REPORT ON SYNDICATE GROUP 1: ENTREPRENUERIAL JOURNALISM

Expert: Dan Gillmor

Chair: Remzi Lani

Rappoteur: Muda Ganiyu

DAY ONE

After he was introduced by the chairman of the session, the Expert and Guest Speaker, Dan Gillmor, began by defining entreprenuership, which he says is-

DEFINITION

1. Owning of a business – not necessarilly in terms of stock ownership, but of goingn throuth a process and achieving an outcome;
2. Learning to respond to ambiguity and change;
3. Innovation-putting things in different ways to achieve different results; and
4. Focusing on the business.

PROCESS OF ENTREPRENUERSHIP

That the process of entreprenuership involves:

1. Starting something you care about; that you're passionate about;
2. Getting it online quickly;
3. Not waiting until your website is perfect or you have all the answers; and
4. Improving as you go along.

SILICON VALLEY MODEL

He talked about the Silicon Valley model which involves deciding how you want to finance your enterprise, and

1. Launching before inviting investors
2. Deciding how much control you want to exercise in relation with other stock holders.

After this brief presentation, Gillmor threw the floor open for participants to make contributions based on his methodology of teaching the course, which doesn't provide answers. Students have to find answers to the kind of project they are interested in doing.

*He talked about the teaching of entreprenuerial journalism being cross-disciplinary with students having to take courses in other departments and faculties such business school, and ICT.

*However, students or entreprenuerial journalists need not be experts in ICT or business, but they must have basic grounding.

*On the cost of setting up, he mentioned the use of Open Source softwares.

However to help understand how to react ton his presentation, he was asked to give examples his students had done before, and he mentioned:

1. Online community of film-makers
2. Twitting and SMS on multimedia signage
3. Mobile-based system of offering help to immigrants, and others.

Some participants expressed discomfort about having an uncertain syllabus, whereby students would not know what to do from the beginning to the end of the semester ion reference to Gillmor's method of leaving the syllabus open after the first few weeks of the semester.

Questions raised on this include:

i. How to deal with students' expectation;
ii. How to make a programmed with uncwertain syllabus attractive to students
iii. How to deal with faculty colleagues.

Gillmor was of the view that teachers should be able to understand how (journalsim) business works.

Another issue raised is the difference between being enterprising and being entreprenuerial. Gillmor pointed out two sides to entreprenuership:

i. Identifying an idea or opportunity;
ii. Coaliscing the idea into something new;
iii. Identifying something that people need or that solves a problem;
iv. Anticipating something that does not exist; or
v. Doing something that exists better.

*He's of the opinion that technologist should get talked about last.

Someone then raised the issue of how to grade students. What happens where projects embarked about a student or a group of students fails?

Gillmor

"Projects are important, but even if a project fails, the student can still get an 'A".

*Meaning that students are not necessarilly graded on the success of their projects, as another participant poited out, but on their efforts. After all many start-ups fail. But did the student make a genuine efforts? Did he follow a process?

*To help students understand the process of entreprenuerial journalism, Gillmor said people who have been successful are brought in regularly for hands-on experience with the studetnts.

Another person raised the issue of how to contextualize entreprenuerial journalism in the African context given the low penetration of technology.

*Gillmor pointed out that:

i. Mobile is the medium for Africa

ii. That radio is still popular, and that

iv. The principles of entrepreneurship are not vastly different from one society to another.

However, another participant pointed out that in his institution, all students, whatever their discipline do a course on entrepreneurship, but that in the journalism department, they encourage students to think of being job creators, rather than be job seeker, through:

i. Engaging in freelance journalism, and photojournalism
ii. Become bloggers
iii. Setting up as independent radio/TV producers
iv. Becoming community newspaper publishers.

This brought to an end our discussions on a day one.

DAY TWO
On day two, the chairman of the syndicate, Remzi Lani, summarised the previous day's discussions and then invited Gillmor to continue with his insights. Gillmor, however, asked participants who had issues from the previous day to speak up.

*A participant who had promised to make available inter-disciplinary curriculum between journalism and engineering said he had brought the materials and if we get it printed or give e-mail addresses, he would make it available.

*Various participants threw up models of entrepreneurship journalism in their institutions:
i. From Oklahoma- Online students magazine with multiple media format that provides stability and entrepreneurship where students can initiate and post projects;
ii. Britain- though, courses are offered based on accreditation requirements, and not as flexible as in the U. S., students projects compete in the business reality show-DRAGON;
iii. Zambia-noticing a gap in the business reporting, the journalism department got airtime from the national broadcaster and created a business programme where students contribute and which earns revenue. Students who graduated are also encouraged to create their own programmes on national broadcaster.

Mr. Lani, the chairman of the session asked Gillmor to define the start-up culture, which he does as follows:
i. It's chaotic
ii. Ambiguous
iii. Requires team work, and
iv. Makes rapid development.

The issues of raising fund for the business without compromising the independence of the media was raised, and the argument went back and forth about the need to make profit and give return to

stake holders and at the same time remain true to the ethics of journalism. Gillmor reiterated the need to:

    i.   Remain transparent-that is where the news conflicts or coincides with interest of the funders, the readers should be made aware of this

    ii.   Others raised the importance of journalism remaining a service to the community, though at a profit to the stake holders.

    iii.   That sustainability is important-the media must be sustainable.

Which raised the issue of teaching students numeracy and economic literacy, whereas the emphasis had, hitherto being on purely literacy.

AUDIENCES

Finally, the issue of audiences was raised?

What led to the advent of citizen journalism where the audience began to create their own contents?

*They're not being properly represented by the traditional media.

*Their needs are not being met.

*Which means to succeed as an entrepreneurial journalist, the needs of the audience must be met.