

Global Media Journal

German Edition

From the Field

Reforming Journalism Education on a Tertiary Level in Afghanistan: Recommendations for a Dual Education Model

Kefa Hamidi & Alessandra Brüchner

Abstract: The importance of journalism's role in society is beyond debate. Particularly in so-called fragile states, the social responsibility of media and journalism cannot be denied. Journalism education must account for the high level of skills required by journalists, and the 'mediation' function of journalists in fragile states should be conceptualised. Responding to dynamic developments in the Afghan media landscape and the resulting need for high-quality journalism education, this article proposes a reform model for journalism education on a tertiary level in Afghanistan. Based on research as well as a needs and feasibility assessment following the participatory action research (PAR) approach, target models and an implementation plan for educational reform were developed. This provides a potential blueprint for reforms in journalism education in fragile states, which considers social and cultural values and interests in the local context while drawing on the perspective of the outsider. This article presents the results of a project entitled "Professionalisation of Journalism Education on a Tertiary Level in Afghanistan", which resulted in a manual.

Keywords: communication studies, journalism, journalism education, development communication, Afghanistan

Author information: Kefa Hamidi heads the Research Centre for Development Communication, which is based at the University of Leipzig and is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Email: kefa.hamidi@uni-leipzig.de

Alessandra Brüchner supported the University of Leipzig research project as a student assistant. In her master's degree in Global Mass Communication / Journalism, she is primarily concerned with current media developments and their social impact.

Email: alessandra.bruechner@googlemail.com

To cite this article: Hamidi, Kefa & Brüchner, Alessandra (2020). Reforming Journalism Education on a Tertiary Level in Afghanistan: Recommendations for a Dual Education Model. *Global Media Journal – German Edition*, 10(2), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22032/dbt.47741>

Introduction

This article introduces a model for a reform of journalism education on a tertiary level with a focus on the country of Afghanistan. The media landscape in Afghanistan has experienced a boom over the past two decades, with rapid expansion and the differentiation of private and state-organised media institutes and media services (Hamidi 2015). Journalism as a profession has gained attention, and a diverse field of training opportunities has emerged since the media boom; however, these programmes lack conceptual unity and face difficulties in balancing the theoretical and practical aspects of journalism training. It is questionable whether journalists in Afghanistan are adequately educated to turn the rapid development in the media sector into positive sustainable change. Fragile states undergoing social development in particular rely on journalists to act as “mediators” to foster social cohesion and national unity. Educational models must take this into account and adapt to international developments while serving local needs. Long-term sustainable solutions regarding how to reform and harmonise journalism education on a tertiary level in Afghanistan are introduced according to a model of a dual journalism education that combines theory and practice¹.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, an overview of current international research, including exemplary models of journalism education and recommendations for required elements, is provided. Second, an empirical needs and feasibility study is reported. Subsequently, it outlines the guidelines for implementing a reformed model, which can be viewed as a blueprint for the reform of journalism education in fragile states within the framework of a development communication project, combining an “outsider” perspective and local ideas and needs.

Delving into academic literature: context and models of journalism education

To determine the general objectives and necessary elements of journalism education, first, insights into the relationship between the media, journalism and society, particularly in transforming fragile states, were obtained, and the history and forms of journalism education were then examined.

¹ The article presents the results of the project (led by Prof. Dr. Arnulf Kutsch and coordinated by Dr. Kefa Hamidi) “Professionalisation of Journalism Education on a Tertiary Level in Afghanistan”, which, based on international research and a needs and feasibility survey of Afghan experts, resulted in a manual suggesting a model for the reform of journalism education on a tertiary level together with guidelines for its implementation: Kutsch, A. & Hamidi, K. (2020). Dual journalism education. Recommendations for the reform of journalism education at state universities in Afghanistan. In particular for the Faculty of Journalism and Public Communication at Nangarhar University. Leipzig University. Leipzig. See: <https://journalism-education-afghanistan.org/>

Media, journalism and society

Media and journalism have social importance, which is an important research aspect in journalism education and should be further examined as a theoretical foundation. Mass media plays an important role in the continuity of the social system (Hjarvard 2008). A central function of mass media is information transfer (Drüeke 2018: 19), while in a political sense, it needs to produce a forum for exchange among and between citizens and the state (Gerhards/Schäfer 2010: 144). At the same time, it has the function of criticising and keeping the state, society or organisations in check (Meyen 2005: 3). An integrating function of different groups in society also plays an important role (Arnold/Schneider 2007: 117ff.). Embedding media and its functions into society is also revealed by how journalists perceive themselves in their professional roles and values. Journalists' self-perception of their role influences their work because it constitutes a "self-defined frame of action" (Weischenberg et al. 1994: 160). The study pinpointed a journalist role typology from findings in the literature, which defined seven types: 1) the information journalist, where journalists are neutral informants (Hanitzsch 2010: 123; Weischenberg et al. 2006: 356); 2) the critical controller; 3) the advocacy journalist who acts as an attorney for the underprivileged; 4) the pedagogue; 5) the service-provider journalist (Hanitzsch 2004: 150); 6) the missionary journalist, who is prevalent mainly in Islamic countries in the function of transmitting social and religious values (Ramaprasad/Hamdy 2006, Hamidi 2013); and 7) the mediator-oriented journalist, who is especially relevant in developing countries or fragile states, such as Afghanistan.

A focus on developing countries provides a more specific perspective on the function of media in society and on journalists' roles. For several years, a discussion of the media's role in developing states has been based on development communication and development journalism as research directions. Generally, it is argued that the mass media in developing states should contribute to "national development" (Kunczik 1985) and "social harmony" (Massey/Chang 2002) and plays important roles, such as supporting social change or nation-building. The mass media is considered capable of influencing social development by reporting on development programmes (Namra 2004: 17) and reaching different groups of society with its content, thus nurturing a shared vision of the country. Development journalism can foster nation-building by creating national consciousness and unity while encouraging cooperation between diverse and sometimes hostile communities. In this case, a journalist should act more as a guide dog rather than a watchdog (Kasoma 1999: 3). Moreover, when the focus is specifically on the social contexts of Islamic-majority regions and journalists' conceptions of professional values, religion has an influence on the self-perception of roles, which means that fostering religious values plays a dominant role for journalists (Ramaprasad/Rahman 2006, Khan 2004, Hamidi 2013). It can be concluded that the media's significance in society and journalistic roles and values are influenced by the

local context. Thus, journalism education in various countries should reflect specific local traditions and the norms of journalistic practice. Every curriculum serves the society it is embedded in. Accordingly, journalism education in developing countries must define a new academic identity, moving away from Western models (Mensing 2010). To establish what journalism needs to be able to do and which issues should be taught on a local reformed journalism course, the history and types of journalism education, along with current trends, are examined in the following.

History and form of journalism education

Forms of journalism education must be differentiated between university-based and non-university-based courses. University-based journalism courses historically follow the notion of journalism as a profession that should perform a public service (Macdonald 2006). Prescribed standards and universal professional values for individual journalists provided by a professional education help cope with commercial pressures on journalistic practices (ibid.). Examining academic journalism education on a global scale, our study explored two exemplary models for journalistic education: in Germany and in the United States. Germany uses a more “public-oriented” approach, focusing on academic and scientific efforts (Barrera 2012), whereas the United States offer training focused on practical skills, which is mainly financed by private media outlets (Weischenberg et al. 1994).

In general, journalism education should be differentiated in terms of practical and theoretical learning contents, responding to the journalistic labour market’s need for practical training, as well as contextual theory. While the tension over the “industry versus academic” dichotomy of journalism has sparked international controversy and on-going discussions, both practice and theory must be integrated into journalism training in higher education as they are particularly relevant in their application to journalistic practice and the media system in journalism education (Nowak 2007). Practical experience in journalism education can be offered in a variety of forms, such as internships, joint research projects or case-based teaching, and it requires a theoretical grounding and academic reflection. The approach of “applied research”, whereby the focus of research is directed towards its usage as a foundation for strategic decision-making in newsrooms (Meier 2011), was also examined. This type of integrative research allows for a worthwhile transfer between theory and practice.

In this context, our study also examined current issues and changes in the media industry. One of them is the relationship between the professions of journalism and public relations (PR). While the understanding of these two fields is different, there are also overlaps in knowledge and skill requirements for journalists and PR officers (Skjerdal/Ngugi 2007: 182). Thus, while a specialised education should be separate, basic education in the same department could be an option. Moreover, cross-mediality (“the connection of the individual channels” in one institution) requires a systematic

approach and changes in editorial organisation, which in turn require specific training and knowledge (Bruns/Luque 2015).

Considering these theoretical aspects and insights as well as current developments in media and journalism, university-based education offers a unique answer to today's media in fragile states and its challenges. Higher education can offer an integrative and holistic journalism education as its duration and long-term character provide room for comprehensive theoretical and practical training, including reflection. Moreover, the infrastructure and political status of universities make suitable handling of financial resources possible and form an institutional authority that can shape media policies (Hume 2007: 43). Along with the other insights into the knowledge required in journalism education at the tertiary level as described, the focus was then deriving goals for journalism education from literature to determine the elements required for reformed journalism education.

Objectives for a university-based journalism education: Qualifications and competencies

Journalists require concrete qualifications and competencies to be able to perform their job according to Nowak (2007). Nowak (2007: 101) proposes that qualification objectives encompass basic expertise and methodological skills (such as providing information in a media-appropriate manner), goals for producing journalistic quality and general goals, such as ethical behaviour, which are especially important in journalism. Honningfort (1990: 272) summarises areas for qualifications required in university-based journalism education, including practical relevance, social sciences, specialised knowledge, communication science and the integration of theory and practice.

Competencies, on the other hand, which are defined as the ability to analyse an environment and its actions, link them to concepts and translate them into functional action, enabling students to achieve qualification goals (Nowak 2007: 82). In a fundamental and indicatory competency model, Weischenberg et al. (1994) point to four areas of competence, which include professional competence, subject-specific competence, presentation competence and social orientation. In Weischenberg's model, professional competence focuses on instrumental skills of investigation, selection, editing and editorial organisation as well as expertise in media and communication studies. Presentation competence relates to rhetorical skills and choosing a media-specific, topic-oriented and recipient-oriented form of presentation, whereas subject-specific competence not only serves the purpose of specialisation but also the navigation of society through scientific knowledge and knowledge of the cultural environment. Social orientation relates to reflective journalistic action, including ethics and consciousness. Hanitzsch (1999) adds the field of technical

competence, while Meier (2011) adds organisational competence. Moreover, Nowak (2007) established the area of basic key competencies as a foundation for subject-specific competencies. These and other competency models (for more details, see Josephi 2010; Schmidt 2015: 15) form the basis of a five-dimensional structure, largely based on Weischenberg et al. (1994). They characterise journalistic education, including the areas of professional competence, subject-specific competence, presentation competence, organisational competence and social orientation. These competencies must be considered when determining the elements to include in reformed journalism education at the tertiary level.

Interim conclusion: Elements of journalism education programmes on a tertiary level and recommendations for their implementation

Based on these theoretical considerations, a model of journalism education was developed, which is comprised of three core elements. As described, journalism training should follow a dual education model, connecting both theoretical and practical aspects. First, this means that subjects of the theory part of a course need to be determined, including professional competencies in the field of journalism and communication as well as subject-specific competence. Second, objects of the practical part of a course must be addressed, including internal and external university education. Third, necessary structural, legal, technical and personnel requirements need to be taken into consideration.

Subjects of theoretical education should be derived from relevant journalistic competencies. Based on the findings in the literature described, an individual multi-dimensional model for journalistic competencies covering six areas was developed: *professional competence, subject-specific competence, presentation competence, organisational competence, social orientation and mediation competence.*

First, *professional competence* refers to the instrumental skills of investigation, selection, editing and organisation as well as professional expertise. The latter includes knowledge of communication and media science (theories, methods and current research results), knowledge of the media system (history, policy, economics and ethics) and insights into media operations and the production process. This enables students to evaluate developments in the media market and their own work as a basis for ethical, functional, reflective and autonomous journalism and further research.

Second, *subject-specific competence* relates to departmental knowledge in a sector-specific field, such as sociology, political science, law or history, forming the basis for later specialisation. This includes scientific methods and professional knowledge of the subject so that students can cover their chosen area. Equally important is orientation knowledge, such as basic social sciences, and English skills, as originally presented in Weischenberg's model.

Third, *presentation competence* refers to rhetorical skills, such as presentation, as well as expertise and skills in the fields of technology and cross-mediality. This refers to knowledge of commonly used tools, such as Internet-based or computer software, and of special technology, such as electronic editing systems or photo editing. Students must also understand the possibilities of different media forms and learn, for example, how to operate multiple channels and to use specific presentation techniques.

Fourth, *organisational competence* enables students to organise editorship and ensure quality and understand how different media forms and concepts connect to specific target groups. This also needs to include expertise on current economic structures and journalism in the corresponding country.

Fifth, *social orientation* relates to reflections on journalistic actions and the cultural environment it is embedded in. On the one hand, it includes the components of functional awareness, media and professional ethics and autonomy awareness. Journalists need to be aware of their role in society and to achieve a sense of autonomy. On the other hand, this area includes expertise in the specific history, culture and society of a country, which is important for role awareness.

Lastly, these dimensions must be extended by *mediation competence* as a new journalistic competence in fragile states, such as Afghanistan. The concept of mediation emphasises journalists' role as contributors to national development and social harmony in the social transformation of their country. Mediation can be understood as a negotiation between parties based on different ideological and democratic starting points, where the neutral mediator supports mutual communication through solution-oriented action to solve an existing conflict (Haft 2002). By systematically integrating mediation competence into journalism education, a gap in existing models in developing countries is closed. The concept of mediation can be applied to three components. First, the field of journalism and development focuses on how journalism can support human development founded on democracy and human rights. Second, conflict-reporting techniques that avoid contributing to conflict and integrate objective reporting can be explored. Third, learning about intercultural communication enables students to reflect on their social milieu and raises awareness of cultural diversity.

In addition to theoretical aspects, journalism education should also include practical aspects, as presented. Because advanced criteria for the integration of theory and practice have not yet been developed in journalism studies in Afghanistan, it was deemed important that the new model should provide it. Concerning the subjects of practical training in journalism education, an international comparison led to the inclusion of compulsory internships in an editorial training desk at university that reflect editorial experience and simulate classroom practice, accompanied by experienced lecturers from the field.

Moreover, the implementation of reformed journalism education at the tertiary level requires different resources. These include *human resources*, professionalisation and qualification and a willingness from lecturers to be innovative in their instruction. *Material and technical resources* in the form of textbooks and technical equipment are needed for theoretical as well as practical education, such as an editorial training desk, student publications or real-life media projects. *Contractual and institutional resources* can be summarised in terms of cooperation with the media industry and journalist associations to organise integrated internships, external lecturers, a networked group of universities, media practice, politics and a subject-specific professional association above the level of higher education. *Legal regulations* must be put in place by the institution responsible, which, for example, includes restrictions on admissions.

To ensure that the implementation of the model could work in a specific context, a needs and feasibility assessment with relevant experts was conducted as part of the study.

Obtaining empirical data from the field: Needs and feasibility assessment

The project's central premise was to construct a reform model for journalism education not only based on international literature and external findings from an "outsider" perspective but also offering a potential reform plan that gives consideration to social and cultural value orientations, structural conditions and interests and the expectations and opportunities of the stakeholders involved in the reform process. This premise manifested itself in a needs and feasibility assessment based on 45 interviews with Afghan experts in media studies, media policy, higher education policy and media practice, following the strategy of participatory action research (PAR).

Research approach

The PAR approach rests on two perspectives. First, the term "participatory" means that persons in the field are viewed not only as research objects but are also given the role of "co-researchers" (von Unger 2014). Persons, groups and institutions involved are those affected by the research topic and its expected results. Stakeholders in different fields related to journalism education on a tertiary level in Afghanistan will be directly affected by the project and its recommendations. Second, the PAR approach focuses on developing a strategy for solving a specific problem, i.e. taking "action" concerning a certain situation. The problem is established and reflected upon, which leads to a research question being asked and marks the beginning of the PAR research process. Subsequently, data are collected, reflected on and analysed to solve this problem. The purpose of the study was to assess the current state of journalism education on a tertiary level in Afghanistan, which postulated the problem, and to identify needs and

expectations for improving education both inside and outside state universities. This meant seeking assessments of theoretical and practical training objects and opinions from experts involved in this reform as well as experience and recommendations for steps regarding coordination and sequence.

Sample and procedure

Forty-five interviews were conducted with experts in journalism education from mid-February 2017 to the end of May 2017 via Skype. The sample was comprised of an expert group of (a) 20 university and college teachers, (b) five representatives of regional and national higher education policy, (c) 15 managers of regional media organisations (press, radio, public relations, news agency, online services) and (d) five executive boards of regional and national professional journalism associations. As previous theoretical research has shown, the model for the reform of journalism education must consist of three core elements: subjects of theoretical education, subjects of practical education and resources for implementation.

Accordingly, the survey itself was developed in three parts. Each part of the survey contained a detailed explanation and a guide with 35 to 55 questions. The survey first asked about the general function of media and journalism in Afghanistan. In the second part, co-researchers were asked about theoretical and practical skills in journalism that should be offered to students in higher education. The third part dealt with the implementation of solutions and suggestions for improving journalistic training. In the pre-testing process, the survey guidelines were adapted at various points. They were extended and made more complex to improve comprehension and to bridge local and cultural distances. Moreover, the survey was differentiated according to the different expert groups. Those with an academic background were interviewed on all three topics, whereas representatives of media practice and university politics were especially and predominantly questioned on the third topic. Each interview lasted for one to three hours and was conducted in either Pashto or Dari. They were recorded, transcribed and translated into English. The answers were evaluated with the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA.

Connecting the dots: A reform plan for journalism education in Afghanistan

We now present the concrete target models for the practical implementation of a bachelor's programme in journalism, a master's programme in communication science and a programme for further education of Afghan journalists that were developed based on the results of the literature and expert interviews. Our empirical data suggested recommendations for curricula in development communication and public relations. To design a plan for the implementation of the reform, the fundamental measures that

must be taken are now highlighted. Subsequently, they will be put together to lay out a step-by-step reform plan.

The findings of the empirical data were evaluated in a SWOT analysis by differentiating *Strengths* and *Weaknesses* of Afghan journalism education along with the *Opportunities* and *Threats* or *Risks*.

Concerning the *Strengths* of the Afghan journalism education system, it was found that a major advantage lay in the positive attitudes of stakeholders towards the reform of journalism education. In terms of *Weaknesses*, the Afghan discipline of communication science needed to be strengthened to keep pace with international developments, including publications and associations. When specifically examining the existing bachelor's programme, it was found that theoretical and methodological subjects in communication science needed to keep pace with the international standard as well and that practical education elements should be extended. The study also showed that the academic, didactic and foreign language competencies of teaching staff should be strengthened. Moreover, in terms of equipment and staff, appropriate technical media equipment and service personnel resources should be invested in, and cooperation between universities and media practice needed strengthening. Regarding *Opportunities*, the study showed that Afghanistan's liberal legislation and flexible structures are advantageous and should simplify the implementation of the reform steps. In media institutions, and among faculties and lecturers, people aspired and were willing to change on the administrative level. *Risks* for Afghan journalism education are posed by different factors according to the study. Political uncertainty in the country and a lack of financial means are two factors. Moreover, it is considered necessary to raise the level of lecturers' qualifications to improve the quality of teaching. In terms of legal and administrative regulations, some challenges should be considered: decisions and measures are multifaceted and will affect other faculties and disciplines within universities. Imports and exports of curricula content must be regulated. The number of current admissions of students per academic year poses a great challenge as it does not match a didactically reasonable size for practical exercises within universities or internship positions available in the media industry. Journalism and professional occupations in the media are popular subjects among students, which is why restrictions on admissions are necessary. This information from the needs and feasibility assessment made it possible to compile concrete target models for the practical implementation of reformed journalism education programmes in higher education.

Models for journalism education at Afghan universities

When considering target models for specific programmes, the professionalisation of journalism education needs to be able to offer specific academic-theoretical and vocational-practical training while focusing on the educational objectives of a

normative role model and organisational leadership in journalism. This must be set against the backdrop of the profession's functions on the national and cultural levels. Journalism education should aim at shaping an elite that will positively influence and benefit society and general welfare, the media market and other journalists. The study concept for a bachelor's programme follows the theoretical competency model described, including a focus on training for mediation competence, while connecting theory and practice in a unique way. Thus, it comprises the three educational areas of theoretical journalism, practical journalism and communication science complemented by in-depth specialist knowledge in the form of a compulsory elective and basic skills in social sciences. Educational areas can be grouped into modules comprised of different units (see *Table 1*). Compulsory electives should be aligned with these units, such as sociology or political science. Special subjects, such as religion, languages and IT, will be regulated in the guidelines for the bachelor's programme in communication science/ media science at state universities in Afghanistan. An editorial training desk, where students can learn editorial procedures, teamwork and journalistic craftsmanship in practice as well as be responsible for the institute's own publications, and an integrated internship will be central elements of the practical side of the course. The suggested model only prescribes about 60–70% of the curriculum content, leaving the remaining content to the university itself, considering local differences.

The main aim of this programme is the theoretical and practical education of prospective journalists. The graduates should be able to solve professional and journalistic problems independently and creatively based on the academic and practical skills they acquire. They will be recognised as fully trained journalists by professional journalist associations and will be expected to take on functions within the field of journalism in Afghanistan.

Table 1: Recommendation for a bachelor's study programme in journalism

Journalism science	Journalism	Communication science
<p>1. Basics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction: Fields and Theories - Introduction: Profession of Journalism - Functions, Roles, Self-Images, etc. - Media System of Afghanistan: History and Structure <p>2. Norms & Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media Law in Afghanistan: Principles and Norms, New Developments, Religion and Journalism - Ethics of Journalism – In-Depth Focus <p>3. International Journalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International Media Systems - Foreign Reporting <p>4. Organisation and Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newsroom Management - Media/Internet Economics - Digital Transformation of Media <p>5. Special Methods of Journalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigative Journalism <p>6. Preparation and Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation Undergraduate Dissertation - Preparation Internship - Undergraduate Colloquium - Reflection on Traineeship <p>7. Undergraduate Dissertation</p>	<p>1. Forms of journalistic Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - News, Report, Comment, Interview, Feature <p>2. Introduction to Journalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Print Journalism - Online Journalism - Radio Journalism - Television Journalism - Cross-Media Journalism <p>3. Editorial Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Print e.g. Production of an Edition of a Student/University Magazine - Radio/Television e.g. Production of a Radio/Television Programme <p>4. Journalistic Projects on specialist topics (e.g. Journalistic Challenges in Afghanistan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (1) Report: Social Inequalities - (2) Mediation in Journalism in a multi-ethnic Society - (3) Investigation: Politics and Journalism - (4) Narration: Native Culture & Enculturation <p>5. Traineeship</p>	<p>1. Basics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction: Research Field and Theories, Process of Communication - Professional Fields in Public Communication: Advertising, Public Relations, Social Media - Relation to Journalism - Communication History of Afghanistan <p>2. Methods of Empirical Communication Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Methods of Empirical Communication - Research: Content Analysis, Interview - Statistics Basics - In-Depth Focus on Statistics: Data Analysis <p>3. Public, Distribution, Media Use and Media Effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publics and Public Opinion: - Theories, Models, Development in Afghanistan - Distribution of Information: Theories, Models and Research Results Media and Verbal Communication, esp. in Afghanistan - Media Use and Media Effects: Theories, Models and Research Results - Media Use and Media Evaluation in Afghanistan <p>4. History of Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of Communication of Afghanistan

Source: Own table

The master's study programme in communication science will teach students about structures, processes, content, use and impact as well as the history of public media and interpersonal communication (see *Table 2*). This program can only be studied with a previous BA degree in media and journalism. It focuses more on scientific content and less on cultural context. The training in the core subject will encompass core areas in the discipline of communication science/ public communication/ journalism embedded in the three modules of theory, method and application. Students will learn to evaluate the quality of research results in the subject of communication science according to scientific criteria and to conduct independent research.

Table 2: Recommendation for a master's study programme in communication science at universities in Afghanistan

1st Academic Year						
1	Main Areas					
	Empirical Communication Science	Media Economics & Media Studies	History of Media & Media Culture		Elective	Religion
	Theory Module Communication, Media, Society Perspectives of Communication Science 4 CH / 15 CP Lecture (by various speakers) + Exam					
30 CP	Scientific Theory and Theories: Basic Theories of Social Science and Theories of Communication Science 4 CH / 15 CP Lecture (by various speakers) + Exam					
2	Methods Module 1 Methodology & Methods of Empirical Communication Research Data Collection 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial		Methods Module 1 Methodology & Methods of Media Economy Media Analysis 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial	Methods Module 1 Methodology of Hermeneutics Sources of Media History and Media Culture 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial	Elective	Religion
	Application Module 1 Research Project 1 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial		Application Module 1 Research Project 1 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial	Application Module 1 Research Project 1 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial		
30 CP						

2nd Academic Year					
3	Empirical Communication Science	Media Economics & Media Structures	History of Media & Media Culture	Elective	Religion
	Methods Module 2 Methodology & Methods of Empirical Communication Science Data Evaluation 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial	Methods Module 2 Methodology & Methods of Media Economy Media Statistics 2CH/10CP Seminar + Tutorial	Methods Module 2 Methodology of Hermeneutics Quantitative Methods of Communication Science 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial		
	Application Module 2 Research Project 2 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial	Application Module 2 Research Project 2 2CH/10CP Seminar + Tutorial	Application Module 2 Research Project 2 2 CH / 10 CP Seminar + Tutorial		
30 CP					
4	Graduate Colloquium 2 CH / 5 CP	Graduate Thesis Selectively in the Foci Empirical Communication Science Media Economics & Media Structures Media History & Media Culture 25 CP			
30 CP					

Source: Own table

The main aim of this academic programme is for students to acquire theoretical and methodological education in the disciplines of communication science/ public communication/ journalism. A master's programme in communication science will prepare prospective journalists for leading positions in the media industry or at state institutions as well as for further qualifications, such as a PhD. It will qualify young academics at universities as well as lecturers and professors, which is an important prerequisite for the reform of journalism education. In the particular case of Afghanistan, a master's programme at a national university has yet to be introduced, so establishing such a programme will offer students the opportunity to obtain their education in their home country without the need to go abroad.

Third, practising journalists must be able to obtain a science-oriented qualification. Technological innovations as well as editorial, structural and organisational changes are examples of how the profession of journalism has transformed over the past few years and demonstrate the rapid dynamics of the field. Journalists' practical experience must therefore be extended. This can be achieved by updating their technical

knowledge in both theoretical and practical areas connected to media and journalism and by adding to specialised knowledge from respective sciences, such as society, politics and culture. An annual multi-day course is a possible way to acquire this knowledge, which could be planned, organised and staged as a communal task by the discipline of communication science/ public communication/ journalism at state universities in cooperation with professional journalism associations and media institutions (see *Table 3*). The recommended concept is a two-day event (with an additional day for travelling). The event can always be lengthened by one or several days according to needs, situations and possibilities. Organisers should select the venue best suited to the event: it could be an advantage to locate it in the capital city or to change the venue annually to other state university locations.

Table 3: Recommendation for the further education of practising journalists in Afghanistan

	1. Day	2. Day	3. Day
9:00-10:15 10:15-11:30 11:30-12:45	Arrival	Professional Knowledge 1 Professional Experts with Key Issues, e.g.: Expectations of Practical Field towards Journalism Education 1. Lecture + Discussion 2. Lecture + Discussion 3. Lecture + Discussion	Subject-Specific Knowledge Technical Experts with Key Issues, e.g.: Nation-Building in Afghanistan: Progress or Decline? 1. Lecture + Discussion 2. Lecture + Discussion 3. Lecture + Discussion
3:00-4:15 4:15-5:30 5:30-6:45	Welcoming, Experts in Communication Science and the Professional Field Cooperation: Journalists and Further Education: Tasks, Organisation and Perspective Walkthrough	Professional Knowledge 2 Professional Experts with Key Issues, e.g.: Communication Science: Education, Goals, Content, Professional Field, Challenges 1. Lecture + Discussion 2. Lecture + Discussion 3. Lecture + Discussion Walkthrough	Departure

Source: Own table

The empirical data suggested that introducing development communication and public relations programmes will prove useful for education in Afghanistan in the field of communication and resulted in recommendations for courses accordingly. The discipline of development communication will qualify people to support and to foster developmental processes in Afghanistan. In developing and transforming countries such as Afghanistan, development communication (i.e. supporting positive social

change and fostering national consciousness and unity) has great significance. Students can learn how to use available communication strategies to strengthen an understanding of national development and identity. The key goal will be to focus on how communication can bring about social and behavioural change and specifically on how to use digital and traditional communication to promote it (more in Kutsch/Hamidi 2020: 111).

Practitioners in public relations who communicate with the population via the mass media need to be able to navigate internal and public communication in enterprises, organisations or public authorities and to develop a positive image. Students of public relations need to learn how to choose a suitable media form and channel for the respective target group, which is especially important in a culturally and linguistically diverse country like Afghanistan (more in Kutsch/ Hamidi 2020: 111). After giving recommendations and constructing concrete models for the different programmes, we now discuss the concrete means and processes of implementation.

Transformation plan for reforming journalism education in Afghanistan

A transformation plan to reform journalism education at the university level was developed by pointing towards fundamental measures that should be taken. The step-by-step reform plan is introduced in this section.

Fundamental measures were allocated to different structural levels. *Institutional initiatives and decisions*, for example, are related to the integration of reformed courses into existing education structures at universities, introducing admission restrictions and the integration of a community of Afghan experts. Second, measures in terms of *organisational and technical requirements* were identified, including changes in didactics, the alignment of the curriculum, creating technical facilities at university and contracts with the media industry. *Structural, legal, technical and personnel requirements* are also necessary, such as addressing individual lecturers to invest in better subject-specific qualifications, foreign languages and active research. We found that state universities can each focus on a particular specialisation in communication education, such as journalism, public relations or further professional training, and can offer a relevant programme, which would prove useful in terms of resources and capabilities.

Regarding a step-by-step plan for implementation, it became clear that the transformation of journalism education will be a long-term process, estimated to take between eight and 10 years. Therefore, a schedule was developed in two units of two years and a subsequent unit of four years. For each phase, actions were differentiated on the following levels:

(1) Ministry of Higher Education/MHE in Afghanistan, University and Faculty Management and National Commission of Curricula, (2) institutes and faculties for

journalism and public communication in Afghanistan, (3) the academic qualification of lecturers, (4) the university or institute, (5) institute lecturers, (6) the curriculum of the bachelor's programme, (7) the technological infrastructure of the institute, (8) media corporations and (9) journalists and journalist associations.

On the level of the (1) ministry and administration, the first two years should focus on making policy decisions concerning the introduction of dual journalism education. In addition, the search for international partners for a master's programme abroad, a joint provisional online master's programme, international grants for the further education of lecturers abroad and teaching resources are all important at this stage. Over the following two years, these decisions and plans should show tangible results. During the second half of the transformation process, these aspects must be more in-depth, and a master's programme should be implemented in Afghanistan.

(2) Institutes and faculties of journalism and public communication in Afghanistan first need to make policy decisions regarding the introduction of specialisation areas at different state universities as well as cooperation in and outside of the university, which should show results in the following two years. During the second half of the process, they should also focus on having cooperation with institutions abroad.

In the areas of (3) the academic qualification of lecturers, the introduction of practical exercises from lecturers in journalistic practice and the release of lecturers for further qualification at foreign universities, these items must first be planned and allowed for and then put into practice. To achieve this, international grants must be provided.

(4) Individual universities need to create a development and planning commission for the transformation process, draw up contracts with the media industry regarding internships and resolve technical and personnel issues, especially for setting up editorial training desks. By the second half of the process at the latest, this should be put into practice.

(5) Lecturers at respective universities and institutes must focus on improving their subject-specific knowledge, English and didactic skills. During the third and fourth year, they should implement didactic methods to include forms of joint work when discussing academic issues with students, while in the second half of the process, they should also become members of professional associations.

On the level of the (6) curriculum, the first two years should include policy decisions regarding the integration of an internship and the change in teaching subjects and curriculum content, including teaching imports from other subject disciplines, which will be strengthened in the following years.

On the level of (7) technological infrastructure, first, financial resources for creating editorial training facilities and hiring practitioners must be acquired, and subsequently, facilities must be created and practitioners hired.

(8) Media corporations need to create a basis for further in-house training of professionals and providing internship places for students, followed by introducing the training itself and creating internship guidelines, including pay arrangements.

Lastly, (9) journalists and associations should be aware of and influence the reform as well as determine the necessary training for the profession, differentiate professional positions and agree upon pay and holiday regulations and social benefits. All these stakeholders must contribute to the long-term reform of journalism education in Afghanistan on a tertiary level.

Conclusion

Based on extensive research of the relevant literature and a needs and feasibility survey of stakeholders involved in reforming journalism education in Afghanistan on a tertiary level, the project “Professionalisation of Journalism Education on a Tertiary Level in Afghanistan” proposes models for a reformed bachelor’s programme, a master’s programme and a further training programme for professionals along with suggestions for study programmes in development communication and public relations, as presented in this article. It concludes with guidelines for the long-term implementation of these models followed by a step-by-step plan. It was found that journalism education on a tertiary level needs to be specifically tailored to the local and cultural context, pointing to Afghanistan’s state of rapid transformation and an awareness of religious and cultural values. Mediation competence is key to the role of journalists in their support of national development in transforming societies.

Because the project combines an extensive study of current international research alongside a needs and feasibility assessment of local experts and stakeholders, it can be viewed as a template for developing a reform programme for journalism education on a tertiary level in countries that find themselves in a similar situation as Afghanistan—of social transformation and rapid media development. Cross-cultural cooperation with external expert communities and the introduction of an “outsider” perspective create added value in such a project, as the study shows. At the same time, local expertise and insights are fundamental elements and form the basis of this process. Future projects of this kind can foster development and innovation in local contexts as well as strengthen global exchange in the field of communication science, journalism education and the media industry.

References

- Arnold, A. K., & Schneider, B. (2007). Communicating separation? Ethnic media and ethnic journalists as institutions of integration in Germany. *Journalism*, 8(2), 115–136.
- Barrera, C. (2012). Transatlantic views on journalism education before and after World War II. *Journalism Studies*, 13(4), 534–549.
- Bruns, B., & Luque, J. (2015). *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/20488>

- Drüeke, R. (2018). Medien, Öffentlichkeit und Demokratie: Zur Watchdog-Funktion von Medien. *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen*, 31(3), 19-28.
- Gerhards, J., & Schäfer, M. S. (2010). Is the internet a better public sphere? Comparing old and new media in the USA and Germany. *New Media & Society*, 12(1), 143-160.
- Haft, F. (Ed.) (2002). *Handbuch Mediation*. München.
- Hamidi, K. (2013). Zwischen Information und Mission. Journalisten in Afghanistan. Berufliche Merkmale, Einstellungen und Leistungen. Leipzig.
- Hamidi, K. (2015). Transformation der Mediensysteme in fragilen Staaten am Fallbeispiel Afghanistan. *Global Media Journal - German Edition*, 5(2). https://www.db-thueringen.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/dbt_derivate_00032879/GMJ10_Hamidi_final.pdf
- Hanitzsch, T. (1999). Journalistenausbildung in Indonesien. Bedingungen, Ziele, Strukturen und Inhalte. Leipzig (Universität Leipzig: Unveröffentlichte Magisterarbeit).
- Hanitzsch, T. (2004). Journalismus in Indonesien. Akteure, Strukturen, Orientierungshorizonte, Journalismuskulturen. Wiesbaden.
- Hanitzsch, T., & Seethaler, J. (2010). Journalismuswelten, Ein Vergleich von Journalismuskulturen in 17 Ländern. *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 57(4), 464-484.
- Hjarvard, S. (2008). The Mediatization of Society. *Nordicom Review*, 29(2), 102-131.
- Honnigfort, B. (1990). Nichtsköner, Allesköner, Fachidioten? Kritische Anmerkungen zu den Lernzielkatalogen der Journalistik. In S. Weischenberg (Ed.). *Journalismus & Kompetenz. Qualifizierung und Rekrutierung für Medienberufe* (pp. 271-281). Opladen.
- Hume, E. (2007). University Journalism Education: A Global Challenge. A Report to the Centre for International Media Assistance. Washington. https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CIMA-University_Journalism_Education-Report.pdf
- Joseph, B. (Ed.) (2010). *Journalism Education in Countries with Limited Media Freedom*. New York.
- Kasoma, K. (1999). The Neo-Multiparty Theory Of The Press, Donor And Other Influences On The Media In Africa (Professorial Inaugural Lectures No. 5). Zambia.
- Khan, A. U. (2004). Profile of journalists in Peshawar. Leipzig.
- Kunczik, M. (1985). *Massenmedien und Entwicklungsländer*. Köln.
- Kutsch, A., & Hamidi, K. (2020). Dual journalism education. Recommendations for the reform of journalism education at state universities in Afghanistan in particular for the Faculty of Journalism and Public Communication at Nangarhar University. Leipzig University. Leipzig.
- Macdonald, I. (2006). Teaching journalists to save the profession. *Journalism Studies*, 7(5), 745-764.
- Massey, B., & Chang, L. (2002). Locating Asian values in Asian journalism: A content analysis of web newspapers. *Journal of Communication*, 52, 987-1003.
- Meier, K. (2011). *Journalistik* (2nd ed.). Konstanz.
- Mensing, D. (2010). Rethinking (again) the future of journalism education. *Journalism Studies*, 11(4), 511-523.
- Meyen, M. (2005). Massenmedien. In J. Hüther, & B. Schorb (Eds.). *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik* (pp. 226-233). München.
- Namra, A. (2004). Development journalism vs. "envelopment" journalism. <http://www.countercurrents.org/hr-namra190404>
- Nowak, E. (2007). Qualitätsmodell für die Journalistenausbildung. Kompetenzen, Ausbildungswege, Fachdidaktik. Dortmund. <http://eldorado.tu-dortmund.de:8080/bitstream/2003/24721/2/Dissertation.pdf>
- Ramaprasad, J., & Hamdy, N. (2006). Functions of Egyptian Journalists: Perceived Importance and Actual Performance. *International Communication Gazette*, 68(2), 167-185.
- Ramaprasad, J., & Rahman, M. (2006). Tradition with a twist. A survey of Bangladeshi journalists. *International Communication Gazette*, 68(2), 148-165.

- Schmidt, C. (Ed.) (2015). *Standards of Journalism Education: An International Comparative Study in the Context of Media and Development*. Leipzig.
- Skjerdal, T. S., & Ngugi, C. M. (2007). Institutional and governmental challenges for journalism education in East Africa. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 28(1-2), 176-190.
- Weischenberg, S., Löffelholz, M., & Scholl, A. (1994). Merkmale und Einstellungen von Journalisten. *Media Perspektiven*, (4), 154-167.
- Weischenberg, S., Malik, M., & Scholl, A. (2006). *Die Souffleure der Mediengesellschaft. Report über die Journalisten in Deutschland*. Konstanz.
- von Unger, H. (2014). *Partizipative Forschung: Einführung in die Forschungspraxis*. Wiesbaden.