

Educating for Journalisms

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Although journalism was long learned “on the job,” the past four decades have been marked by a pronounced “academization” of how the profession is learned worldwide (Joseph, 2019; Garrisi, 2022). The most recent *Worlds of Journalism Study* survey (2021–2025) shows that holding a university degree has now become a near-universal prerequisite, and that two-thirds of professionals come from university programs specifically dedicated to journalism. Taking into account the diversity of arrangements (degrees, apprenticeships, certificates, and so on), it appears that, globally, three-quarters of journalists have received some form of professional training (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2025).

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN MODEL IN JOURNALISM EDUCATION

Nonetheless, from an academic standpoint, journalism education remains an unevenly developed object of research (Deuze, 2006). Literature reviews reveal a field structured around recurring debates over norms and *curricula*, supplemented by empirical studies of specific programs, countries, skills, and pedagogical innovations (Solkin, 2022; Vukić, 2022). A primary debate in the literature concerns the opposition between theory and practice (Joseph, 2019).

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Focused on the analysis of journalism curricula, this scholarship examines what place should be given to practical skills (necessary for the exercise of the profession) in relation to theoretical knowledge (which enables a reflexive approach to the activity) (Deuze, 2001). However, scholars have long criticized this dualism as being overly simplistic (Reese & Cohen, 2000; Mensing, 2010; Olivera, 2025), and discussions have gradually given way to an approach centered on skills and professionalization (Donsbach, 2014; Solkin, 2022). Now central, this perspective structures the three main approaches to journalism education identified by Solkin (2022): (1) the standard approach, geared toward professionalization, which seeks to prepare students for the needs of the industry by privileging the learning of existing frameworks more than their critical distancing (Frith & Meech, 2007); (2) the reformist approach, attentive to the economic and technological transformations of the sector, which focuses on innovation and entrepreneurship (Mensing & Ryfe, 2013) and often values these at the expense of journalists' working conditions; and (3) the radical approach, the least common, which draws on a critical reflection about journalism that it seeks to reform by fundamentally transforming the educational programs themselves (Anderson, 2014).

These different ways of conceiving of education programs (but especially the critiques they generate) bring political and ideological stakes into relief. Beyond the articulation of theory and practice, what is above all at issue is the very definition of journalism that they help to produce (Joseph, 2019). Journalism educational programs thus appear as sites where professional norms, ideals, and political presuppositions are reproduced or contested. In this regard, the literature shows that these programs developed by implicitly taking an "Anglo-American" journalistic frame of reference as their model (Solkin, 2022; Joseph, 2019; Rodny-Gumede, 2018). Journalism education was, indeed, historically institutionalized in the United States (Curran, 2005) before spreading throughout the world (Joseph, 2019). To this end, programs drew on a "dominant professional ideology" that links journalism to (1) the public interest, (2) neutrality and objectivity, (3) editorial independence, (4) a relationship to reality grounded in factuality and immediacy, and (5) a professional ethics (Deuze, 2001).

This model has been criticized on at least two grounds. First, it tends to universalize a conception of journalism that is empirically reductive. Comparative research on journalism has indeed emphasized how widely professional roles, practices, and ideals vary across contexts (Hanitzsch, 2019a). By proposing to distinguish the study of "roles" from that of "role performance," Mellado and Lagos (2014) notably called for moving beyond such universalizing conceptions: she thus anticipates a gap

between, on the one hand, the ideal of journalism as a "watchdog" (claimed by many professionals around the world) and, on the other, actual practices (which vary according to the political system, the economic model, and the journalistic culture). This conception has also been criticized for its Western-centric character (Banda *et al.*, 2007). The implicit adoption of this "dominant professional ideology" has, in effect, anchored within curricula a conception of journalism intimately bound up with theory of democracy (Rodny-Gumede, 2018). This has had the consequence of positioning democracy as an ideal to be attained (Solkin, 2022), of representing the journalistic cultures of developing or transitional societies "as needing to 'catch up' with the norms and practices valued in the West" (Hanitzsch, 2019b, p. 215), and also of formulating recommendations ill-suited to the political, economic, and cultural contexts of these programs (Rodny-Gumede, 2018). In their study of the UNESCO curriculum designed to teach journalism in developing countries and emerging democracies, Freedman and Shafer (2010) point, for instance, to the danger that may arise in promoting a critical stance toward power in authoritarian contexts. This standardization also has effects in the countries of the global North. Aujla-Sidhu (2022), in this vein, calls for decolonizing journalism curricula in the United Kingdom, with the aim of enabling students to better comprehend and represent multicultural societies (Aujla-Sidhu, 2022). In a similar spirit, several authors argue for "de-Westernizing" these programs (Banda *et al.*, 2007) and advocate a form of journalism education more attentive to context and centered on community (Mensing, 2010; Hochheimer, 2001).

THE CRISIS OF THE WESTERN MODEL OF JOURNALISM

Despite its limits, the Western-centric model of journalism continues to impose itself as the dominant professional paradigm across much of the world (Hanitzsch, 2019a). Yet Deuze (2001) already identified, at the beginning of the 2000s, three factors likely to weaken its foundations: multiculturalism, the crisis of the news media's economic model, and the technological transformations of the sector. Far from abating, these dynamics have only intensified since then, reinforcing the tensions that the dominant journalistic paradigm faces today.

Thus, multiculturalism and the stakes of representing minorities—ethnic, racial, religious, sexual, and so on—have intensified in the contemporary world, contributing to the erosion of the ideal of journalistic neutrality and objectivity. Indeed, adopting a "view from nowhere" becomes all the more difficult in a context where identity politics constitutes a major issue, journalistic practice included. Such debates—

advanced in the countries of the North and feeding the narrative of a globalized crisis of journalism— are being called into question by researchers from the global South. They criticize, among other things, the Western-centric character of these debates and the insufficient attention paid to local histories, traditions, and cultures, which are nevertheless liable to shape journalistic practices.

While these authors often report the inadequacy of the norm of objectivity to the contexts they study (Mutsvairo *et al.*, 2021), in the countries of the global North several studies underscore how much contemporary social movements (for example, #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter) have helped to reactivate the critique of journalistic objectivity as the expression of a dominant point of view (Schmidt, 2024; Beaulieu, 2024; Møller & Askanius, 2021). The debates raised by these mobilizations have affected journalism educational programs, insofar as questions of gender, class, and race run through both the teaching and the practice of the profession (Azanu *et al.* 2025; Ljungdahl, 2025). At the same time, several events of the past decade—such as Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, disinformation campaigns, and the Covid-19 pandemic—have revived the importance accorded to the profession, notably through practices of fact-checking and of combating disinformation (Quandt & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021). Although journalistic objectivity remains a matter of debate in the academic field due to its normative dimension (Mellado & Gajardo, 2026), the contemporary social and geopolitical context is leading to its redefinition: it appears less as an ideal of neutrality than as a transparent and reflexive process of the search for truth (Koniczna & Santa Maria, 2023). In this context, the question of journalistic positioning remains difficult to pin down, and the practices of educational programs in relation to the norm of objectivity remain plural.

Regarding the second factor, one observes the weakening of the news media's economic model. This transformation progressively blurs the boundaries between journalism, communication, and entertainment (Thussu, 2007). The rise of *infotainment* thus contributes to the shift from *hard news* toward lighter, more sensational, or satirical formats, particularly in the coverage of politics. More broadly, the rise of round-the-clock news is part of a commercial reconfiguration of the dominant media, structured by competition, the struggle for audiences, and the capture of attention (Cushion & Sambrook, 2016). This situation is aggravated by media concentration and the reconfiguration of their business model in response to digital media. This redefines not only the contours of journalistic practice and the labor market (both present and future for students) but also the relations between the media and political spheres (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hallin, 2020).

The French case offers a particularly illuminating illustration of this transformation and of its consequences for journalism education (Derhi, 2024; Devars, 2015). From the rise of LCI in the 1990s to the later expansion of BFM TV, CNews, and franceinfo, rolling news channels have helped to redefine the rhythms, formats, and political economy of television news in France. In the case of CNews and, more broadly, of Vincent Bolloré's media ecosystem, these developments are analyzed as part of a wider "culture war," marked by a drift toward the far right, in which news media become strategic instruments in the struggle to define political common sense (Darras, 2025; Bouron, 2025; Kaciaf & Klaus, 2024; Ouakrat, 2023). These reconfigurations produce structuring effects on the professional market for journalism, as evidenced by the recent emergence of several journalism schools tied to the conservative right and the far right¹. Such examples underscore how much the education of future journalists constitutes a major political issue.

Finally, a third factor identified by Deuze in 2001 concerns the impact of technological transformations on the news media industry. In this regard, the platformization of news has further intensified the logics of commodification in journalism, subjecting the profession and its practitioners to the imperatives of the economy of digital visibility. The latter imposes algorithmic and attentional constraints that tend to redefine the criteria for selecting, ranking, and assessing the reliability of the news (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018). On this terrain, the rapid development of artificial intelligence is transforming journalism and its practices in ambivalent ways: while these technologies facilitate the automation and analysis of content, they also intensify the standardization of information, technological dependence, and the erosion of job security in the profession (Dodds *et al.*, 2026; Nelson & Cohen, 2025; Beckett, 2019). In this context, artificial intelligence becomes an unavoidable issue for educational programs, which must contend both with a lack of expertise among instructors and with significant ethical questions (Wenger *et al.*, 2025). These changes nonetheless remain unevenly distributed: adoption rates are higher in North America and Europe than in Africa or Latin America, where significant socio-technical barriers persist—tied to infrastructure, local data, and marginalization within AI corpora (Sonni *et al.*, 2024; Munoriyarwa, 2024). These disparities feed debates over the digital divide and the risk of digital colonialism between the global North and South (Toussaint, 2025). This asymmetrical distribution of access to technological infrastructures, together with the effects it produces on the contours of the activity, constitutes a fundamental question inseparable from the problem of journalism education. The teaching of the profession must, in effect, be able to engage with it and to offer a critical reading of it, notably by examining relations of power, technological dependencies, and the

logics of domination, decolonial perspectives included (Coudry & Mejias, 2023).

**A PROFESSION IN PERMANENT ADAPTATION:
A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION**

These challenges—at once societal, economic, and technological—are compounded by an international context deeply marked by major geopolitical realignments and by the intensification of ideological polarization, which together call into question journalism’s claim to articulate a “truth” about the social world. In this respect, the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the Russo-Ukrainian and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts—to mention only a few particularly salient recent configurations—bring to light the structural tensions running through the contemporary modes of news production, the conditions under which the profession is practiced, and the challenges of teaching this profession in a context of social, political, and economic instability marked by the rise of the platform economy and by heightened polarization (Hameleers & Yekta, 2023; Harsin, 2015).

This context is further characterized by a growing erosion of trust toward institutions historically vested with epistemic authority, such as the school, the Church, and the university (Benkler *et al.*, 2018; Harsin, 2015). Expert speech is increasingly contested in an environment marked by the competition of regimes of truth. International surveys nonetheless reveal that this is less a generalized rejection of knowledge than a crisis of trust toward the intermediaries charged with transmitting and legitimizing it—intermediaries who include journalists (IPSOS, 2024; Cologna *et al.*, 2025). From this standpoint, the media coverage of the climate crisis, as Adrienne Russell (2023) frames it, appears as a paradigmatic case of the tensions running through contemporary journalism. Journalists are confronted with the need to render intelligible a phenomenon that is systemic, global, and unfolding over the long term, while operating within a public sphere characterized by a persistent tension between scientific knowledge and its journalistic and political mediations, which are themselves subject to contestation.

Far from being isolated phenomena, these issues pose challenges to educational programs in a context marked above all by professionalization—and one that, as noted,

leaves less room for critical perspectives (Solkin, 2022). This state of affairs is surely not entirely attributable to educators: adapting journalism education to a professional world in constant flux while conducting a sustained reflection on the issues that are reshaping its contours may, in many respects, appear an impossible mission. It nonetheless seems necessary to encourage these programs to maintain an attentiveness to the ideological and political dimension of their activity, and to take it into account within their pedagogical arrangements and practices.

How, then, are we to envisage the training of future journalists in a context marked by an ongoing structural uncertainty? What concrete initiatives are being implemented to integrate, within *curricula* and pedagogical practices, instructional frameworks that make it possible to grasp and problematize issues that have become central to contemporary societies? Finally, to what extent do these programs incorporate local social, political, and cultural specificities, with a view to promoting a model of journalism closely articulated with the realities of the societies in which it is embedded? It is at the intersection of these questions that the present special issue is situated. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the contributions gathered here offer a situated perspective on a set of issues deemed particularly salient.

Predominantly rooted in, or inspired by, the European and Anglophone programs at the heart of the dominant professional model of journalism, the articles occupy a privileged position from which to offer an informed critical analysis of it. They nonetheless invite us to reflect critically, by implication, on the material conditions and institutional legitimacy of the programs under study, whose resources and normative frameworks are neither universal nor homogeneous. Indeed, South–North issues are not always addressed in the issue’s contributions. Nevertheless, the themes taken up by the authors open the way to broader reflections, helping to inform scholarship on journalism education in developing countries. The latter, in turn, makes it possible to shift the gaze and to reconsider, through a critical lens, the Western norms that still largely structure the definition and the transmission of the profession. Such an exercise is indispensable for comprehending journalism and its “worlds” (Pereira *et al.*, 2018) in all their richness, in relation to the historical, social, political, and cultural dynamics that shape them.

NOTES

¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2x0WjgAlXE> as well as <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/240126/l-esj-paris-une-ecole-de-journalisme-qui-se-bollorise-toute-vitesse>, accessed 19 May 2026.

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