CREATING TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF JOURNALISM IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Introduction

Studies reveal that journalism is driven by audience demands and interests (Napoli, 2010). News editors will often formulate their daily agendas based upon the most relevant and popular stories (Peters, 2010). Just as journalism plays a vital role in covering and conveying daily news, the audience has much influence over what stories should dominate newscasts providing a more personalized touch (Thurman, 2011).

Unlike in other parts of the world, the public in the U. S. has great influence over media reporting. It has prompted inquiries as to the media’s role in effectively reporting the news to the public (Pickard, 2010). In that regard, the importance of the American media has increased significantly because of its responsibilities as a world leader (McIntyre, 1987). Additionally, it has a duty to serve society that is not resigned exclusively to U. S. borders (Christians & Nordenstreng, 2004).

Journalists have adopted the ideology of remaining neutral in reporting news stories rather than going about the task of forming opinions or advocacy that could have a potential impact on them (Christians, et al, 2009). It has been theorized that journalists should find a balance between normal functions, traditions, their responsibility to uphold democracy, and engaging in their proper function within the media (Christians, et al, 2009). Further, modern day journalists tend to overcompensate on their responsibilities in a variety of roles that search for truth and empower the public (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2010).

Journalistic reporting in Saudi Arabia is handled quite differently than in the U. S. The media’s reporting of events tend to border more on the conflicts that continually unfold within the region. It is not uncommon to see images of the dead being broadcast on television and displayed on the pages of newspapers (Valenti, 2004). Much of the writings by Saudi journalists speak to
terrorism and other events across the Middle East and the unrest that ensues as a result of it. Its focus is on the grim realities of the threats it poses to the country as a whole (Valenti, 2004).

As a whole the media systems and journalism throughout the Arab region have a ways to go before meeting the standards needed to be fully institutionalized and well-protected as democratic systems (Hafez, 2008).

The education system in Saudi Arabia is typically segregated according to gender. Saudi beliefs according to the Qur’an maintain that education is mandatory for men and women (Baki, 2004). Although women are limited in what they can and cannot do, as time has evolved more and more women are graduating from higher education institutions and embarking on careers in industry, agriculture, journalism, and commerce (AlMunajjed, 1997).

This has prompted an exploration into how students in Saudi Arabia should be trained in the area of journalism given the vast number of resources available to share content, the risks involved, and the growing interest in the field by male and female students alike. The training and education of journalism students has been largely debated but is lacking in research on the topic (Deuze, 2006).

Journalism students are in great need of proper training to support their future endeavors to promote professionalism, to help them gain experience under a trained mentor before entering the field, and to enhance the education system in Saudi Arabia. Many of Saudi journalists lack to be professionals in journalism field. According to Jaseer Al-Jaseer, is one of Saudi Arabia’s most experienced journalists, he mentioned that "Saudi journalism did not have any star professionals" (Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

In this study, the researcher will examine and analyze specific journalism programs from universities in both the United States and Saudi Arabia. The aim of the researcher is to obtain valuable information in order to help with the creation of effective training programs for undergraduate students in the department of journalism in Saudi Arabia. These training programs
will offer a broader curriculum and raise the capability of bachelor of journalism students in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, these training programs will prepare them well, improve their skills, and refine their talents, so that in the future they can become excellent journalists. At the present time, the media need more professional people in the press, therefore, creating fully comprehensive training programs for journalism students is extremely important.

Training programs have improved the performance of many employees, and when Saudi journalism students receive high level professional training, they will be ready for the field of journalism. Creating professional and proficient training programs is the best option to help students fully comprehend what being a journalist requires, and will enable them to carry out their duties at the highest level possible.

The framework for the project involves a review of a selection of universities in both of these countries. Universities were selected based on certain criteria and the availability of information for use in the research study itself. The universities chosen for consideration in America were: Emerson College, The University of Southern California, Boston University, Washington and Lee University, University of Oklahoma Norman Campus, University of Miami, University of Connecticut, University of Arizona. The universities chosen for review in Saudi Arabia were: Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, Umm al-Qura University.

It is essential to determine the core courses that students receive in their journalism education so as to enrich and improve their work experience. The study aims at developing the Saudi Arabia undergraduate’s experience through creating a comprehensive journalism training program that prepares them well for a future career. Content analysis, also known as thematic coding, will then be used to determine the key focus of the journalism courses on offer at the selected universities, with analysis and summary of what this information suggests about the scope of journalism in each of the countries at this time.
Literature Review

Journalism Definitions

Journalism is a broad profession that encompasses the vast and minute daily news and events on a global scale. It cannot be defined in a single way because of its complexity and scope upon which it is derived. According to Schudson (2003, p. 11), “journalism is the business or practice of producing and disseminating information about contemporary affairs of general public interest and importance.” Journalism serves to inform and educate the public about news and events concerning people, places, and things and then pushes it out in mass format (Allen, 2015). Journalism comes in all forms from the type that focuses on a particular topic or category to its delivery format.

History of journalism

The history of journalism is directly linked to the development of communication technologies. The earliest forms of journalism started with the invention of newspapers that allowed the broadcast of information. Newspapers facilitated by enabling people from different locations to access the same stories (Lamble, 2014).

The earliest journalist could use the newspaper to cover sensational information in their localities. With the development in democracy, newspapers became popular in the society as a means of broadcasting political information. Politicians started relying on the newspapers for their popularity and maintaining their hold on power while at the same time those in power started fearing public Broadcastings for making them accountable (Lamble, 2014).

The next phase of development in journalism is the age of yellow journalism that took place in the 1900s, as public attention shifted to various contentious issues related to immigration and industries. The newspapers, at this time, were full of exposes that were critical of political leadership and industrial operators for falling to uphold the interests of the public.

Newspaper editors at this time were highly focused in publishing sensational headlines and controversial stories. The 1900s was also important in journalism because of developments in radio
technology. Newspaper journalism continued to dominate until the 1930s while radio journalism became the popular electronic media in the American society (Musser, 2008).

The 1930s marked the age of columnists in the history of journalism. In this period, the print media shifted to the use of regular editorial spots for writers on several issues of interests. People could use newspapers to express their personal opinions in these editorials, and some newspapers developed with the aim of publishing articles supporting certain ideas. The major issues covered in editorials at this period included war, the economy, and populist ideas. This phase of development was important in providing opportunities for ordinary people to participate in proving personal opinions to the public, and this increased the diversity of issues that were covered by journalists (Musser, 2008).

**Journalism Professionals**

Journalism is rife the world over with individuals who have embarked on journalism as their chosen career. There are many who have made a name for themselves through the journalism profession. There has been much debate as to whether or not journalism is considered a profession (Pihl-Thingvad, 2015). By comparison to other professions, journalism does involve a level of professionalism that is reminiscent of other industries because of its connection to the public.

Much like doctors and lawyers and those in other chosen professions, journalists must receive specialized training in order to work in their field (Abbott, 1988). Their work is considered more than just a job, but rather regarded as a mission because of its intent to serve the public in one of its greatest needs; information sharing (Freidson, 2001). Journalism professionals must adhere to much discretion in how they fact-gather and exhibit autonomy. They also have a sense of shared identity with other professional journalists who have similar work ethics and ideologies (Gardner et al., 2001).
**Journalism in the Saudi Arabia and USA**

In the Middle East, journalism is approached much differently than in Western cultures such as the United States. The Middle East does not deal in political correctness and reports news accordingly. Journalism in the Middle East serves to dispel the West’s interpretation of events taking place in the region (Valenti, 2004).

In a study conducted by Alotaibi (2014), it was found that those online publications that were not published in print form saw more interaction and activity versus traditional journalistic means of reporting and sharing content. This was due in large part to the type of content shared and the source of information. If this is any indication, Saudi journalists may have found an important work-around to the many challenges they have faced, giving them freedom to share information and content in a manner and at a level like never before.

Unlike much of the Middle East, the United States has many more liberties which give journalists the latitude to report news and information as they see fit. This can sometimes be a good thing and sometimes bad depending on the integrity of the journalist and their news organization. It takes great moral courage to report things as they actually are rather than how they seem in opposition to pressure from society and the government to do so (Doyle, 2006).

American media has been transformed through the ages and is now driven by the leading stories in society. Whatever is relevant and popular is what gets the media’s attention. Journalism has changed dramatically as a result. The stories that lead in the U. S. would never make it past the government censorship of the Middle East and other neighboring countries. At best, journalists strive to appear neutral and unbiased in an effort to promote ethical truth in reporting (McChesney, 2003). However, this is far from an accurate assessment of how things really are. News organizations go to great lengths to drive stories that will make for good headlines suggesting that they are anything but unbiased (Bagdikian, 2000). Any unbiased reporting by today’s U. S. journalism comes from the
premise that it will not tell the public what to think but does a good job of giving the public plenty to think about and how to think about it (McChesney, 2003).

Technology and social media are the catalysts to blame as the world of American journalism has become just as fast-paced and an ongoing competition to see who can break the latest news stories first (Barnhurst, 2011).

**Journalists in Saudi Arabia and the United States of America**

The basic law as imposed by the Saudi government prohibits any journalist from any form of journalism that attempts to divide the population or encourage rebellion against the government. Saudi journalists are required to register with the Ministry of Culture and Information in order to practice. They are expected to be responsible in their reporting efforts.

U. S. journalists are not restricted in what content they can produce. Not only do they have the freedom to write about any and everything, they are allowed to voice their opinions freely about controversial topics, the governments, and societal issues without fear of consequences (McChesney, 2003). Journalists by and large are not limited in what they can report on, but the culture of modern society is such that it has had an impact on how journalists practice their craft. Most of American journalism has integrated in politics that has bred a culture of political correctness that has spread to every facet of society. There is no American censorship on journalists, but the level of political correctness has become a sort of censorship where every word is analyzed for its authenticity and accuracy and subject to public backlash if not acceptable (McChesney, 2003).

**Job Descriptions of Journalists in the USA**

Journalists are heavily involved in the digital production of content and must be adept to the latest technologies that contribute to the success of their job (Rintala & Suolanen, 2005). They are responsible for pushing content out to their social media accounts and keeping them up to date and
current. Tasks that were once resigned to cameramen, video editors, and Internet content production are not being reassigned to journalists to handle as part of the overall production of stories they are working on (Rintala & Suolanen, 2005).

As journalists are being tasked with more responsibilities, there is an expectation within the industry that journalists must meet certain competency requirements in order to keep up with the ever-changing technological advances (Lee, 2002). These requirements have enabled journalists to have more autonomy over the editing, production, and broadcasting of their work (Heckscher, 1994). As a result, journalists are self-managing their tasks and responsibilities at every phase of the process (Carlson, 1999). Journalists are now expected to strive to achieve the goals of their news organizations at every turn that have less to do with job descriptions and more emphasis placed on utilizing their learned skill sets (Baytos & Kleiner, 1995).

Some of the residual contributing factors include: “organizational constraints, job roles, work-family conflicts, pay, job stress, workload, work schedules, and control” (Beam, 2006, p. 171). In a 2002 research study, 84% of journalists interviewed said they were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their jobs (Beam, 2006). Factors that made their jobs enjoyable included their work, accomplishments and achievements, recognition, and opportunities for promotion (Beam, 2006). Overall, U. S. journalists have had no choice but to evolve along with the times in order to remain valuable and relevant to the news organizations that they work for.

The Job Descriptions of Journalists in Saudi Arabia

Journalists’ job duties include being the primary mouthpiece for the government which includes broadcasting news and propaganda that is determined by the government, advocating for government ideologies such as politics and the Islamic faith (Hudson & Swindell, 1988). They are also required to promote news and ideas as a means of unifying the public. Mahon (2000), sums up the job description and roles of Saudi journalists in this way, “construct, articulate, and disseminate
ideologies about identity, community, difference, nation, and politics, and with their impact on social relations, social formation, and social meanings’’ (Mahon, 2000, pp. 468).

The vast majority of journalists are men. Women are considered subordinate in nature and their primary job duties as journalists consists of crafting press releases about events throughout the region under the government officials (Sidia, 2010).

When surveyed Arab journalists consider political reform and social change to be their two biggest job roles (Pintak & Ginges, 2008). That is followed by educating the public, sharing news for the good of society, being an advocate for the poor, encouraging civic interactions, societal development, analyze Saudi issues, support Islam and the Palestinian cause and be a voice for social change (Pintak & Ginges, 2008).

**Saudi Journalism Education**

As of 2010, the unemployment rate stood at 10.5 percent. Over 8.4 million of those employed are foreign workers that have flooded Saudi Arabia (Courington & Zuabi, 2011). Those Saudi’s who are graduating from higher institutions of learning, especially women, are having difficulty becoming employed post-graduation. Approximately 50.8 percent of the population is made up of citizens age twenty five or younger and the call for job creation is getting stronger and being heard (Courington & Zuabi, 2011). To answer this call, the government is working to create a private job sector that will employ those in this age demographic. By doing so, the government hopes this will lead to “enticing private investment, constructing “economic cities,” and reforming education” (Courington & Zuabi, 2011, p. 138).

According to the Qur’an, education is considered mandatory for every man and woman (Baki, 2004). That being the case, Saudi Arabia follows this directive in its efforts to educate its men and women. Their education system requires that men and women must be segregated. Women are
considered subordinates to men in every way and are forbidden from doing many things. However, from an educational standpoint, women are permitted to receive an education and many are graduating from higher education institutions with formal degrees in many different professions. One of these fields is journalism (Al Munajjed, 1997).

In general, some of the most controversial issues covered by journalists have been that of women’s issues. These issues have had an impact on how students are educated in the journalism profession. As Saudi men and women graduate from higher learning institutions and pursue careers in journalism, many have elected to discuss women’s issues extensively in the press (Hamdan, 2005).

Saudi Arabia allocates as much as 6.9 percent of its GDP to education, but the need for reform is great. If this is to be overcome, the country “must still reform a public sector education system plagued by inefficient bureaucracy” (Courington & Zuabi, 2011).

U.S. Journalism Education

The field of journalism study is among some of the most common and popular programs found within U.S. universities. Research shows that more women graduate from undergraduate journalism programs in college institutions than men (Manning-Miller, & Brown-Dunlap, 2002). This also includes enrollment where women outnumber men considerably in both graduate and undergraduate journalism and mass communications programs.

There are 109 journalism education programs that are recognized in the United States by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. The programs are provided in many institutions across the country. Journalism education in the U.S. is meant to prepare graduates for a career by providing real-world exposure and the necessary skills (Steinbach, 2007).
The major learning institutions have established their news outlets, including newspapers and television stations, in which students gain practical knowledge. Students use the news outlets to cover local information on various issues, including crime and civil issues. Also, students are provided with practical skills in magazine publishing and web design, as part of the available news outlets owned by the learning institutions (Steinbach, 2007).

Journalism education is mainly provided in the level of professional and academic degrees. It is common for students to take these journalism programs to combine with courses, such as law and public policy. The skills taught in journalism in the U.S. include reporting, writing and production. Students are also equipped with skills on ethical and legal issues such as plagiarism, human rights and the freedom of speech (Steinbach, 2007).

There is a trend in data journalism in which the focus is shifting to the quality of information provided. According to Barnathan (2013), journalists of the future will require expertise in a given filed in order to succeed. The rise in communication technology has provided multiple tools to gather and broadcast information directly to users without journalism.

This trend means that journalist must have expertise knowledge in order to remain essential in the dissemination of information to the public. There is a view that it is better to be an expert with poor writing skills instead of being an expert in writing but with poor content on the subject of interest (Barnathan, 2013).

In accommodating the emerging needs, journalism education in the U.S. has been modified to provide students with skills in research to enable them to provide quality information from the perspective of an expert. The need for expertise is demonstrated by the system in which journalism students undertake an additional course in another field (Barnathan, 2013).

In addition, the evolution of technology is changing the way information is collected and distributed to the public. A large number of people now turn to social media sites like Twitter to
access the breaking news. These trends have contributed to calls for changes in journalism education in the U.S. with the aim of satisfying the current and future needs (Barnathan, 2013).

**Curriculums**

First of all one shall mention that a curriculum devised particularly for journalists shall contain the information relevant for the field of professional engagement. Notably, students shall obtain the basis for comprehending what the journalism is and what are the needed skills. Therefore, the whole curriculum shall be constructed in the way that students also get the perspective of analyzing the given events. According to the Knight Foundation (2015), “Today, the question continues to prompt a polarizing response that may reflect deeper concerns about change, quality and measurable outcomes, as well as the place of journalism schools within the academy.” Therefore, the core idea for educating future journalists is make students aware of what are concerns, changes and outcomes from the critical perspective. Thus, a course dedicated to critical analysis should be comprise an integral part of the program.

No less important is to take into consideration the general background of individuals who have just stepped into the journalist career. In other words, professors shall be aware of previously studied subjects in former high schools in their students to modify better the possible challenges in the studying process. Yet, some of the classes shall be made mandatory for journalists in any case, for instance writing should be made a part of the core curriculum since the first year of journalist studies. As mentioned in Forbes, “More and more, the onus is on individual journalists to come up with the ideas and report, write, edit, publish and promote the work themselves” (Goudreau, 2012).

What should be included in a core curriculum for journalism? That is only one important question to ask when considering the materials and course approach for a journalism class. There are many other related issues aside from the simple question of what classes and books to choose for a course. Journalism demands a knowledge of current events and trends, and it also depends upon the context, such as the school and the teacher that will be implementing the curriculum.
According to Blom and Davenport (2012), assessment is an important aspect for figuring out the effectiveness of the teachers and student relationship. It also helps administrators determine the strengths and weaknesses of the course. The core courses mirror the philosophy of teaching at a school. Hence, the curriculum, courses, teachers, and pedagogy are all interconnected and best understood through evaluation (Blom & Davenport, 2012). Good schools always evaluate, considering how and where to revise and improve their teaching and learning. Thus, journalism curriculum must be seen from the perspective of improvement, not simply from a financial or efficiency approach.

The authors claimed that “No clear consensus emerged about all classes to be included as core courses in a hypothetical journalism undergraduate curriculum” (Blom & Davenport, P. 78). The decision about courses in a curriculum is not straightforward. That would include an emphasis on writing, as this has been undercut by technological interests and other trends. The basics of communication propel journalism.

Also that would incorporate use of technology, especially communication: “A relatively large proportion of the respondents included a visual communication course in their hypothetical core” (Blom & Davenport, 2012, p. 81). The image age will only increase and so future journalists must be attuned to the latest in visual communication methods and devices. In all, the journalism curriculum will need to include account for improvement at the pedagogical level and definitely include writing skills as well as visual communication.

**Journalism Training Programs**

As the demand for equality in education continues to be made in Saudi Arabia, students in higher learning institutions will need to receive proper training along with an adequate education in order to be well-equipped for post-graduate careers. This is particularly true for journalism students who are in great need of proper training to support their future endeavors to promote
professionalism, to help them gain experience under a trained mentor before entering the field, and to enhance the education system in Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, in order for students to be well prepared for their careers in journalism, training is necessary and should be required that go beyond the bounds of on the job training. By integrating training into education curriculums, students will be exposed to the potential challenges they will face as new journalists as well as the pitfalls to avoid.

**Theoretical Perspective**

In this study, two theoretical elements are implicitly used to help understand the main topic here. In particular, there are two main dimensions in this study, and each of which is examined from the perspective of a different theory: first, how things are currently and why; and secondly, how things should be and how to get there.

First, there is the authoritarian theory, which is one of the four theories of the press, developed by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956). This theory focuses on how the state controls and regulates journalism as a way to maintain its authority over its citizens. In this regard, an authoritarian system of journalism seeks to support and facilitate and boost the development of government policies. Media outlets, in this regard, are subject to state permits, licenses, and censorship (Duffy, 2013).

This is not to say that private ownership does not exist because they do. Private practice may include then the use of the internet, which is freer from state control compared to other platforms. However, even such private practice must adhere to government policy. This theory, therefore, best explain the current situation of Saudi Arabia’s journalism industry: its practice and graduate programs.

The other important theory is that of social responsibility. This may be more relevant for Saudi Arabia than libertarian theory. Besides, despite the recent changes, including the freer use of the internet in the exchange of information, it is hard to foresee a future of absolutely libertarian
journalistic practice in Saudi Arabia at least not in the same way that it is in the US and much of the Western world.

Unlike libertarian system which seems to impose rules on a people, often even they are not ready, the theory of social responsibility seems to grow with society as it evolves (Christians & Nordenstreng, 2004).

Saudi Arabia, like all societies, has shown the capacity to evolve, too. There are, for instance, elements of an increasingly democratic society, characterized by, among other things, more power for women. This theory, therefore, best provides for the future of Saudi Arabia, including journalistic practice, and this should be reflected in the training programs for undergraduate journalism students in the country.

The Research Questions

RQ1. Which are the most undergraduate journalism core courses that provide in the eight universities in the United States?

RQ2. Which are the most undergraduate journalism core courses that provide in the four universities in Saudi Arabian?
Methods

The purpose of this project is to examine and analyze specific undergraduate journalism departments in Saudi Arabia as compared to the United States. The framework for the project involves a review of a selection of universities in both of these countries. Universities were selected based on certain criteria and the availability of information for use in the research study itself. Content analysis, also known as thematic coding, will then be used to determine the key focus of the journalism courses on offer at the selected universities, with analysis and summary of what this information suggests about the scope of journalism in each of the countries at this time.

The methodology for this research involved selecting universities from both the United States of America and Saudi Arabia. The universities chosen for consideration in America were:

1- Emerson College
2- The University of Southern California
3- Boston University
4- Washington and Lee University
5- University of Oklahoma Norman Campus
6- University of Miami
7- University of Connecticut
8- University of Arizona

The justification for this selection was based on basic keyword searches on the Internet search engine, Google, and based on subsequent data analysis to determine which colleges in the United States are deemed to have high ranked journalism programs using a college ranking website (Journalism – Overall Best, 2013). Determining the criteria used in the ranking of United States colleges is particularly challenging and there is likely always a high degree of subjectivity, but the selected colleges are also noted to have readily accessible websites and reputable journalism
programs based on independent assessments of each. The colleges chosen for review in Saudi Arabia are:

1. Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University
2. King Saud University
3. King Abdulaziz University
4. Umm al-Qura University

These universities were chosen and the list was likewise limited to four instead of a comparative eight colleges because these are the only institutions in Saudi Arabia that have academic departments devoted to the study of journalism. These universities are also readily supported by the Saudi government, which determines that they have a wealth of resources at their disposal to support student engagement in journalism. It also means, given that their governmental support is relatively longstanding, that they have acquired considerable experience in the study of journalism, sometimes on an international scale. It is also noted that most Saudi journalists graduate from one or other of these universities, thus they can be seen to have a significant influence on the way in which journalism is practiced in Saudi Arabia.

The methodology used to obtain information relevant to this project and specifically for use in the content analysis was derived from several studies outlining best practices for this type of research. Lacy, Watson, and Lovejoy (2015), discuss three issues pertaining to content analysis in their assessment of best practices. They emphasize specifically the problems with using search and databases for sampling, the issues with not accounting for differences between content analysis and algorithmic text analysis, which they identify as a different process, and the problems in finally calculating and reporting the results of content analysis accurately, in which processes they not several pitfalls pertaining to the accurate assessment of data. Another resource in the assessment of methodology was Worthington and Whittaker (2006), who consider content analysis in relation to
new scale development and comment on strategies for appropriate scaling and best practices in scale
development for their chosen field of psychology. Though, for this study, is the applicability or
transferability of the proposed best practices for managing scales in research and appropriately fitting
models for factor analysis.

The objective for the research in this study is to analyze specific journalism programs at
universities in both the United States and Saudi Arabia to collect information that will be beneficial
to the development of viable training programs for students enrolled at specific universities that offer
journalism as a field of academic study in Saudi Arabian. The primary focus of the study is
comparative, too, on the basis that the study of journalism in the United States is deemed to be of a
high standard and because also the colleges chosen for inclusion in this study are deemed to offer
journalism programs that are of a high standard.

The steps for thematic coding outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), were used as the basis
for formulating the particular steps for content collection and analysis. According to Braun and
Clarke (2006), the first step is to develop a familiarity with the content that is to be the focus of the
coding. In this instance, the method for collecting data involved an initial review of the department
of journalism website pages for each of the eight universities chosen for inclusion in the United
States and for the four universities chosen for inclusion from Saudi Arabia. The initial review was
cursory and involved a focus on the information that was available, consistent with the guidelines

The second step for thematic coding involves establishing and assigning codes for particular
forms of data that appear with sufficient frequency that they may be perceived as the basis of a
pattern. This involves a review of the initial website data and analysis of the data to determine what
keywords and phrases occur with frequency.

The third step involves defining individual themes that are to be assessed over the course of
the project and according to which all of the websites under review are to be assessed for
commonality of the theme. Explaining the justification for selecting each theme is important (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The fourth recommended step is a quality control measure to ensure that the chosen themes are all relevant and significant in relation to the focus of the analysis; all of the chosen themes should allow for the collection of information that is relevant to the research as a whole.
Results

The purpose for conducting this study was to analyze the number of Journalism programs that are offered in selected universities in the United States, compared to those in Saudi Arabia.

RQ1: Which are the most undergraduate journalism core courses that are provided in the eight universities in the United States?

As described in the Methods section, eight undergraduate journalism programs were included in this study because they are considered the best journalism programs for undergraduate study in the United States: Emerson College, the University of Southern California, Boston University, Washington and Lee University, University of Oklahoma Norman Campus, University of Miami, University of Connecticut, and University of Arizona.

The number of core courses for these programs ranged from six to 12 out of 33 possible journalism courses. Therefore, even in the best programs in the United States, the number of available courses required for a core course of study could be significantly expanded.

No courses were required by all programs. The most popular courses were: Ethics, taught by seven schools (all but Southern California); History of American News/Journalism, taught by five schools (all but Emerson, Washington and Lee, and Arizona); Reporting/Introduction to Reporting, taught by four schools (Southern California, Washington and Lee, Miami, and Arizona); Multimedia Journalism, taught by four schools (Oklahoma, Miami, Connecticut, and Arizona); and Beat Reporting, taught by four schools (Emerson, Boston, Washington and Lee, and Connecticut).

The Southern California program is of the most concern because it required the most core courses of any school, 12, which may make it a popular program for those who are serious about the study of journalism; on the other hand, it did not require Ethics, and it did not have a similar program into which ethics may have been rolled (such as Principles of Journalism).

Vital ethical issues in journalism, as detailed in the literature review, include prioritization of “real” news versus “entertainment” news; fact checking to ensure accuracy before reporting breaking
stories; objectivity and neutrality; bias and multiculturalism; and the extent to which government interference must be tolerated (Gaunt, 1992). Therefore, all professional journalism programs should require an Ethics course.

The other core courses taught by at least one American journalism program are: Discovering Journalism, Broadcast Reporting, Newswriting, Introduction to Online Media, Investigative Reporting, U.S./State/Local Government or Politics; Newspaper Editing and Design; Feature Writing; Environmental Journalism; Foundations or Principles of Journalism; Law of Mass Communication; Writing Magazine Nonfiction; Writing for Mass Media, Government and Public Affairs Reporting; Visual Journalism; Introduction to Mass Communication; Digital Journalism; Multimedia News Gathering; Mass Communication Law; Intro to Visual Storytelling; Web Design for Journalists; Infographics and Data Journalism; Media Criticism; Media, Technology, and Culture; Media, Technology, and Culture; Literary Journalism; Photojournalism; and Editing. As can be seen, all schools emphasize modern media in some way; some institutions will study this concept in various ways. Given the shift of so much media reporting to the Internet and social media, this is a necessity.

RQ2: Which are the most undergraduate journalism courses that are provided in the four universities in Saudi Arabia?

As described in the Methods section, four undergraduate journalism programs were included in this study because they are the only institutions in Saudi Arabia with academic programs devoted to journalism: Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, and Umm al-Qura University.

They are all longstanding programs supported by the Saudi government. The number of core courses for these programs ranged from 18 to 29 out of 48 possible journalism courses. Therefore, these programs seem to provide vastly more information to journalism students.

Several courses were required by all four programs: News; Photography; Computer Design
Other most popular core courses required by three universities were: Islamic Media; Media Institutions Management; Informational Texts in English; Knowledge of Arab and International Media; Journalist Output, Thinking and Learning Skills; Communication Skills; Introduction to Media and Journalism; Internet Usage; and Islamic Culture. Courses taught by half the schools were: Media Sources; Media Documentation; Media Criticism; Investigative Journalism; Creating Newspapers and Magazines; The Article; Press Talk; Publishing or Electronic Publishing; Editing; Theories of Media Influence; Media Ethics; New Media; and Public Opinions.

Courses required by one university were: Media Ideologically; Writing for Web sites and e-Newspapers; Website and Newspaper Design; Graduation Project; Persuasion Skills; Contemporary Media Issues; Electronic Press; Specialized Press; Islamic Economics; Media Campaign; Diction; Introduction to Sociology; Introduction to Advertising; Systems and Media Censorship; Psychology; Introduction to Mass Communication; and Intellectual Invasion.
Discussion

The purpose of performing the study was to analyze the specific number of journalism programs that are offered in selected universities in the United States as compared to Saudi Arabia. The research questions involved determine the most undergraduate journalism core courses provided in eight universities in the US and the undergraduate journalism core course provided in the four universities in Saudi Arabia.

The study helped in gaining sufficient information that is helpful in developing training programs for undergraduate students in journalism department in Saudi Arabia. It was essential to determine the core courses that students receive in their journalism education so as to enrich and improve their work experience. The study aimed at developing the Saudi Arabia undergraduate’s experience through creating a comprehensive journalism training program that prepares them well for a future career.

The first research question helped in figuring out the journalism program of the US undergraduate students in the selected universities. The universities included Emerson College, the University of Southern California, Boston University, Washington and Lee University, University of Oklahoma Norman Campus, University of Miami, University of Connecticut, and the University of Arizona. The study found that ethics, reporting, history of American news, multimedia journalism, and beat reporting were essential in gaining knowledge.

The courses taught by at least one American journalism program were Discovering Journalism, Broadcast Reporting, News Writing, Introduction to Online Media, Investigative Reporting, U.S./State/Local Government or Politics; Newspaper Editing and Design; Feature Writing; Environmental Journalism; Foundations or Principles of Journalism; Law of Mass Communication; Writing Magazine Nonfiction; Writing for Mass Media, Government and Public Affairs Reporting; Visual Journalism; Introduction to Mass Communication; Digital Journalism; Multimedia News Gathering; Mass Communication Law; Intro to Visual Storytelling; Web Design
for Journalists; Infographics and Data Journalism; Media Criticism; Media, Technology, and Culture; Media, Technology, and Culture; Literary Journalism; Photojournalism; and Editing.

The second research question helped in figuring out the journalism program of the Saudi Arabia undergraduate students in four selected universities. The four universities included Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, and Umm al-Qura University.

The courses required by all the universities included News; Photography; Computer Design Programs; Media Research Methods; Citizen Journalism or Media; and English. When comparing to the US universities, only single programs in the US required Photography or Web Design. The courses taught by half of the schools were Media Sources; Media Documentation; Media Criticism; Investigative Journalism; Creating Newspapers and Magazines; The Article; Press Talk; Publishing or Electronic Publishing; Editing; Theories of Media Influence; Media Ethics; New Media; and Public Opinions.

When looking at the courses offered in Saudi Arabia journalism program, it is possible to note that Saudi Arabia is a flourishing culturally diverse Arab country. The country is considering including some courses in its program so to raise their level of education to that of an international one. In the journalism program, Saudi Arabia has the existence of Western Media and English language. The English language was an important course in the journalism program as English proficiency in an area of specialization is essential in helping an individual know the profession terminologies. It is an indication of the effort that Saudi Arabia is putting so as to improve its journalism through learning about other countries’ media. A common factor in journalism program for both Saudi Arabia and the USA is that journalists should take up multiple roles of a designer for newspaper and magazine, editor, photographer, and writer.

The causes taught by most universities to allow for these duties for a journalist included Website and Newspaper Design, writing for Web sites and e-Newspapers, Photography, Diction.
When comparing USA journalism program with Saudi Arabia, it is clear that media ethics is one important component in most of the universities studied. Ethics is vital in journalism, and it is important to ensure accuracy before reporting the news. According to McChesney (2003), some of the ethical issues that journalists face on a regular basis include truthfulness, sensationalism, conflict of interest, authenticity, and the appropriateness of the photographs. It is essential that journalists should make a commitment to providing truth and offer stories not intended to deceive the audience.
Body of the project

The purpose of this paper is to create first class training programs for undergraduate students who are studying journalism in Saudi Arabia. I have constructed a dynamic and creative plan which would be suitable for the departments of journalism within the Saudi Arabian universities. I devised the plan after having carried out extensive research which focused on core courses in undergraduate journalism programs. This resulted in my making a comparison of high grade undergraduate journalism courses at eight US universities and four Saudi Arabian universities. After taking an in depth look at each component, I merged some of the courses in order to ensure that the plan incorporated the ones that were the most important. The courses that will be covered for the new training program to enhance journalists' experience include: the History of Journalism in the USA and Middle East, Journalism Reporting and Photography; Ethics in Journalism; Multimedia and Design; and Cultures and Intensive English. Each class shows: the course description, goals, outcomes, and the duration.

Training programs for Saudi Arabian Universities

1-The History of Journalism in the USA and Middle East

Course Descriptions:

This course introduces students to journalistic development in the USA and the Middle East by looking at various periods in history, and the developments which have shaped journalism into what it is today. The course also examines how much the journalistic arena has changed through the years, particularly since the explosion of social media, a phenomena which has actually been running for more than thirty years, even though it is only in the last fifteen or so years that it has taken its place as part of the mainstream culture in the world of online journalism. Students review the history of journalism in America which is rooted in a strong political drive for the movement for American Independence, after which the US constitution's first article ensured the press's freedom, and thereby spurred on the rapid development of the American press.
Students also review the part that the US press played in supporting religious institutions and political organizations. There are also discussions on the expansion of the press at the time of the 19th century when newspaper outlets were established outside the confines of eastern American cities; and when the famous Penny press started to have a leading role in US journalism from the 1830s, and how the quicker printing presses, the telegraph and other technological advancements which arrived in the 1840s, assisted in the press's expansion throughout America as it went through fast demographic and economic growth.

This instruction on the history of American journalism culminates with the late 20th Century and early 21st Century, when journalism in the US became consumed by huge media conglomerates, and digital journalism took over resulting in an enormous newspaper crisis as those who purchased newspapers started to get the news from the internet, and advertisers deserted the newspapers and headed to the internet.

Students will learn about the history of journalism in Saudi Arabia since its inception and how it has evolved in addition to the history of the most prominent news organizations and journalists Saudis. Also, the fact that in Saudi Arabia the majority of newspapers are under private ownership and regulated and financially supported by the Saudi government. The country's "basic law" which applies to journalism enforces the media's role to contribute to national unity and educate, and that due to this enforcement, certain matters may not always be reported as they are in the US. There is also an in depth look at the way that journalism in both the US and Saudi Arabia has been shaped by: cultural forces, technology, politics, economics, and societal changes.

**The Outcome:**

After have completed the course successfully, students will be able to:

- Be conversant in the history of journalism in both the US and Saudi Arabia.
- Have a knowledge of the cultural forces, technology, politics, economics, and societal changes that have taken place across the US and Saudi Arabia, and how they have
shaped the journalism of today.

- Understand the legal freedoms and restrictions historically instituted by the governments of the US and Saudi Arabia.
- Students will get a deep insight to the press in the Middle East and USA.

Course Duration:

4 months.

2- Journalism Reporting and Photography

Course Descriptions:

This course entails instruction on the various aspects involved in reporting for newspapers and magazines. These include: photography, graphics, layout, editing and writing. It also includes the basic rudiments of utilizing technical telecommunication and communications, as well as public relations.

With regard to producing high level news stories, students are taught to be responsible and employ accuracy, clarity, and style when compiling news reports. Various procedures to ensure that a story is newsworthy are covered. These include: how to follow the AP (Associated Press) style, how to employ the best interview techniques, and how to work with multimedia tools. There is also instruction on the best ways of researching intricate news problems, utilizing public records, standard reference works, and multiple sources.

There is basic tuition on journalistic photography which includes practical hands on experience in a workshop-oriented class. Students will learn the fundamental methods for creating photo essays and camera shooting. Students also partake in training in a Mac darkroom.

The Outcome:

After have completed the course successfully, students will be able to:

- Be fully conversant in the different aspects involved in reporting for newspapers and magazines.
✓ Have a basic understanding of how to utilize technical telecommunication and communications.

✓ Have a working knowledge of public relations.

✓ Be able to compile high level news reports.

✓ Be conversant in AP style.

✓ Have familiarity with research techniques and referencing.

✓ Know the basic elements of photographic journalism.

✓ Be able to camera shoot and generate photo essays.

✓ Be able to carry out basic darkroom digital processing.

**Course Duration:**

4 months.

**3- Ethics in Journalism**

**Course Descriptions:**

The ethics in journalism course goal involves studying how to look for the truth behind a story, and giving the readers and audience a fully comprehensive and reasonable account of the issues and events at hand. Students are taught that journalists who are conscientious endeavor to enlighten the general public with integrity, honesty and conscientiousness; that integrity is the foundation of a journalist’s reliability; and that journalists hold extremely responsible positions and as such, should be bound to apply high standards of practice and principles.

In this course, students will be taught to: always avoid distorting the facts, examine the reliability of data regardless of the sources, and to take precautions to bypass unintended errors; to prevent any conflict of interest; ensure that there is no misrepresentation of: quotations, photos, promotional material, news teases and headlines; to always avoid plagiarizing; never to highlight or exaggerate incidents so that they become out of context; not make any form of distortion to video or news photo content; to be mindful of the compassion that should be shown to anyone who
could be adversely affected by a news report; to employ sensitivity when interviewing vulnerable subjects such as children, and those who have suffered great trauma; and to stay clear of activities and associations which could damage journalistic credibility and compromise personal integrity.

The Outcome:

After have completed the course successfully, students will be able to:

- Understand the strategies to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Have an in depth understanding of professional integrity.
- Be able to avoid plagiarizing by being familiar with the correct form of referencing and acknowledgment.
- Follow the highest standards of journalistic practice.
- Practice journalistic credibility.
- Understand subject's vulnerability and follow guidelines to ensure they are protected.

Course Duration:

4 months.

5-Multimedia and Design

Course Descriptions:

This course involves equipping students with the necessary skills to become proficient in various aspects of multimedia and design. They will be taught about the practical skills which will enable them to become successful media practitioners, and will learn about the ethical responsibilities and the purpose of media. And they will receive tuition which will enable them to understand the various forms of media and systems of delivery such as: design project management and principles, video, and the application of innovative software which can heighten their journalistic success, and add to their coverage. Students will also be shown how to carry out basic computer programming, develop their creative talent, and skillfully merge computers.
Other areas covered comprise the improvement of synergistic applications and the presentation and organization of data. Students will also be introduced to audience building through online journalism techniques. They will be instructed in methods which will allow them to further their competence in utilizing the spectrum of online applications and services which are sought by today's journalists. These incorporate: video-editing software, Adobe Photoshop, Twitter, Facebook, and WordPress. There will also be instruction in: online story editing, headline writing, and search-engine optimization.

The Outcome:

After have completed the course successfully, students will be able to:

- To be conversant with various aspects of multimedia and design.
- Understand the ethical duties and the purpose of media.
- Know the fundamentals of design project management and principles.
- Have the skills to create videos
- Know how to carry out an application of innovative software.
- Understand the rudiments of basic computer programming.
- Be able to merge computers in a skillful manner.
- Have the know how to develop synergistic applications and the presentation and organization of data.
- Be familiar with online journalism techniques.
- Have the ability to utilize a spectrum of online applications and services.

Course Duration:

4 months.
5-Cultures and Intensive English

Course Descriptions:

This course looks at the fact that as Saudi Arabia is becoming the perfect country for businesses that are venturing into areas within the Middle East and beyond, and as the Saudi stock market now permits institutional foreign investors, there are an increasingly large number of foreign residents and business visitors who are dependent on local Saudi news. Therefore, the goal of this course is to show students that in order to write suitable articles and attract good investors to the Kingdom, it is crucial that they have a competitive edge by attaining an in depth understanding of various cultures, and becoming proficient in professional editing and writing skills in the English language and English journalistic style. A number of different forms of English style editing and writing will be covered, and these will include: public service announcements and press releases, news releases, newsletters, blogs, and reporting on radio and television interviews.

The culture awareness aspect of the course is designed to help journalists take on the creative, aesthetic and critical sensibilities that are needed for progressive engagement in global citizenship.

The Outcome

After have completed the course successfully, students will be able to:

- Apply cultural awareness to specific content.
- Examine emerging issues, trends and news related to foreign cultures.
- Write well-organized content which appeals to both Saudi and non-Saudi residents and outsiders who have interests in the country.
- Create content which is culturally appropriate and engaging.
- Use reasoning and the critical sensibilities that are required for progressive engagement in global citizenship.
- Be conversant in various forms of English style editing and writing.

Course Duration:

4 months.
Conclusion

This paper sought to determine how to create training programs for undergraduate journalism students in Saudi Arabia's universities. In this respect, the paper sought to cite the core courses in the universities' journalism programs to determine in what ways they may be lacking and what improvements to make.

The central argument, in this case, is that journalism studies in Saudi Arabia undergraduate programs are a manifestation of the country's culture, including state's control and emphasis on doing what is good for the state. This is reflected in many of the core courses, including Islamic culture; Islamic media; Islamic economics; and intellectual invasion, among many others.

For the country to get its journalists to the level of competing equally with other journalists from other countries, the paper argues, it is important to include training in the undergraduate programs.

Limitations and Future Research

This paper sought to examine specific core courses in undergraduate journalism programs in Saudi Arabia's universities- as compared to those in the United States. The paper has succeeded to find the core courses. However, the paper is limited in a number of ways. For one, the paper makes conclusions on the basis of the superficial look at the core courses, rather than a look at the specific contents of the core courses. More in-depth examination of specific course core courses would have revealed their contents. Therefore, this would have allowed a clearer evaluation of their strengths and limitations and more valid suggestions for improvement. Instead, the paper merely mentions these core courses and, on the basis of the titles, makes assumptions as to their content.

Another limitation which plays a role in the limitation mentioned above- is that of scope. The research sought to cover a big scope. Seeking to evaluate core courses of journalism programs in all the universities included here was too big a goal. This stood in the way of in-depth examination of the topic and valuable information.
However, this paper most importantly opens the way for more in-depth studies in the future. So far, before this study, there has been a lack of specific studies. Despite its too general approach, this study does narrow down to the core courses. This is an important leeway for future studies to pick on, particular focus on specific core courses and provide more detailed analysis. Such analysis could determine, among other things, how the content of the core course reflect the approach to journalism, as well as its gradual shift to a social responsibility approach; as well as what to do to ensure that such courses are at par with international goals.
Outside Reviews of the Project

STUDENT: Abdulhamid

DEGREE: Master of Arts

MAJOR: Public Relations

April 6, 2016.

Evaluation by Yousef Alamer

Dear Dr. Blom,

My name is Yousef Alamer. I currently hold the position of a Teaching Assistant at the journalism department in Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. Presently I am teaching for the freshman and senior levels. I have worked with two newspapers for a year: “Al-hayat” and “The Economist”. I have a Bachelor’s degree in Journalism from Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. In 2011, I graduated from the department of Journalism with a Bachelor’s degree in journalism from Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. Abdulhamid was my classmate and we had some classes together.

In general, I found that the project has covered all the important and useful points. From my perspective, I see that the project is well organized and it is easy to follow the instructions. I think that this project will help the journalism departments in Saudi Arabia.

However, I have a note about "statement of the problem". I suggest that Abdulhamid should include the study population in this part, in order to make this part clearer. Through my experience in the department of journalism, I found most professors cited the study population in the statement of the problem.

About the quality of the project, I see that the project gives valuable information that helps Abdulhamid to create training programs for undergraduate students in the department of journalism in Saudi Arabia. I found the research questions very clear which helped Abdulhamid to give direct answers.
I see that the literature review covers many subjects that are related to this project. I like how Abdulhamid organized it with a different subject and made links between them. I found this section very well written and uncluttered.

Finally, I found the method section very helpful. It provided a clear idea and helped Abdulhamid to create training programs. I see clearly how Abdulhamid moves step by step in this section and I think that this section is the best section in this project. After reading this whole project, I found that the project was creative and helpful.

Thank you,

Yousef Alamer

A Teaching Assistant at the journalism department

Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University
Dear Dr. Blom,

My name is Abdulsamad Sahly. I graduated from Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in 2008. Currently, I am a teaching assistant at the Journalism and Media Department at Jazan University. I worked as a director of the media club of Journalism at Jazan University from 2009 to 2012. Moreover, I have an experience with some of the Saudi newspapers such as “Okaz”, “Riyadh” and “Al Watan.” I have not met with Abdulhamid before, but my brother and Abdulhamid are friends, so my brother Ahmed asked me to read and evaluate this project.

The project covers many concepts of journalism. In the introduction, he gave a good background on the topic and I think he made a great opening. From my point of view, this project is written in a good way, and I noticed that Abdulhamid includes many details for each section. I can say that in general the project is good.

The literature review in this project covers the basic information. I believe the concepts in this section make the project valuable and help me to understand the rest of the other sections in the project.

Furthermore, I think that in the methodology he made a good effort. Specifically, the content analysis was derived from several studies for this research. Results and discussion chapters were concise, focused and gave me a clear idea about his goal. These chapters were very good compared to other chapters.
In the end, the training programs that Abdulhamid created for undergraduate students who study journalism in Saudi Arabia, were good, especially the reports and photographs. I think this course will help many undergraduate students who study journalism in Saudi Arabia.

Best Regards,

Abdulsamad Sahly

A teaching assistant at the Journalism and Media Department at Jazan University


Appendices

Table 1:
Journalism Core courses: Saudi Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University</th>
<th>King Saud University</th>
<th>King Abdulaziz University</th>
<th>Umm al-Qura University</th>
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<td>Media campaign</td>
<td>Diction</td>
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Table 2: **Journalism Core Courses: US. Universities**

<table>
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<th>Courses</th>
<th>Emerson College</th>
<th>The University of Southern California</th>
<th>Boston University</th>
<th>Washington and Lee University</th>
<th>University of Oklahoma Norman Campus</th>
<th>University of Miami</th>
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