Bridging the gap between classroom and newsroom
Experiences from collaboration of capacity building in media and academia
Bridging the gap

between classroom and newsroom:

Experiences from collaboration of capacity building

in media and academia

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Fojo Media Institute
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Abstract

In spring of 2023 Fojo commissioned an internal report to map out the organisation’s past and present engagements with higher education institutions (HEIs) and academia. In autumn 2023 this report is being published as a Fojo Media Insight with the aim of sharing the organisational learning from these engagements with other organisations following a similar agenda. The mapping found three distinct but overlapping areas regarding these engagements:

1. Capacity building of universities and other HEIs, 
2. Academic collaborations, and 
3. HEI networks. 

The first area mainly concerns Fojo’s international projects and highlights the work Fojo has done to capacitate HEIs to improve the quality of education in journalism. The second area shows Fojo’s contributions to academic knowledge in the field of journalism and journalism education. Lastly, the third area deals with all the HEI networks that are both loosely and tightly bound to various Fojo-operations but have not yet yielded any formal academic output.

From the mapping, the report then outlines several opportunities for Fojo to deepen its engagement with HEIs and academia. One such opportunity is to utilise the untapped potential of the extensive HEI network that is currently not being explored. Furthermore, Fojo can improve at linking its engagements between projects, both in the international and Swedish operations. To increase the relevance of Fojo as an academic actor, one opportunity would be to increase the visibility of studies conducted within the scope of Fojo’s projects and in other collaborations. Fojo could also utilise the fact that the institute is tied to a Swedish university to much higher degree when it comes to applying for research funding.

The report concludes that Fojo has contributed to bridging the gap between classroom and newsroom in several countries over the past years but that is under utilising its somewhat unique position at the intersection of academia and media development. Should this improve, Fojo could aim at being at the forefront of academic fields such as sustainable journalism, fact-checking, and green media development.

Keywords: media development, academic partnerships, newsrooms, classrooms

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**List of Abbreviations**

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<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AJEN</td>
<td>African Journalism Educators’ Network</td>
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<td>CHARM</td>
<td>Consortium to protect and promote human rights and media freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<td>DESTIN</td>
<td>Journalism Education for Democracy in the Ukraine</td>
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<td>DiVA</td>
<td>Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet (Swedish Digital Scientific Archive)</td>
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<td>EJTA</td>
<td>European Journalism Training Association</td>
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<td>EUniWell</td>
<td>European University for Well-Being</td>
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<td>GMMP</td>
<td>Global Media Monitoring Project</td>
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<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
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<td>If-dem</td>
<td>Linnaeus University Knowledge Environment: A Questioned Democracy</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>IMS (1)</td>
<td>Linnaeus Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies</td>
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<td>IMS (2)</td>
<td>International Media Support</td>
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<td>ITP</td>
<td>International Training Program</td>
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<td>LMO</td>
<td>Linnaeus Media Observatory</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and Northern Africa</td>
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<td>MJ</td>
<td>Department for Media and Journalism, Linnaeus University</td>
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<td>NIRAS</td>
<td>Consultancy Firm Nielsen &amp; Rauschenberger, Denmark</td>
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<tr>
<td>SJC</td>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, University of Rwanda</td>
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<td>SJP</td>
<td>Sustainable Journalism Partnership</td>
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<td>SSE</td>
<td>Stockholm School of Economics</td>
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<td>WACC</td>
<td>World Association for Christian Communication</td>
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Preface – Andreas Önnerfors

Since 1972, Fojo Media Institute in Kalmar, Sweden, has been engaged in capacity building in the media sector nationally and abroad. Fojo’s name is an abbreviation of its core mission: “Institutet för Fortbildning av Journalister”, the institute for further education of (practicing professional) journalists. Over the past fifty years, this mission has constantly evolved. After 1990, Fojo extended its remit of capacity building outside Sweden, mainly to Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. Today, more than 80% of Fojo’s operations take place in international development programs.1 Due to Fojo’s proximity to the University College of Kalmar (established in 1977) and after its fusion with Växjö university to the newly formed Linnaeus university (LNU, since 2010) the issue of the institute’s academic affiliation received new salience. Fojo had to a certain extent always been a part of academic organizational structures in Kalmar, but in 2019 was firmly integrated within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of LNU. Given the fact that Fojo is dedicated to further education of individual journalists and in a wider sense capacity building of journalism, newsrooms, and diverse media ecosystems, synergies with the three focus areas of Swedish universities, higher education, research, and knowledge exchange remain to be explored carefully.

This issue of Fojo Media Insights is therefore concerned with Fojo’s experiences in capacity building at the intersection of media and academia, bridging the gap between classrooms and newsrooms, uniting research, and journalistic practice. A suitable first step was to map experiences working with academia and higher education institutions (HEIs). In 2023, Jonas Nyman gathered data for and wrote an internal report that now – with some slight amendments – is shared to a wider audience. We believe that the insights from this report not only can inform the design and remit of such collaborations in the future but also are an important reminder that media and academia on a worldwide scale face common challenges requiring increased collaboration. Benchmarking with other institutes following a similar agenda (such as the Erich-Brost-Institute for International Journalism at the Technical University Dortmund, Germany) highlights the potential that Fojo’s experiences also can be generalized and applied to other settings.

1. Introduction and background

Over the last couple of years Fojo has extended its contacts with researchers and educators across the globe. It is an important part of Fojo’s strategy and identity to work within the area of sustainable journalism. It also opens an opportunity to link work in Sweden closer to international programmes. It provides an opportunity for Fojo to strengthen its identity as a serious academic actor in the media development sector which can lead to increased trustworthiness. There is also a risk though, that if this work is not carried out diligently, organisational relevance and agility might be perceived as weak.

In order to make the most of said opportunities while also avoiding risks, Fojo is now doing its due diligence regarding its work with academia and higher education institutions (HEIs). In a first stage, this work includes mapping of Fojo’s current and previous engagements in this area, looking at their nature, as well as the results, impact, and synergies in and between these engagements. Data was gathered during 2023 through a systematic literature review of Fojo’s reports, and by conducting interviews.

Due to Fojo’s extensive catalogue of engagements with academia and HEIs, it has been necessary to divide the engagements into three separate areas to make the mapping easier to follow. Although these areas overlap in some cases, they do provide more clarity on the nature of each engagement. The three areas are:

- **Area I**: Capacity building of universities and other HEIs
- **Area II**: Academic collaborations
- **Area III**: HEI networks

3 Most of these reports have been available in full text on the digital platform of Swedish scientific publications by Zuhura Beshier, see DiVA, URL: diva.portal.org, accessed 2 November 2023.
2. Capacity building of universities and other HEIs

The largest category of Fojo’s engagements with academia and HEIs in terms of numbers is capacity building of universities and other HEIs. This category mainly concerns Fojo’s international programmes. For example, Fojo has previously been engaged with universities in this way in Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Belarus. And we have ongoing operations with universities in Bangladesh, Somalia, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe. A good example for this type of work is Anki Wood’s “Baseline Study: Fojo Media Institute project Capacity Building of the School of Journalism and Communication, University of Rwanda” from 2015. This baseline study was conducted within the inception phase of the project Capacity Building of the School of Journalism and Communication (SJC), to support SJC under the University of Rwanda. The findings rest mainly on eight brief background papers analysing the media context and the environment in which SJC operates. The key outputs consist of proposed logical framework for the programme including indicators and baseline values under each of the four outcomes. The system for measuring and evaluating of the progress under the indicators throughout the four-year programme is a second important output of this study.

Just as with all Fojo’s interventions, the nature of the capacity building is dependent on context and as such varies from engagement to engagement. On a general note, most of the capacity building initiatives deal with one or more of the following areas: curriculum reviews, training of teachers/lecturers, internships for students, and bringing in guest lecturers/speakers as experts on specifics themes. The common denominator here is trying to bring the classroom closer to the newsroom as we observe an increasing divide between journalism education and journalistic practice in many corners of the world today.

Thanks in part to Fojo’s work with capacity building, new curricula have been developed in for example Rwanda and Somalia. These curricula have been developed in collaboration with  

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industry representatives to make sure that the real needs of the media sector are filled. To this purpose, training of trainers/lecturers have also proven to be an effective method. In several Eastern European projects, training university and industry representatives together rendered a much better understanding for each other’s needs which has been very valuable for media development, especially in times where democratic decline is spreading fast.

Looking at synergies, several international projects have also used the expertise from courses within the Swedish operations. This has provided insights for international university partners in thematic areas such as fact-checking, climate journalism and trauma sensitive reporting, while also offering valuable experience for the Swedish lecturers. In this case, experience has been fed back to activities at LNU. In autumn 2023, an international master program in Media, Democracy and Human Rights was launched at the Department of Media and Journalism (MJ) at LNU, in which Fojo has been an active partner and has developed a 7,5-credit course on International Media Development. Another synergy can be found when looking at collaborations between projects. A lecturer exchange programme between universities in Rwanda, Somalia, and Ethiopia is currently ongoing where participants are able to share experiences as well as find possibilities for joint research, courses, and other academic endeavours. In general, Fojo is making strides when it comes to utilising synergy effects by increasingly using the full width of its operations, learning from past and present experiences on what is working in our projects and collaborations (and what is not). The advantages of being placed on the intersection between journalistic practice, production, and education (as well as media research) is a higher amount of agility and pragmatism.

3. Academic collaborations

This is an area where Fojo has increased its focus considerably over the past years. It somewhat overlaps (and complements) the point below (section 5) but focusses on the actual academic output of Fojo’s operations.

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9 Interview with Viktoria Menjoun, Fojo regional manager, 23 May 2023.


Fojo’s most comprehensive academic involvement in recent times is perhaps the progress made within the field of sustainable journalism, through the international non-governmental organization INGO “Sustainable Journalism Partnership” (SJP, under formation). Apart from furthering the academic concept itself, Fojo has contributed to two studies on the subject: “Appraising African sustainable journalism education and training as a model for the Global South” and “Towards sustainable journalism in Sub-Saharan Africa”.

The latter was supported by the “Consortium to protect and promote human rights and media freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa” CHARM, a programme where Fojo is partnering with Civicus and Witwatersrand University among others, in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa. It’s worth noting how vital the CHARM project has been for the academic anchoring of the SJP in sub-Saharan Africa, which shows how synergies can flourish in and between Fojo’s various operations. In 2023, Fojo also released a report on climate change journalism in South Africa that was an outcome of this collaboration. The report, authored by Enoch Sithole at the Wits Centre for Journalism (Witwatersrand, SA), was the first in Fojo’s re-established Study Series.

Another recent academic involvement includes contributions to the World Association for Christian Communication, WACC’s Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), which has been monitoring gender in media outlets globally since 1995. Additionally, through LNU, Fojo is a big part of the knowledge environment ‘A Questioned Democracy’ (If-dem), which is tackling issues of democratic decline through the perspectives of representation, media, and citizenship. Through If-dem, Fojo contributes to research, development of courses, and collaboration both in and outside LNU. It is also through LNU that Fojo is taking part in forming the Linnaeus Media Observatory (LMO) together with the MJ and the Linnaeus Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies (IMS 1) among others. The purpose of LMO is to unite practice and research,
which goes very well with Fojo’s current strategic work, and the practical role that Fojo can play in a research context. Furthermore, some research projects where Fojo are directly involved are currently in their inception phases. For example, media and emotional mobilisation is currently explored as a platform for multiple forms of research collaboration and an international conference was organized in 2023. During 2023, steps have been taken to integrate the work of Fojo in LNU’s Africa Network.

Although it is difficult to assess the results of recent academic collaborations as such, one can discern certain impactful consequences for Fojo as an organisation engaged in media development and capacity building. First of all, these types of academic collaborations increase the visibility of Fojo as an academic partner which offers greater opportunities for similar assignments in the future. Secondly, it involves Fojo more with the rest of LNU as an academic institution which creates mutual arenas of further collaboration.

4. HEI networks

Fojo’s HEI-network is extensive and can be connected both to the interactions with universities through capacity building programmes and to academic collaborations outlined above. This section will outline (but not exhaust) the extent of Fojo’s networks and how the networks can contribute to Fojo’s work as a whole.

Fojo’s HEI network includes over 100 institutions in countries all over the world. Starting in Sweden, the connections of course include the various outlets that come from being part of Linnaeus university, but also from contributions to research projects such as the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), where Gothenburg university has been leading the work. Fojo is also working closely with Umeå and Örebro universities on the concept of sustainable journalism, as well as how to incorporate it in media and journalism studies. Through the establishment of SJP, sustainable journalism has offered great opportunities for networking. An estimate shows that 80+ of the memberships in the partnership come from academic institutions. Distinguished mentions in this vein are Tampere university in Finland and Aarhus

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19 Interview with Andreas Jahrehorn Önnerfors, Fojo project manager, 23 May 2023.
21 Data from Sustainable Journalism Partnership. URL: https://sustainablejournalism.se/, accessed 22 May 2023.
university (through the Constructive institute) in Denmark, which have the potential to be key partners in this field going forward.\textsuperscript{22}

Fojo’s fact-checking initiative Faktajouren (established in 2018) has established collaboration with academic scholars working in the areas of media and information literacy, psychology, and disinformation through conferences, interviewing scholars and reviewing scientific literature for the benefit of practicing journalists. New Nordic collaboration is explored with the Centre for Investigative Journalism (SUJO) at the University of Bergen.

In south and east Africa, Fojo has perhaps its greatest network of HEIs outside of Sweden. Through the above-mentioned CHARM project, Fojo has MoU’s with both Witwatersrand university (WITS) and Aga Khan University in Kenya. In turn, Fojo has access to the large African Journalism Educators’ Network (AJEN) which was formed at WITS.\textsuperscript{23} This network consists of 35 universities across Africa and has an MoU with the Centre for media and communication research at the Pan Atlantic University in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{24} Also in Africa, Fojo has been instrumental in the formation of the Ethiopian Journalism Educators’ Network which ties together all of the country’s 24 journalism schools.\textsuperscript{25}

In Europe, Fojo is partnering with Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) in Riga since 2017. Together, Fojo and SSE Riga have carried out module trainings on media management for editors in chief in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, and Latvia. However, Fojo mostly has contacts with universities in the east through past projects in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Recently, ten Ukrainian universities were involved in the DESTIN project, where Fojo has been partnering with six other European HEIs, including Bath University which was lead in the project.\textsuperscript{26} Additionally, Fojo is a member of the European Journalism Training Association (EJTA) which includes 30 European journalism teaching institutions. There is yet to

\textsuperscript{22} Interview with Lars Tallert, Fojo Senior advisor policy and development, 22 May 2023.
\textsuperscript{24} AJEN contact list, available upon request.
\textsuperscript{26} “Journalism Education for Democracy in the Ukraine: Developing Standards, Integrity and Professionalism” (2022) Bath Spa University. URL: https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/projects/destin/ accessed 6 November 2023.
be a discussion whether Fojo could also contribute to LNU’s membership in the European EUniWell collaboration.

Through the International Training Program (ITP) on media self-regulation which is being implemented together with NIRAS, Global Reporting, and International Media Support (IMS 2), Fojo has further access to a vast network of universities and HEIs. The ITP features in five regions (southeast Africa, southeast Asia, Latin America, MENA, and east Europe), and in each region several participants work at HEIs.

Evidently, networks themselves do not yield any results, but the impact of the networks are what you make of them. For example, through SJP, Fojo and Aga Khan university co-organised the second ever sustainable journalism conference in March 2023. The conference gathered journalism stakeholders to advance the concept, both in practice and in education. To take the impact of networks even further, action points from the conference have started to impact curriculum development at several sub-Saharan African universities. In this, Umeå, Tampere, and Utrecht universities are contributing with their expertise in this field.

Speaking further to the synergetic effects of Fojo’s networks, one can see how the various networks already are intertwined and cooperate in several ways regarding research, courses, and media development. One such example that has benefited Fojo is how one member of the ITP from Uganda Christian University has been working on research applications with the SJP. Being a partner in research applications is currently explored further.

5. Opportunities

Several opportunities for deeper cooperation and more targeted collaborations with HEIs arise from the points made in the sections above. A first point to make, tying into the last paragraph above, is the untapped potential of the network connected to the ITP on media self-regulation which is still largely unexplored. Although one good example was highlighted, there is room for

28 Interviews with Lars Tallert, Fojo Senior advisor policy and development, 22 May 2023 and Jean Mujati, Fojo project manager, 23 May 2023.
29 Interview with Lars Tallert, Fojo Senior advisor policy and development, 22 May 2023.
improvement in this regard. Not only is there a large bank of competence that is being missed out on, but it is also an opportunity to find even more partners that could contribute to Fojo’s operations (or where Fojo could contribute).

Another opportunity to evolve Fojo’s work with HEIs is to better utilise the trainers and professionals that are already part of our operations, both Swedish and international. Although Fojo has gotten better at sharing competence between projects and regions, there is still work in this area that could be improved, both in terms of increased knowledge dissemination and quality of education. This relates also to output of various projects such as reports or articles.

On the same note, linking partner universities in various projects and regions to each other through collaborative processes could have great impact on educational and academic aspects alike. One such link could be including universities connected to Fojo’s project in Zimbabwe to the already existing educators’ exchange between Rwanda, Somalia, and Ethiopia. However, on this note, it is imperative that clear targets are set and that the right support mechanisms are in place so that these collaborations do not disappear into thin air. Institutional learning on what such targets and support mechanisms are, are key to make this happen.

To increase the credibility of Fojo’s academic work, one opportunity would be to increase the visibility of studies conducted under its programmes through clearer communication. This should also include notions of how Fojo (co-)produces knowledge through supporting studies within projects and our own reports. In 2023, Fojo launched two publication series: 1) Fojo Study Series and 2) Fojo Media Insights with increased visibility and quality standards. Furthermore, previous reports and studies have been made available on the Swedish research publication platform DiVA. As pointed out earlier, the processes of increasing credibility and visibility is ongoing, but could be more substantial.

Additionally, Fojo’s platform at a Swedish university offers plenty of hitherto unexplored opportunities. Although it is worth noting that Fojo’s position as a bridge between practice and research somewhat excludes the organisation from certain research in the stricter understanding, there’s still a lot of research funding to apply for. Fojo’s position as practitioners offers gains to be made if it manages to adequately formulate how this can contribute to various research projects. There are also opportunities to contribute more to university courses by drawing on Fojo’s expansive network of trainers. Last but not least, one of Fojo’s key assets is outreach and
impact, which is a strong complementarity to the traditional focus of universities on research and higher education.

6. Risks

Two main risks arise in light of the above. The first is a recurring question in many of Fojo’s international projects, that is: who are really the benefiters? By giving support to state universities and future journalists in authoritarian countries there is always a risk of supporting a megaphone for the regime in question. This risk cannot be erased but mitigated through awareness, proven experience, and sober decision-making.

The other risk concerns Fojo losing its position as a link between research and practice. With a clearer focus on academic aspects (or higher education classrooms), there is always a risk of fading from the practical side of Fojo’s operations – media development in newsrooms. By continuing to emphasise Fojo’s practical and industry relevant know-how and how this specific strength can contribute to both academia and practical journalism, this risk can be minimised.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, Fojo has contributed to bridging the gap between classroom and newsroom in several countries where the organisation has been and is active with capacity building of universities. The institute has also increased its academic prowess over the past years, although this is still something that could be improved. The extensive network of HEIs, academics, and trainers tied to Fojo offers great opportunities for progress in all areas of university and HEI collaborations.

While there are many positives to take from Fojo’s work with HEIs and universities, there is still a need to improve the institutional memory of the organisation. Too often it seems like the wheel has been reinvented when new projects concerning universities or research concepts have been developed. This is an area that is already showing signs of refinement, but still needs more attention.
Lastly, functioning as a bridge between practice and research, Fojo has a unique selling point both in academia and in media development. This is something that could be utilised more to really highlight what makes Fojo unique. Fojo should not be afraid to push for its strength in practical skills even when it pursues more academic endeavours. Potentially, this could contribute to Fojo being at the forefront at niche academic fields where the institute already has great networks, e.g., sustainable journalism, fact-checking, and green media development.
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The following titles have been published in the Fojo media insight series:

2023.01: Bridging the gap between classroom and newsroom: Experiences from collaboration of capacity building in media and academia.
This working paper maps practices and discusses challenges and opportunities related to the relationship between classrooms and newsrooms in media development.

Fojo Media Institute, established in 1972, has substantial experience in this area which now for the first time is mapped and explored.

The mapping found three distinct but overlapping areas regarding these engagements: (1) Capacity building of universities and other HEIs, (2) Academic collaborations, and (3) HEI networks.

Insights from this report not only can inform the design and remit of such collaborations in the future but also are an important reminder that media and academia on a worldwide scale face common challenges, requiring increased collaboration.