012), also stress that Western understandings of journalism - because they tend to universalise what is in fact a narrow worldview- potentially distort journalism history, ignore connections, and intersections which enhance our understanding of journalism and therefore devalue alternative and/or indigenous knowledge and approaches.

UNESCO (2007, p. 6) responding to demands to review the hegemonic model of journalism education, and attempting to shape the debate, offered the following 'universal' goals of journalism education:

- A journalism education should teach students how to identify news and recognize the story in a complex field of fact and opinion, how to conduct journalistic research, and how to write for, illustrate, edit and produce material for various media formats and for their particular audiences.
- It should give them the knowledge and training to reflect on journalism ethics and best practices in journalism, and on the role of journalism in society, the history of journalism, media law, and the political economy of media
- It should ensure that they develop the linguistic ability necessary for journalistic work in their country, including, where it is required, the ability to work in local indigenous or vernacular languages.
- It should prepare them to adapt to technological developments and other changes in the news media.

Despite acknowledging linguistic variations and the need to work within local contexts and for specific (local or indigenous) audiences, the UNESCO model has been criticized for privileging western approaches to journalism.

As Wasserman and de Beer (2009) point out: The end-result often remains the implicit or explicit normative ideal of the Western developed model of journalism and its priorities and principles, against which journalism in non-Western societies is measured against (p. 431)

Turner (2012) adds, that the quality of journalism practice and research is evaluated in terms of how far along they have developed towards some Western ideal.

For Miike (2010), the universalization of the western model of journalism education "disregards, downplays, or overshadows certain values and elements that have been historically embraced in non-Western cultures" (p. 3).

The dissatisfaction with the western model of journalism, has led to increasing calls for adoption of regionally or even locally appropriate models of journalism education,

scholarship and practice (Josephi, 2007, p. 303; Miike, 2010; Papoutsaki, 2011; Wasserman and de Beer, 2009; Dissanayake, 2003; Gordon, 2007). Furthermore, the need for a more culturally nuanced approach to the journalism education curriculum is supported by studies of journalists' perceptions of their roles across the world. Such studies reveal that journalists do not perceive their roles in a universal way. Role perceptions are often influenced by the social, political, and cultural structures within the countries in which they practice and the ways in which they position themselves in the specific society, culture and locality (Weaver, 1998a, 1998b).

In short, universalist approaches to journalism education which have characterized the neoliberal era, are no longer acceptable to many scholars. Following this, there are calls for:

- a more critical and inclusive curriculum, which takes account of the diverse forms of journalism and allows for diversity of approaches and practices to emerge
- it requires active acknowledgment of diverse global theoretical, practical, and research perspectives, including local cultural knowledge
- and recognises the value of cultural, political, social, and economic differences.

The Institutional Context

Change requires students and staff to engage in a process of teaching and learning that challenges ethnocentric and monocultural approaches to journalism education and broadens the knowledge, skills and abilities of students to value cultural differences. Debates on promoting and teaching intercultural competence in journalism education have become commonplace within institutional contexts and this is reflected in research on journalism education. (Paige et al., 1999; Leask,2009; de Wit, 2011).

For this, developing intercultural competence through the curriculum, is perceived to be the best way to move towards a more inclusive curriculum, as it exposes students to understandings of other cultures and develops the skills required for interacting with people from different cultures. It therefore helps to broaden the knowledge, skills, and ability of students to value cultural difference. Iris Marion Young (2000) argues – although not specifically discussing the journalism curriculum – that change is implemented through communicative action, itself the outcome of the learned ability to understand and respect the standpoint of the collective Other.

However, promoting intercultural competence alone, does not translate into an inclusive curriculum (Leask, 2009, 2011; de Wit, 2011), especially when courses focusing on de-westernising the journalism curriculum and intercultural communication are often siloed and not well integrated into the broader institutional priorities.

This means that Institutions and educators face the challenge of designing a program of study which becomes part of the institutional priorities and goals. Such a programme ought to:

- analyse how the domains of power (structure, disciplinary, cultural and interpersonal) are affecting staff and students
- understand the level of discrimination and exclusion of different practices (norms,

rules, culture)

- The curriculum, research agenda, thinking and reviewing goals, publishing, funding ought to be looked at and reviewed routinely as a result to the learning process
- identify key research that is done globally and connect that to what is happening at institutional level
- embed skills and experiences to enable interaction across culturally diverse settings and
- develop reflexive skills that can help challenge the habits and assumptions that inform attitudes towards learning and professional practice. ⸬SEP⸬

In summary, this involves an analysis of course content, modes of learning and teaching

and knowledge construction and professional practice within the broader contexts of the institution and of the discipline. ⸬SEP⸬

Imagination and Practice

Perhaps the broader level of change has to be pursued and achieved at the level of Imagination and practice.

Such a pursue for radical change, ought to start with seeking to clarify the meaning of 'de-westernization' and of 'inclusive society' in journalism education. Does it mean rejecting outright knowledge and practice produced within western journalism education contexts? Should teaching practices and educational aims prioritise non-western ideas and to what extent?

Are these necessarily better placed to promote an inclusive journalism curriculum? Couldry (2007, p. 249) for example, warns that a broader curriculum in media education should not necessarily be a process of 'de-nationalizing' or 'de- westernizing'. It should be achieved by producing new discourses that have both global and local reference points. Any strategy of critical de-westernization ought to pursue the embedding of non-western approaches to journalism into the curriculum and the development of a critical discourse which is achieved through self-reflection, and learning from what works within global and local reference points.

Such an approach requires critical reflection (as individual educators and in teams) and imagining new possibilities as an essential component. Leask (2011) stresses developing a number of goals towards a common understanding of what de-westernization means within school and institutional practices.

Couldry (2007), argues for developing a language around fostering social change (from the individual to the institutional levels) which in turn will allow fostering a critical understanding of the diversity of journalisms through adopting a critical de-Westernization agenda.

However, critical de-westernization narratives that foster social change are often well embedded in some courses, yet other courses still predominantly draw on Anglo-American

theories, constructs, and approaches to learning.

The goal is to ensure a more coherent, planned, and purposeful approach towards building a more inclusive journalism education.

Therefore, it is important to promote a transformative educational experience for journalists and communicators of the future, who are able to work across diverse intercultural contexts who will be reflective and mindful of their habits and assumptions and will be capable of:

- dealing with complex problems across different professional and cultural settings
- been critical and reflective of their own approaches and willing to be challenged and learn
- capable of ethical reasoning that is mindful of diversity and changing sociocultural
- settings
- responsive to change and capable of evaluating and adapting practice to respond to changing contexts and
- committed to lifelong learning

The overarching aim of building a more inclusive journalism education is to better understand the student and staff imaginary.

To help equip students and staff members to:

- successfully engage with the culturally diverse environment that we live in
- successfully communicate with people from different ethnic communities including *indigenous communities*.
- foster greater understanding of students and staff of diversity issues
- recognize the importance and contribution of Knowledge produced within different social and cultural settings and to and embed it in the class room, so that it is considered and incorporated alongside traditional discipline content.

This approach will offer critical insights into different ways of thinking about and doing journalism. It will ensure students and staff challenge some of the assumptions and habits underpinning their understandings and experiences of journalism.

Conclusion

The report suggests that change at the level of the individual teacher or the individual classroom is not enough to articulate and sustain an alternative and inclusive model of journalism education. Critical de-Westernization as a continuous and reflexive engagement suggests that change needs to take place at all levels of journalism education, from the disciplinary level, down to the classroom and the individual teacher and student. It requires ongoing work around understanding the way the discipline has been shaped, what it takes for granted, and what it obscures because of this. It also requires a shift in the ways the discipline is imagined, researched, taught and practiced to facilitate and foster lifelong changes that challenge the current hegemonic model of journalism education.

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