Chapter 3
Diversity and the Media:
A Curriculum Examination and Proposal for Journalism and Mass Communication Education in Africa

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigated the curricula of journalism and mass communication programs in African universities. Sixty-seven programs in public and private universities located in all regions of the continent were examined. The major findings show that diversity and the media courses were taught in 58% of the sample. Programs in the sample from North Africa did not have the course or its equivalent. And, with the exception of Southern Africa, most of the programs in other regions of Africa mainly limit their diversity courses to gender issues. To better prepare journalism students for the coverage of a diverse world, this study recommends that diversity and the media courses be requirements in journalism and mass communication programs in Africa, with the courses expanded to include other elements of diversity such as social class, age/generation, race/ethnicity, religion, and geographical/ physical location.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter primarily ascertained whether or not journalism and mass communication programs in African universities incorporate courses that significantly prepare their students to meaningfully cover issues of diversity and inclusion in their teaching and training curricula. Several African scholars such as Dube and Rabe (2017) and Teer-Tomaselli (2016) have emphasized the need for universities in the continent to continuously reevaluate the focus of their pedagogy in grooming Africa's future journalists. In addition, there has been pertinent work by Phasha, Mahlo, and Dei (2017) and others regarding ongoing attempts in Africa to introduce and champion diversity and inclusion in journalism's educational curricula.

These calls are not only timely but important because Africa is an immensely diverse continent. Two salient "primordial makers" identified by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in its document, *Diversity Management in Africa: Findings from the African Peer Review Mechanism and a Framework for Analysis and Policy-Making* (2011), attest to the issue of diversity in the continent. One of the makers is language, which the document described as the "proxy for ethnic identity." The African Peer Review Mechanism's findings noted that there are 470 languages in Nigeria, 242 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 134 in North/South Sudan, and 89 in Ethiopia. On the other marker, which is about the economic structures in the continent, the document observed that, "The modes of production that prevail in the African continent range from fairly advanced capitalism, symbolized by modern banking systems and stock markets, to subsistence peasantry and pastoral systems." [1]

Africa is also diverse in other spheres outside language and economic structures. These include ethnicity, race, gender, age distribution and religion. As Akobo and Damisah (2018, p. 398) opined, albeit from a business management perspective but nevertheless relevant to journalism and mass communication, "Africa as a continent has multiple diversity dimensions" that need to be understood and promoted for effectiveness and efficiency in managing a workplace. These elements of diversity pose a challenge to constructive local and international media coverage and dissemination of issues in and about the continent.

Burns (2016, p. 221) noted that journalists around the world face challenges in their coverage of issues of global importance. The scholar observed, for instance, that in spite of the World Health Organization's 2011 declaration that about 15 percent of the world's population lives with some form of disability, "many aspiring journalists - or even established journalists for that matter - have had little engagement with PWD (people with disability)." This is a legitimate observation.

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