

JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: DANCING WITH UNESCO'S MODEL CURRICULA

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Abstract

Globally, journalism education is undergoing significant changes in lieu of the ongoing technological evolution. In recognition of the importance of journalism education and how it shapes journalism practices globally, in 2007 UNESCO has mapped out a framework for journalism education, especially for developing countries. This study seeks to identify the core values, knowledge, and skills needed in Malaysian journalism education and ascertain the degree to which they align with the model of journalism curriculum for developing countries proposed by UNESCO. To this end, the study conducted in-depth interviews with journalism scholars in Malaysian public universities and senior practitioners from media organisations. The results show the majority of educational components recommended by UNESCO are not compatible with journalism education in Malaysia.

Keywords: Journalism education, curriculum, Malaysia, UNESCO

INTRODUCTION

Journalism has long been an established academic discipline taught in the majority of universities globally. In Malaysia, journalism education has existed for more than 40 years, which is more than enough for the discipline to have matured. Yet, despite its age, questions remain as to the efficacy of the journalism education in preparing graduates with the necessary skills to proactively participate in and contribute to the journalistic world. As such, there is an ongoing global debate on the constituents of good journalism education (Comrie, 2003; Deuze, 2006; Reese and Cohen, 2000; etc.). Many researchers agree that journalism education should prepare students by imbuing within them the knowledge (education) and skills (training) necessary to reflect the best practices in journalism. It should prepare them to be responsible journalists with broad general knowledge and specific know-how. It should not only prepare them with good linguistic ability, but journalists should be proficient in the use of a wide range of technologies and stay abreast with changes in technology and news media.

For all intents and purposes, in 2007, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) introduced its new Model Curricula for Journalism Education for Developing Countries and Emerging Democracies. This journalism curricula was introduced to improve global journalism education. UNESCO assumes that the proposed journalism model can be applied in any developing country and emerging democratic states regardless of the diversity in national, social, economic, political and cultural contexts. Many have criticised the model as there are obstacles such as family structure, culture, region, climate, etc., in the implementation of the proposed model in most developing countries (Freedman & Shafer, 2008; Shafer, Freedman & Rendahl, 2008). The new UNESCO curricula maintains North American and Western European journalism practices as yardstick, however, the Western rooted curricula is not always suitable for most non-Western contexts.

On that note, this paper investigates the feasibility of the UNESCO model on journalism education in Malaysia. Through our interviews with experienced lecturers in journalism and seasoned practitioners in Malaysia, we can triangulate the findings with the UNESCO model to ascertain the suitability of this model to the Malaysian context.

Journalism Education in Malaysia

Journalism performs a number of functions in modern societies as a source of information, analysis, and commentary on current events. As such, journalism operates under constraints emanating from political, economic, social, cultural, and technological developments (UNESCO, 2013). The majority of journalists aim “to serve society by informing the public, scrutinising the way power is exercised, stimulating democratic debate, and in those ways aiding political, economic, social and cultural development” (UNESCO, 2007, p7). All these constraints and challenges render journalism becomes an interesting field of study.

What is interesting is that despite the heated debate over the efficacy of journalism education, there is a general paucity in research on this topic. The limited research that does exist tends to be either too normative or overtly descriptive (Becker et al., 2003; Hirst, 2010; Poynter, 2013).

Journalism education in Malaysia has been conceptualised and subsequently materialised 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 Europe. For example, in the Department of Communication, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) alone, 14 out of 15 lecturers obtained their masters and/or doctorate degree from Western universities. When journalism education was first introduced in Malaysia, there was no dedicated school or faculty for its study. Communication, in general, first started as part of the humanities curriculum in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in 1970 (Zaharom, 2003). A proper communication school was only set up in 1972 by Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), formerly known as Institut Teknologi Mara (ITM). Most of the lecturers were sent to Western countries for their studies, especially to North America. Furthermore, in the early years, journalism was not considered by many as an academic subject but a training program due to its ‘practical’ nature (Syed Arabi, 2000). Because of this ‘practical’ nature, journalism education received a lot of criticisms (Little, 2006; Mensing 2010; Broaddus, 2012). However, the new introduction of Outcome Based Education (OBE) (MQA, 2007; COHECS, 2010; MoHE, 2011) by the Ministry of Education Malaysia has led to a shift in educational approaches away from purely academic and theoretical studies to more practical outcomes. The outcome based framework as propagated by Biggs and Tang emphasises the need to reflect on student learning experiences thereby highlighting the importance of including the ‘practical’ nature of the journalism studies (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

It is also important to note that journalism, communication and/or media education in Malaysia is only offered at the tertiary level. Meanwhile, in other countries, especially in developed countries, students have been exposed to journalism/communication/media education since they were in school. This means that from an early age such students should have a good foundational understanding of how media works.

What is affecting journalism education in Malaysia?

Journalism education usually covers practical skills and contextual knowledge. Irrespective of needs, demands, culture, laws, and national histories, proper journalism education must balance between practical and contextual knowledge. This is referred to by Ahmad Murad Merican as ‘the backbone for the journalistic profession’ (2002). It contributes significantly to the functioning and well-being of the society.

However, according to Tanner et al. (2014), the reality is that not all employers are seeking the same skills in a prospective employee. The skills required of trainee journalists vary depending on the organisation and position. Despite this, the fact that all university-based journalism programs structure their courses around a similar range of core subjects (all of which have a technical bent), suggest that there is at least some agreement among educators about what industry expects in a graduate (Tanner et al., 2014:11). However, such expectations are in a flux due to unprecedented rapid technological change. This has created new challenges for university-based journalism programs (Martin, 2008; Kraeplin & Criado, 2005).

In Malaysia, in 2006 the Council for Heads of Communication Studies (COHECS) – a working committee established by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia – emphasised the importance of cultivate skills in media and communication studies. Its book titled “*Hala Tuju Pengajian Komunikasi dan Media di Malaysia*”, published in 2010, reported on the employability of media and communications graduates in Malaysia. It based its conclusions on feedback from 60 employers from media and non-media organisations regarding 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 with sufficient depth the curriculum of each program, nor did it include the UNESCO model.

According to Ahmad Murad Merican (2002), journalism education in many Malaysian public universities comprises of a number of components, including:

1. Writing skills (newswriting and editing abilities)
2. Language and critical thought (language and logic)
3. Substantive knowledge in providing content (social science and the humanities, such as sociology, economics, history, political science, media laws etc.)
4. Knowledge of communication as a field of study (marketing, advertising, public opinion, communication research, international communication etc.)
5. Computer and production skills (information technology, video production, graphics etc.).

Different Malaysian universities have integrated and emphasised these components differently in their journalism education. Some universities emphasise writing skills, while others substantive knowledge or technological skills.

In contrast, the UNESCO model includes more generic components comprising of three curricular axes or lines of development:

1. An axis comprising of the norms, values, tools, standards, and practices of journalism;
2. An axis emphasising the social, cultural, political, economic, legal, and ethical aspects of journalism practice both within and outside the national borders; and
3. An axis comprising of knowledge of the world and journalism's intellectual challenges (UNESCO, 2007:7)

Comparing between COHECS's findings and UNESCO's proposed model, this paper examines the suitability of the UNESCO to the Malaysian context.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised the qualitative in-depth interview method to gauge the depth and breadth of journalism education in Malaysian.

...in-depth interviews allow a researcher to collect data from respondents when the phenomenon under study cannot be directly observed or measured. It is used to obtain respondents' opinions, feelings, values, motivations and recollections of incidents or experiences that relevant to the study (Weerakkody 2009, p.166).

The importance of using in-depth interview in this research is to transform the answers given by the respondents in accordance with recognised or accepted core values (standards or principles) of journalism practices. Qualitative in-depth interview is more flexible and unstructured in the sense that questions are generated in the process of the interview itself. An interview guide serves as the basis for the conversation. In the interviews we conducted, respondents talked about a range of issues that posed new questions for further discussion. DeMarrais (2004, p.52) described qualitative interviews as follows:

Using interview questions and follow-up questions, or probes, based on what the participant has already described, the goal is to construct as complete a picture as possible from the words and experiences of the participant. This can only be accomplished when the qualitative interview is open ended enough for participants to provide a depth of knowledge on the research topic. The intent is to discover that person's view of an experience or phenomenon of study.

Qualitative interviews are used when a researcher wants to gain in-depth knowledge from participants about a particular phenomena or experiences. Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003, p.140) added that, "interviewing is by far the most popular research method employed in the social sciences, yet this is not to underestimate the importance of simply talking to people and placing their personal accounts at the centre of the research". The intent is to discover a person's view of an experience or phenomenon (DeMarrais 2004, p.52). In-depth interviews offer the most direct, research-focussed interaction between the researcher and the respondent (Kazmer & Xie 2008, p. 273). Although we already knew and had established a rapport with some of the respondents, it was not easy to interpret their insights. Both the personal and professional views of the respondents were taken into account to describe the complexities of journalism practices in Malaysia.

For this study, the interviews were semi-structured and a topic guide was used to ensure comparability across cases. Effort was made to be as 'authentic' as possible in the interviews (proceeding as in a normal conversation) in order to put the respondents or interviewees at ease. As emphasised by Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003, p.141), as a research method the success of interviewing greatly hinges on the personal and professional capabilities of the researcher, a skill that only comes through practice and experience.

Respondents were selected among media professionals or practitioners and academicians (N=5). Interviews were conducted with the selected respondents for duration of 30 minutes to 120 minutes for each interview. All the interviews were transcribed in detail. A thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcribed interviews.

The collected interview data includes feedback from media practitioners and academics. Their reflections on journalism demonstrate strengths and limitation of many topics on journalism education in Malaysia. The respondents were generous with their thoughts and beliefs despite their initial reservation. However, their views emerged as the interviews progressed and the data proved rich. The complexities of the respondents' background were seen as major contributions as their different opinions and answers helped to construct a better understanding of journalism education in Malaysia. Identifying different respondent's feedback enabled the research to qualitatively ascertain how journalism education is regarded by those most closely involved, and the factors that influence the journalism education landscape in Malaysia.

In addition, the respondents different background illustrates how a latent analysis can provide insights about certain aspects of journalism education in Malaysia through. Their opinions and answers, both positive and negative, helped eliminate possible confusion especially in describing the journalism education in Malaysia.

Thematic Analysis and Coding Process

Our interview process abided by strict and systematic research methods to ensure the lack of bias in the data. A thematic analysis was used to find similarities among respondents' thematic statements. The thematic analysis was derived from questions based on the main research objectives, the conceptual framework, and the literature review. The coding process started once we had completely summarised the transcribed data from the interviews. We identified the coding from the first and second summary of transcribed data and later manually retracted the coding from the summary in a manner similar to that described by Saldana (2009, p.13). As argued by Saldana (2009, p.13), coding is different from the themes because "a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded" thus there is no such thing as 'theme coding'. Therefore, thematic analysis is used in this research to analyse and illustrate respondents' thoughts, interactions, or individual experiences, to collectively respond to this research inquiry.

This research approach includes identifying the themes from the designed questions, as Kvale (1996, p.88) argued, theme analysis describes "the concept of the topic under investigation before interviews begin". Kvale (1996, p.226) further explained that "the interviewer does not uncover some pre-existing meanings, but supports the interviewees in developing their meanings throughout the course of the interview". For example, this research focused on the core values that could contribute to journalism education. Respondents were asked about journalism education and were given the opportunity to enlarge upon their answers, leading to a greater understanding of journalism curriculum within the broader context of journalism research.

The major themes used were:

- Defining the core values
- Knowledge
- Attitude
- Skills

Some themes necessarily overlapped, but overall they provided a useful overview and interpretation of expert perceptions of development journalism, media practices, and regional news reporting.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This paper describes the analysis of the interview with academics and media practitioners. The data demonstrates that there are various understandings of journalism education in Malaysia; indications of what could contribute to a better journalism curriculum across the country.

Before reporting on the findings in greater detail, we note that respondents gave their perspectives on the overall core values needed in journalism. On knowledge, attitude, and skills, most of the respondents noted

that these three elements are heavily influenced by the niche of each university. Respondents also claimed that the universities helped shape student perceptions of the profession. They also detected a lack of skills in journalism graduates, which has become a major issue in Malaysia. The overall claims by respondents about the current state of universities that offered journalism programs suggest that journalism education in Malaysia is moving slowly towards journalism education. Despite feedback and comments from the respondents on journalism education, the core values and literary dimension is still convincingly on the respondents.

The respondents defined the core values of journalism as important elements for graduates. The data suggests three important findings concerning the (1) core values of journalism (2) knowledge (theory and practices), (3) the importance of journalistic skills (writing, language, etc.), and lastly, (4) journalism students with good attitudes (passions, desire, responsibility, etc.).

Based on the UNESCO model, the curricula should address an ideally balanced conceptualisation of journalism education. However, the curriculum does not address visible barriers to developing countries/third world countries like Malaysia adopting the report as guided curricula. Although the curriculum aims to promote journalism education worldwide, there is a lack of emphasis for developing countries, especially when knowledge and skills are concerned.

1. Knowledge, theory, and practice
2. Philosophical
3. Skills – based content

Some of the general, anticipated, and most visible barriers to adopting a Western-centric journalism curricula are: (1) lack of qualified faculty to teach the recommended courses; (2) inadequate computer equipment, instructional materials, and support to conduct practical and investigative courses suggested in the model; (3) students without the requisite educational backgrounds and language abilities to succeed with the kinds of rigorous, challenging content the report advocates; (4) university administrative structures that protect corrupt practices and cannot effectively recruit, compensate, and retain qualified faculty; and (5) a scarcity of profitable media organisations that will attract successful graduates of such programs and reward them with jobs that allow them to practice their new skills. Other obstacles that may impede implementation of the curricula include insufficient financial resources to provide such education, incompatibility with a country's historical, religious, political, and cultural values, and governmental controls on both the press and university curricula (Shafer, Freedman, & Rendahl, 2008).

Meanwhile, journalism education should teach students how to identify news and recognise 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 (newspapers and magazines, radio and television, and online and multimedia operations) 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 (including ownership, organisation, and competition). It should ensure that they develop—or that they have as a prerequisite—the linguistic ability necessary for journalistic work in their country, including, where this 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 (UNESCO, 2007: p. 6; Breit, Obijiofor & Fitzgerald, 2013: p. 124).

Based on these models of curricula, we have envisioned the journalism education in Malaysia and have applied these elements into the Malaysian model of journalism education. To accommodate the suggestions of the various models, our analysis is based on thematic analyses which comprise core values, knowledge, attitude, skills, and critics of journalism.

1) Core values

Respondents identified there are important core values which will contribute to strengthen journalism education in Malaysia. Respondents agreed that history and country is the main issues to be understood by every journalist.

Being responsive to local realities – understand the journalistic responsibilities – understand history, values, ethics, community, materials – R1

Understand the country constitution, history – R2

Produce independent and specialised journalists – quality and credible journalists – R3

New journalists lack principles and work because of money. It is a question of jobs versus ethics – R4

According to Breit, Obijiofor & Fitzgerald (2013), the role perceptions of journalists are often influenced by the social, political, and cultural structures within the countries in which they practice. Therefore, there is a need for journalists to have some diverse global theoretical, practical, and research perspectives, including local cultural knowledge and recognition of the value of cultural, political, social, and economic differences (Breit, Obijiofor & Fitzgerald, 2013: p. 127).

Besides that, respondents also addressed the influence of ideologies.

As a journalist, I was influenced by my father to listen to news and read newspapers. I was very much inspired by Tun Mahathir. Most of the journalist in the 80's and 90's helped the government to convey/transmit the information to the society– R3

However, besides the core values, respondents also highlighted on some clichés misrepresenting the role in journalism

Provide objective information, write objectively, without manipulation. Does not include partial reporting, must be holistic and is not one sided (must be balanced). To include a credible source (check your source, check accuracy) – R4

2) Knowledge

Most of the respondents claimed that knowledge is important in journalism. Diverse knowledge was also regarded important and relevant to the students. Respondents stressed the ability to understand the constitution and the ability to write on press freedom and human rights. Besides that, young graduates were strongly encouraged to understand the political development not only in the country but worldwide.

Strengthen the knowledge and able to claim or write from different perspectives. Need to include psychology, sociology, law, political, economy, international journalism, and international relation in the curriculum – R1

Need to also understand the constitution (social contract during independent), understand the constitution before you understand the social contract (knowledge on constitutional). I would like to suggest a subject in the curriculum such as history/journalism in Malaysia and development. In order to become a good journalist, one needs to understand the history and development of the country. Journalists need to understand the role of journalists in the nation, and have a passion for journalism. Journalism is not just a job but the role of journalism is to build the nation. Understand journalism as the Fourth Estate-in building the nation. I would suggest removing journalism from communication program. Return to Social Science and Humanities and introduce Malay journalism on the Malay Archipelago. Include technology, identity, and ethnicity – R2

When you enter the industry, there are certain things you must have and learn. You must have a thorough grounding of knowledge of society, of the political economic system, of how institution works, and national institutions – R2

Understand the current political situation and political development in Malaysia. It is strongly suggested to study the political system in Malaysia. However, basic knowledge is a must. One needs to be guided to be creative with learning technology. Although technology as a medium is different, the idea or philosophy of journalism remains the same. The students must have the ability to sense the news, and must have basic knowledge and creativity – R3

Knowledge must be diverse on local and international issues. The subjects we suggest include Principle of journalism, Media ethics, Broadcast Journalism, Mass Media Theory, New Media/ Social Media, International issues/relation, Science, Environmental issues, Literature of Journalism (history of Journalism) and Philosophy of Journalism – R4

The components of journalism education should consist of aspects like language, writing skills, and liberal arts. We suggest the inclusion of thinking subjects, various dimensions of philosophy in journalism involved with factuality, imagination, thinking, and objectivity, visual literacy, and including some substantive subjects such as analysis of society-sociology, political science, and economics – R5

3) Attitude

As for attitudes, most of the respondents highlighted that young journalist should have positive thinking and good attitude toward being a good and responsible journalist.

An ideal characteristic of young journalist is idealism and idealism in journalism is more than just work. This idealism may also contribute to the society. We serve the society – R1

To be a journalist is about interest, love to read newspaper, being independent, able to apply censorship/self-censoring. Training development was different for those who graduated over seas and locally and this will identify the output versus the outcome. A good attitude for me is like asking questions, bravery (brave to ask questions), not a passenger as you talk, I write and you talk, I ask and you answer, I write. A journalist should ask 3 to 4 question in a press conference and need to read more to be a knowledgeable person. Meet knowledgeable people. The need to understand issues in-depth – R2

A good journalist must have passion in journalism. To have meaning of journalism includes caring for the society. The students themselves must have a good personality, good command of the language and general knowledge. It is not so much about the subjects, but for the personal development of the students the university has to train them and bring the best out of the student – R3

Need to be responsible, committed, open minded, no bias, not prejudice, holistic writing and this attitude is very difficult to build – R4

4) Skills

Respondents also claimed that the skills needed are not only language and writing but soft skills also matter.

...when we talk about journalism, it has to do with expressions, it has to do with culture, it has to do with writing, it has to do with thought, it has to do with political and social life. So, it's not only the skills of writing news. The two components basically have been around for a long time. One is news the other is opinion. For each component you have a variety of characteristics... This has to be emphasised... Because we not only dealing with the writing, we will not work by using print platform anymore. We are using broadcast, there is online, there is cyber. So, they has to be some versatility. Not only with different technology that is used but also versatility with the visual. Because now a journalist must also perhaps capture the visual through various forms of technology. – R2

Students need to be exposed in reality than in the classroom. Journalism students need on job training and should be able to give an informed opinion – R3

Skills needed for journalism graduates such as writing, language comprehension and communication – R4

Skill of writing, understanding about society (knowledge on the society, political system, economic etc.) – R5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although journalism education is seen to have operated not just to reproduce technical skills but also to replicate a particular occupational ideology, based on notions of individualism, professional objectivity, and independence from the state (Golding, 1977 in du Toit, 2013: p.154), our analysis of the respondent's comments suggests an array of understandings of journalism education curriculum in Malaysia.

Some of the practitioners claim that the UNESCO model is irrelevant to the Malaysian model. There is one frequent usage exemplified in the phrase "lack of writing skills and literary dimension" used by the respondents. When asked about their understanding of journalism education, they understood the concept well and gave the exact values needed for journalism practices.

The majority of respondents (academics and practitioners) thoroughly understand journalism education in Malaysia as having originated from the west and in the context of Malaysian journalism the need of journalism is to develop nation building and maintain cultural unity among the ethnic groups. The understanding of the ongoing process of the struggle of the nation's development can be seen from the responses by the sampled academics and practitioners.

Most of the academics agreed that the main issue in journalism education in Malaysia is commonly understood to support nation building aspirations as they are also former practitioners who underwent a period of journalism training and their visions of nation building is a shared vision.

The Malaysian media is a product of specific development policies embraced by the government from before independence in 1957. Since the government made development its objective, support for development by the media is seen as supporting the government. Generally, there are two categories of views on development journalism in Malaysia. First, the positive or proposition views, and second, the negative or opposition. Most of the respondents (academics and practitioners) described development journalism as a positive and responsible practice in Malaysia. Representatives of this view commented:

When you talk about journalism, you cannot forgo the literary dimension. The media does not care about the literary dimension. Anyone who can write...they can be a journalist. Anyone who put anything news on Facebook, social media they can be a journalist... But the literary dimension has to be really emphasize in journalism and the future I think also be, to look into the historical aspect. in terms of not only the history of journalism. But also how it is developed. What was it for? What was the rules and norms and ethics, practice. And also I would say that perhaps contrary to what people may think...journalism education and the practice of journalism in Malaysia would be more... The knowledge of journalism would be more...because we cannot teach journalism out of the ethnic context – R2

The students nowadays lack knowledge, are without commitment, and are not strong/brave. That's why they take journalism as any other profession- or it is just a job (no passion). They are lack of critical thinking, no creative thinking. Get someone from the industry to talk to these students in their first year – get the journalist to share their experience and expectation as a journalist to the students. So at least they have some ideas and work hard in their study to gain what it takes to be a journalist – R3

Redefining the profession of journalism as well as the restructuring of the offering of journalism not as a normal course but as a field of study – R5

When you reach certain levels in editorial department for example as a Chief Reporter or Desk Editor meaning that become Entertainment Editor, Economic Editor, Foreign Editor, you started to combine your role as a journalist and also as a manager. This reflects part of human capital empowerment in the news room. They want to remain as a journalist when there a few people under them so that they can motivate and encourage them. They have to evaluate their performance. So, they need managerial skills – R1

According to Du Toit (2013: p.157), scholars writing about journalism education also point out that the shifting role of knowledge within the global economic order has important implications for the function and status of the media, and that this has impacted on the way in which universities teach media.

The majority of the practitioners and academics concur that there are several obstacles and dilemmas faced by journalism education. Academics and practitioners claimed that the journalism education provides ready material from western scholars, and is too idealistic to be applied in our culture, politics, economy, environment, and etc. Based on the argument by Gaunt (1992), these ideas were often seen to clash with local understandings of the role of journalism in the developing world (Gaunt, 1992in du Toit, 2013: p.154)

Most of the respondents urge the lecturers to go back to the industry and gain industry practice. They also claimed that the university needs a serious and in-depth analysis to study irrelevant knowledge/facts taught in the class/university. Furthermore, lack of understanding on journalism training, the university failed to prepare the student to become a good and responsible journalist.

The practitioners and academics have similar understandings of the concept of journalism education based on the student's opportunities and limitations of curriculum practice. Despite the fact that most of the respondents have different journalism training backgrounds (local and abroad), for example, R1, R2, R3 and R5 graduated from Western universities and have been teaching in journalism for more than 10 years. Prior to teaching, they were also former journalists and policy makers. Meanwhile, R4, is among the pioneer journalists in Malaysia (since the 1980s), who were trained in local university.

The students need to know why they learn journalism. Journalism curriculum now is very narrow and not

enough subjects at university level as the program needs to accommodate university core courses. Besides that, the curriculum needs to blend with other courses such as broadcast and new media. The convergence of new media, broadcasting and journalism (market needs but lack of media communication courses offered because the university requirement to have the university or faculty core courses – R4

CONCLUSION

This paper provides significant empirical evidence leading to the conclusion that Malaysia is slowly improving its journalism education. Findings demonstrate the great influence of university curriculum based on their respective niches and that there is an extensive range in understanding journalism education, especially in Malaysia. It illustrates that core values of journalism education are shaped according to the influence of each country's nation building, ethnicity, culture...etc. The UNESCO model crafted for developing and emerging democracies countries, with all intents and purposes, seems to face certain difficulties in being properly accepted by non-Western countries. It might dance well in the developed nation but not others, not yet!

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