

From Analog to Digital:

Broadcast Curricula in Colleges and Universities of Six Continents in the 21st Century

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Paper presented to the Curriculum Division of the 2006 Broadcast Education Association conference (Las Vegas, April, 2006).

Abstract

This study compares and contrasts broadcast curricula in higher education institutions in the U.S., Britain, Korea, South Africa, Argentina, the Netherlands, Singapore, Japan, Greece, Egypt, and Canada. Broadcast curricula of 112 U.S., 122 British, 67 Korean, 18 South African, 11 Argentine, nine Dutch, eight Singaporean, 126 Japanese, four Greek, four Egyptian, and 40 Canadian colleges and universities are content analyzed. Of the 11, U.S., British, Argentine, and Egyptian institutions feature the balanced mix of theory and skills courses. Korean university curricula are least balanced, due to employment practices of Korean broadcasters that are unique among the eleven countries studied. The curricula of South African institutions are similar with Britain by stressing cultural studies. Dutch institutions adopt the convergence of media by offering new media marketing, policy, and cultural studies. While Japanese universities maintain balanced programs, the number of broadcast journalism programs is limited and the programs lack Media Law, Ethics, and Policy courses. Canadian schools demonstrate an integrated model of broadcast curricula in the digital era with an emphasis on media convergence. A model core curriculum applicable to programs in all eleven countries is proposed.

Statement of Problem

Across the world, higher education in radio-television is in transition as electronic media rapidly evolve and enhance from analog to digital. Such change not only stems from transitions in higher education per se This study examines the radio-television, or broadcast, curricula of colleges and universities in the U.S., Britain, Korea, South Africa, Argentina, the Netherlands, Singapore, Japan, Greece, Egypt, and Canada in order to discover how these curricula are configured to respond to the evolution of media technology and how they resemble and differ from one another.

This study instantiates a perspective on broadcast higher education that could be called global, even though the number and choice of nations sampled is random but small regarding number and nonrandom and convenient regarding choice. As a result of literature review on broadcast education philosophy and a history of each country's college journalism programs, the following research questions are asked:

- R1. What is the present status of broadcast curricula at colleges and universities in the U.S., Britain, Korea, South Africa, Argentina, the Netherlands, Singapore, Japan, Greece, Egypt, and Canada?
- R2. How do these resemble and differ from one another in the digital age?

Method and Research Procedures

Higher education broadcast curricula in eleven nations were content analyzed. Three- and four-year higher educational institutions in all eleven nations were sampled. catalogs from 520 colleges and universities were content analyzed (112 from the U.S., 122 from Britain, 66 from Korea, 18 from South Africa, 11 from Argentina, nine from the Netherlands, eight from Singapore, 126 from Japan, four from Greece, four from Egypt, and 40 from Canada).

The particulars of majors and courses in, and even titles of, academic departments offering broadcast instruction differ wildly. The term "core" as used by U.S. and Canadian institutions appears to carry the same meaning as the term "mandatory modules" in Britain, South Africa, and Singapore, and "required [for the] major" in Korean, Argentine, Japanese, Greek, and Egyptian catalogs. The unit of analysis is the course descriptions obtained from printed or online catalogs.

Courses described in catalogs or other materials were categorized as either theoretical or practical. "Theoretical" refers to those courses that focus on such liberal arts topics as theory per se, history, and philosophy. "Practical" refers to those courses that teach students broadcasting skills, such basic television production, video editing, or broadcast newswriting. Two Americans; two Hispanic graduate assistants; and one Japanese trained graduate student categorized the data in different languages. The percentage of agreement between their categorizations, the average coefficient of reliability, was 97.3%.

Summary of Findings

Students in all eleven countries take coursework in radio and television under varied names for majors, or titles. In the U.S. sample the title used most frequently for broadcast majors is "Broadcasting" (17%). "Radio/Television" follows (11%) with "Mass Communication" and "Telecommunication" tied for third (8%).

The analysis of British colleges and universities in 2004 shows how the institutions emphasize practical education compared to the analysis done a decade ago. Almost all schools offered media production major or multimedia design major as a degree.

Major titles at Korean universities deviated little from "Communication" or "Mass Communication." Coursework stressed history, as shown in such courses as History of Broadcasting, History of Broadcasting in Korea, History of Broadcasting in the Western World, and History of Communication Thoughts.

Influenced by Britain, broadcast curricula at South African colleges and universities are relatively less devoted to practical courses than theoretical courses. Coursework emphasizes Communication Theory, Research Method, and Broadcast and Electronic Journalism.

Argentine institutions are prominently well balanced between theoretical and practical courses. Their coursework in broadcast majors focused on Communication Theory, Introduction to Journalism, Graphic Design, Research Method, Communication Laws, and Broadcast Practicum.

Broadcast curricula including new media technology in the Netherlands are summarized as "business oriented communication." Their programs exhibit an emphasis on marketing,

management, and programming, consultancy in the broadcast market, those of which are on the basis of cultural study, sociology, and philosophy.

Singaporean universities and polytechnics were more segmented than the other nine countries in broadcast program. Courses at Singaporean institutions were specified into several majors such as Mass Communication, Information Communication, Telecommunication, and Multimedia, all of which partly offered broadcast journalism courses.

Typical courses offered in the Japanese broadcast journalism programs include Introduction to Communication, Journalism History, Mass Media Research Method, and Journalism English.

Journalism and mass communication programs in Greece are not widely offered among universities. Only four of them had communication related departments and even two of which were joint programs with cultural technology and business management studies.

Egyptian universities are similar to U.S. broadcast curricula regarding the ratio of theoretical over practical courses. It was notable that Egyptian programs emphasized International Communication Studies including international news and issues. The programs required Media Law, Ethics, and News Writing. Interpersonal Communication was a core course at most of the universities analyzed.

The broadcast journalism programs in Canada analyzed in this study demonstrate that broadcast journalism programs are integrating into the digital era. Some broadcast journalism programs are not offered as an independent department but as courses in and joint programs with social science departments such as political science and sociology.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study was designed to compare and contrast higher education broadcast curricula in eleven selected countries. The extent to which each nation's typical curriculum stressed either theoretical or practical courses was compared to and contrasted with the others'. We found that typical broadcast curricula in each country varied from the others, with one prominent exception: All eleven typical curricula require introductory courses in both mass- and general communication. That exception aside, required coursework in Communication Law in the U.S. and Egypt, in Cultural Studies and Film Studies in Britain, in Mass Communication History in Korea and Japan, in General Communication Science in South Africa, in Graphic Design in Argentina, in Communication Marketing and Policy in the Netherlands, in The Information Communication and Society in Singapore and Canada differentiated each nation's typical curricula from the others'.

We found another commonality but at a higher level of generality: All 11 countries' typical curricula featured more theoretical courses than practical ones. Notwithstanding, U.S. British, and Egyptian broadcast curricula feature the highest percentage of all three of practical courses. Add to this, U.S. leadership in Professional Internships is noteworthy. We recommend that a core curriculum should reflect the change of broadcast education in the digital age. The curriculum is aimed at providing an integrated model of education program in the broadcast media.