Special Issue: The Impact of Academic Work on Journalistic Practice

Journalism
2024, Vol. 0(0) 1–18

DOI: 10.1177/14648849241261644
journals.sagepub.com/home/jou
Sage

Tensions between the professional and academic worlds of journalism: Paradoxes of the Brazilian reality

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Abstract

For 40 years, Brazil was one of the few places in the world in which the regulation of journalistic activity was based on the requirement of a university degree, which associated being a journalist with having an academic qualification and not necessarily a professional one, unlike other countries that established or not licensing/accreditation systems. In the light of historical sociology, this article aims to scrutinize this intricacy of relationships between the professional and academic worlds of journalism, based on the case of the largest media market and scholarship in Latin America. It is shown how, between 1969 and 2013, there was tension and resistance on the part of international press associations, national news media companies and renowned journalists in relation to the mandatory diploma defended by the unions; as well as there were disputes and demands, within the community of professors and researchers, for the emancipation of journalism education in relation to communication studies.

Keywords

Journalists and academics, journalism education, journalists' unions, news media companies, researchers associations

Introduction

Apparently there is a consensus that "we need to figure out how to keep craft, education and research at the same dinner table" (Zelizer, 2007: 26). In an ideal world, the media

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industry recognizes the talents trained by universities and, by capturing them to develop innovative and quality products, guarantees the longevity of its socially responsible businesses. At the same time, communication schools and journalism courses tend to benefit when the economic context in which they are located is one of growth. It attracts a greater number of students, expanding the teaching staff and obtaining more resources for developing high-impact research. In this logic, the academic and professional fields would feed each other, one directly impacting the other.

Using historical sociology, this article aims to problematize this understanding, analyzing the intricacy of relationships between the professional category of journalists and the academic world of teaching and research. It aims to show, based on the study of the Brazilian case, how the subject involves paradoxes that go far beyond the differences between journalistic norms and practices (Mellado, 2020), as, as will be argued, depending on their structuring context, the professional and academic fields can operate with a greater or lesser margin of autonomy, without there necessarily being a permanent interconnection between them.

Evidence of this is that, in numerous countries, especially Western ones, journalism has developed as a more open profession, with less interference from the State or even non-governmental organizations, while in other parts of the world types of licenses or accreditation have been established for someone to work professionally as a journalist (Fidalgo, 2008). The reasons are not the same and can range from attempts to control press freedom by authoritarian regimes or, on the contrary, to guarantee labor rights for news professionals (Strasser, 2010), so that each case, although it can be the subject of international comparisons, needs to be contextualized and studied on its own.

But what is important to note is that even in cases of licensing or accreditation, access to the profession tended to occur less under the mediation of academia and more conditioned by registration issued by government bodies and more frequently by professional organizations: journalists' unions, press councils, etc. Among Western nations, probably the best-known model is that of Italy, where the Italian Journalists Order (ODG) is responsible for granting professional registration after an 18-month internship and passing an oral and written suitability test (Morabito, 2023).

In a smaller number of countries, however, eligibility to work as a journalist has not been based on professional credentials, but on the basis of academic qualifications. Probably the most traditional system was that of Brazil, where the requirement involved completing a 4-year undergraduate course in journalism, to then be able to register with the Ministry of Labor and the unions. This law from 1969 to 2009, which made Brazil one of the few countries in the world to require a specialized university degree to work as a journalist, was discussed and even implemented with similarities in other parts of Latin America, being criticized by US-based organizations such as the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) and the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) (see Friendly, 1984), without necessarily providing an in-depth analysis of local realities.

At a regional level, this long-term policy has generated at least two very distinct lines of interpretation. In the view of some researchers and journalists in favor of the old requirement, it would be justified because countries like Brazil have "a long tradition of granting radio and TV stations as a political bargaining chip, which does not happen

above the Equator; the Brazilian communication system is supported by commercial oligopolies and political oligarchies, which is not always the case abroad"; finally, "comparisons can be made here and there, but professional regulation must be understood as progress and not regression" (Christofoletti, 2002: 108), especially in the sense of increasing professionalization, labor rights and ethical standards.

In the opposite direction, for other scholars on the subject, "despite having as a reference the liberal model similar to the North American one, professionalism in Brazil was shaped by an authoritarian and corporate logic in which, on the one hand, the anonymous individual and/or ordinary citizen is seen as a fundamental interlocutor and main recipient of news production." On the other hand, this common citizen was for a long time "excluded from news production on the grounds that it is too important for democracy and this responsibility should fall exclusively to the graduated journalist, thus camouflaging the use of this requirement as a market reserve" (Roxo, 2014: 3).

The fact is that these issues do not only concern the professionalization process itself, as they also had implications for the formation of the academic field, by stimulating its growth in all regions of the country over the years. Close to the elimination of the requirement for a diploma to be a journalist, there were already more than 300 undergraduate journalism programs operating in Brazil (Lago and Romancini, 2010). However, this does not seem enough to us to assume in advance that the opposite is true: academic work as a decisive factor in the development of the national media industry.

To address the issue, I seek to undertake a socio-historical examination of the relationships between the professional, union and university spheres, which is supported by interviews, opinion pieces and memoirs published by different agents with leading roles in the aforementioned fields. As the first national trade association and the first journalism school were founded, respectively, in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, there is a natural tendency to focus on actors from these centers, although many of them are from other regions of the country.

The period examined goes from 1969 to 2013, covering not only the public debate about the diploma requirement for journalists, but also paying attention to the disputes that occurred within the academic community that, after four decades, led to the curricular separation between journalism and communication at undergraduate level. Therefore, the account constructed here based on documentary research is not linear, nor in a single direction, but explores the dialectics involved in the development of the field, with its continuities and ruptures, without being free from controversies.

As a work of historical sociology, the methodological strategy was to collect and examine a diverse set of documentary sources, rather than conducting interviews limited to "living sources" (see Ritchie, 2014). This choice is justified as the intention of the study was not to make the protagonists of a story revisit their past and review their positions, but to analyze the interference at the time of the events and how the broader public and academic debate developed. Hence the option to combine media texts with those produced by university and trade union circles.

In an investigation of this nature, the concern may be less with the application of a standardized method and more, as Abrams (1982: 7–8) teaches, with the work of interpreting "the relation of the individual as an agent with purposes, expectations and

motives to society as a constraining environment of institutions, values and norms," whose meaning must be sought "in the immediate world of history, of sequences of action and reaction in time." In other words, the task of carrying out a disciplined and at the same time interpretative reconstruction of the past, based on problems that arise for us in the present: professionalization and deprofessionalization of journalism, crisis and challenge for journalism education, etc.

To think about it, the first sections present, based on the Brazilian experience, the antecedents and development of professionalization and education in journalism, in the midst of dictatorships, sometimes accompanied by a labor policy, sometimes by censorship of the media, not to mention university reforms. In this context, a degree in journalism became mandatory for journalists, which was seen by some as a control mechanism and by others as an achievement of the class. Despite there being loopholes, journalism schools became a mandatory stop for anyone who wanted to pursue a career in the field and, at the same time, they became the target of criticism from the old guard — for those who, in general, "journalism is not science" and "depends on the innate talent of those who practice it," in the words of Mino Carta (2001), founding editor of some of the country's flagship news magazines (*Veja*, *IstoÉ* and *Carta Capital*).

Diverging from such understandings, associations of journalism professors and researchers were created in the country with the aim of not only promoting the institutionalization of research on the subject (Franciscato, 2010), but emancipating it from communication education. One of the group's achievements was the curricular reorganization of journalism courses, which are no longer part of the bachelor's degree in *social communication*, although the opposite remains a trend at the master's and doctoral levels. The final sections question the apparent lack of connection between undergraduate and postgraduate projects in the area, in addition to its relevance for a media industry undergoing reconfiguration, with the reduction of strictly journalistic positions (Tavares et al., 2021) and increased convergence between trades.

Even though it was not the original objective, the present work in a way puts into practice, within a contextualized socio-historical framework, Mellado's (2009) proposed analysis model for Latin American journalism, which aims to study the professionalization through articulation of an internal level (professional formation itself) with another intermediary (communication schools, journalism courses, employers' associations, etc.), at a macro level (local political, social and economic system under foreign influence).

The aim is to do this, however, from a historical and critical perspective, that is, without eliminating from the process the inconsistencies between the professional, union, academic and industrial sectors, as the relationship between them has become more complex over time. The intention is, ultimately, to draw attention not only to the potential of a progressive interconnection between craft, research, education and market, but also to contribute with an approach that recognizes their limitations.

The emergence of journalism as a profession and training field

Throughout the 19th century and the first decades of the following, the professions with real recognition in Brazil — a country with a slave heritage that had recently become

republican — were basically medicine, engineering and law (Coelho, 1999). An activity more or less intrinsic to the enlightened intelligentsia, journalism was especially practiced by students and graduates from that last segment, law. Without constituting an autonomous profession, being a journalist was largely confused with being a writer (Costa, 2005), at the same time that the press was seen by both as a platform to launch a political career or reach a position in the public administration (Barbosa, 2000).

This does not mean that there were no expectations from editors and others who worked at periodicals to establish a profession of their own. Following the case of Argentina, which had press clubs since the end of the 19th century, the Brazilian Press Association (ABI) was founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1908, aiming to ensure training, assistance and freedom of the press for the class. Its founder, Gustavo de Lacerda — a long-time reporter for *O Paiz* and contributor to the workers' press — personified the missionary and socialist vision that journalism should be exercised as a priesthood and not converted into a profit-making business for its shareholders (Morel, 1985).

Therefore, this period is key if we want to understand the professionalization of Brazilian journalists in terms such as those described by Waisbord (2013: 15): "as a process by which occupations claim jurisdiction over a field of practice", as well as "about the specialization of labor." In the Brazilian case, this process falls within the broad context of modernization of the national State, despite its development milestones coinciding with those of many other nations — so that we can even speak of a history of the international movement of journalists (Nordenstreng et al., 2016). Without losing sight of this transnational dimension, it is worth detailing the trajectory and characteristics that shape the case from an internal point of view.

In Brazil, if throughout the Old Republic (1889–1930) urban workers managed to organize associative movements and strikes, it was only with the rise of Getulio Vargas that their labor rights would be recognized and supported by law. The new ruler mixed authoritarianism and corporatism to simultaneously gain broad support among the popular classes, contain the anarchist movement and neutralize opposition political parties (Gomes, 2005).

Seen as collaborators with public power, unions proliferated, but became subject to state control. The first entities of this type for journalists date back to the mid-1930s and, in the following decade, with the aim of nationally unifying class ties, the National Federation of Brazilian Journalists (FENAJ) was inaugurated — which today brings together more than 40 thousand members in 31 unions. But as Sá (1999: 43) observes, the reality and concerns were very different at the beginning of the 20th century: "the journalist's activity was subject to laws that concerned the press until 1938," when there was the first regulation of the profession, which defined "the journalist as the intellectual worker whose function extends from searching for information to writing news."

However, it was not a one-way pact with the journalistic class, which now had guaranteed rights such as a minimum wage, a five-hour working day, etc. This is because the "Father of the Poor" also encouraged the modernization of media companies and distributed numerous benefits to their barons and to anyone else who collaborated with the regime. The opposite treatment was applied to his critics, even causing newspapers to close (Capelato, 2021).

Vargas's legacy to the field of education was no less ambiguous. The government gave a short life to the University of the Federal District (1935–1939), directed by the New School Movement enthusiast Anísio Teixeira and which provided, within the faculty of philosophy and letters, the creation of the first chair of journalism in the country. To be coordinated by journalist Costa Rego, the project differed from the technical-professional schools that were beginning to be organized in Latin America. In the assessment of Nixon (1970: 14), "its purpose was rather to study journalism as a social and literary phenomenon, in accordance with the European tradition, than to train journalists."

To compensate, in 1943, the government instituted journalism education in the national higher education system. The first course was designed within the National Faculty of Philosophy (FNFi) in Rio de Janeiro, providing for the cooperation of the Brazilian Press Association and unions, both for employees and employers of journalistic companies. Nonetheless, the school took 5 years to structure itself and receive its first class of students. In the meantime, the Casper Líbero College of Journalism (FCL) began operating in the city of São Paulo, created in 1947, in honor of the journalist and businessman Casper Líbero, who before his death carried out initiatives such as the National Federation of Brazilian Press (FENAI).

Given the low complexity of operation of these pioneering establishments, there was naturally openness to the participation of the different sectors, including representatives of news companies. The fact that renowned journalists such as Carlos Rizzini — right-hand man of media tycoon Assis Chateaubriand —, Danton Jobim and Pompeu de Sousa — directors/editors of the newspaper *Diário Carioca* — were hired to head the undergraduate programs brought some professional credentials to journalism education. But there continued to be enormous prejudice in relation to university training for a practice still seen as a vocation. In the words of Rizzini himself (1953: 45), a professor at both Rio and São Paulo schools, the bachelor of journalism suffered from the "incredulity of professionals. Trained in the newsroom, they do not see the advantages of an education that they think they did not need."

Despite this distrust, it is worth recognizing that the emergence of journalism as an academic training, in a context of the country's industrialization and modernization of the press, benefited the advancement of the professional body. The increase in salaries gradually caused the disappearance of the figure of the adventurous journalist, who sought to rise socially through the exchange of favors (Ribeiro, 2007). This is corroborated by the report of journalist Mario Hora, based on his 48 years of experience in newsrooms, such as *O Globo*, in the former federal capital:

> Anyone who takes a look at the half century of existence of our press, starting from 1900, will be amazed at the progress and evolution achieved by it. The profession considered then a "side job" is, today, a means of subsistence [...]. As a high point of this evolution, schools for journalists were created at universities, from which young people who are destined to renew editorial staff leave with professional theoretical preparation and an indispensable culture (Hora, 1959: 14–15).

In short, points of convergence can be noted between the processes of modernization of newspapers, professionalization of journalists and journalism education in the mid-20th century, even if universities and industry were not integrated. But there were also tensions. In philosophy faculties, journalism courses were seen as a foreign body, at the same time that disbelief prevailed among professionals in newsrooms in relation to academic training for journalistic practice. Furthermore, this is a time when there is no national university research production (see Daros, 2024), greatly reducing the possibilities of transferring knowledge with other sectors, such press and broadcasting companies.

A journalism degree as a requirement to be a journalist

Significant changes in this scenario occurred from the second half of the 1960s onwards. After a period of economic growth combined with political stability, but which did not last, the military came to power through a *coup d'état* in 1964. Since media owners adhered to economic liberalism, it is not surprising that they were a strategic sector for the establishment of the regime, by subjecting themselves to censorship and losing editorial freedom to obtain financing for the modernization of their companies (Abreu, 2002).

The government's relationship with journalists was no less complex. For 20 years, media professionals worked in an ideological patrol environment, amid threats of arrest and torture. Paradoxically or not, during the heaviest phase of the dictatorship, which extended from the presidency of generals Costa e Silva (1967–1969) to Emílio Médici (1969–1974), old demands for greater status by journalistic associations were met. The main one was Decree-Law No. 972 of 1969, which imposed the mandatory academic degree in journalism, recognized by the Ministry of Education, in addition to professional registration with the Ministry of Labor, to work as a journalist.

As noted by Albuquerque (2006: 83), although the regulation of the profession was sought by the unions, in the case of an authoritarian government, which even "persecuted, tortured and killed unionists and journalists," it is "much more likely to assume that it wanted manipulate this demand to benefit their own interests." Especially because, at that time, "concern arose among the regime's authorities regarding the strong presence of communists among journalists in the newsrooms of numerous newspapers" (Albuquerque, 2006: 83) — not to mention in universities and other intellectual spaces (Rüdiger and Daros, 2022).

The fact is that through the law a market reserve emerged, preventing anyone who did not have specific training in the area from occupying any position as a journalist. It would be up to the journalists' unions themselves to communicate to the competent authorities when the law is not being complied with. Those who were obviously not satisfied were the employers, for whom the government's action to please the professional base resulted in a loss of autonomy. Some of the largest national media companies tried to reverse the measure, seen "as a corporate and outdated requirement for a society that was moving towards being liberal and based on market parameters" (Roxo, 2014: 17).

After the return of democracy in 1985, the discussion around the issue intensified and was taken to Congress. The campaign against the mandatory university degree in journalism brought together leaders of the country's main daily newspapers. Its main

spokesperson was Otávio Frias Filho, then editor-in-chief of *Folha de S. Paulo* and son of the company's owner:

> I think that the future of quality press in Brazil depends on guaranteeing access to journalism for professionals in the human sciences. Except in the case of self-taught people, which is not a frequent case, it is practically impossible for a person trained only in communications to be able to carry out more in-depth, critical analytical journalism (Frias Filho, 1987).

This line of reasoning was followed by others, such as the then editor-in-chief of *O Estado de S. Paulo*, Luciano Ornelas (1987), for whom "Brazil must move towards modernity like the countries of Europe, where there are journalism schools and there is no law that requires the diploma. The free market prevails, that of talent. […] No school teaches anyone talent." The political editor of *Jornal do Brasil*, Marcelo Pontes (1987) would add: "The majority of bachelors [in journalism] are really very unprepared […]. The fact that schools are like this leaves journalistic companies a little 'tied' when it comes to hiring good professionals and prevents the renewal of their staff."

On the other side of the battlefield, there was no shortage of respected figures. President of the Brazilian Press Association for decades, Barbosa Lima Sobrinho was committed to the public debate on the issue. For him, the university degree "is a condition to stimulate candidates, at the same time as it is worth protecting those who have it, and fight precisely for the preservation of their job market," so that "journalism is and should never leave of being a profession, as specialized as any other" (Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, 1981: 3).

Among countless journalists and academics, with different ideas, but who in common supported the cause, the following stand out: Alberto Dines, founder of the media criticism platform *Observatório da Imprensa*, as well as the leaders of journalism departments of the country's main universities: José Marques de Melo at the University of São Paulo (USP), and at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) Muniz Sodré and Nilson Lage. The latter, as director of the undergraduate journalism course, speculated that the Inter American Press Association was behind the campaign against the diploma requirement:

> About ten years ago, large Latin American media companies, which follow IAPA guidelines, began a campaign against the professional registration of journalists and, in particular, against specialized university training. [...] They are the ones who have the market reserve, the owners of the media, who monopolize public information in an absolutely illegitimate and immoral way, benefiting from dictatorships and tyrannies, creating a notary system of concessions for friendship and pocketing subsidies, such as that which exists for television networks (Lage, 1986: 9).

And there were those who displeased both sides, including left-wing journalists. This apparently was the case of Cláudio Abramo, who claimed to be a Trotskyist, at the same time as he was responsible for the modernization of some of the main organs of what he called the national bourgeois press. For him, "the ideal would be to have economists, sociologists or doctors in the newsroom who, in addition to a specific bachelor's degree,

had a postgraduate degree in journalism" (Abramo, 1988: 249). But make the following considerations:

> I have always been one of the first critics of the journalism school, but now I see so many people mobilized against it that I end up suspicious. [...] My position today is in defense of the school, although I recognize that it is precarious. This needs to be very well analyzed by the journalists themselves and by their union, which, in fact, has a very non-positive attitude on this matter, because it does not examine the issue in depth (Abramo, 1988: 252).

Opinions aside, the fact is that the diploma decree generated an increase in undergraduate journalism programs across the country. To be more precise, until 1969, the year the law was published, there were 20 journalism schools, a number that more than doubled in the following decade (Lago and Romancini, 2010). Therefore, the fight for the diploma cannot be dissociated from the concern to maintain this scenario, which has greatly benefited the development of teaching careers in journalism and communication in all Brazilian states.

Within the academic community, however, many disagreements arose regarding the direction taken by the area. This is because, in Brazil, in and out of the military regime, the guidance of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was followed, through the International Center for Higher Communication Studies for Latin America (CIESPAL), to convert journalism schools into communication schools. At the same time, journalism lost its status as an autonomous bachelor's degree and became — like advertising, public relations, etc. — a qualification of the undergraduate communication program (Daros, 2023).

This project, years after it was implemented, came to be intensely criticized by some people in the area, as it would disfigure journalism education and its professional identity in favor of the generic figure of the *social communicator* or, at the academic level, the *communicologist* (Meditsch, 1999). At this point, however, the dissynchrony between university education and professional practice was already established: while news companies were forced to hire journalists with diplomas because they supposedly possessed specialized technical and theoretical knowledge from a journalistic point of view, schools began to develop within the framework of communication studies, treating journalism and other media activities as a secondary subject.

In short, academically the identity of communicator/communicologist was promoted and professionally that of journalist.

The end of the diploma requirement and the reform of journalism education

The situation created was not the most beneficial for the development of journalism research. Between the end of the 1940s and 1960s, when the first journalism schools were opened across the country, there was no structure or support to produce academic research within Brazilian universities. The first wave of master's and doctoral programs dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, when the area already operated under the framework of *social*

communication, or communication studies. In other words, as the reduction of journalism to a subfield preceded — at least in the case of Brazil and other Latin American countries — the establishment of postgraduate studies, their focus of concern, since their origins, has been "the" communication (Kunsch, 2013).

Specifically in Brazil, journalism studies came to prominence after the organization of the Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers (SBPJor), in 2003. With around 100 founding members, since then a series of projects have taken shape with the purpose of promoting the national production of specialized knowledge about journalism: holding annual conferences and awards to present and recognize academic work, launch of the bilingual journal *Brazilian Journalism Research* and other editorial initiatives, raising funds for research and partnerships with international networks.

Still in this wave of creating an autonomous field of studies, the Brazilian Association of Journalism Education (ABEJ) was structured and the first postgraduate program in journalism in the country was created, operating at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), since 2007 for a master's degree and for a doctorate since 2013. In addition to historically housing leaders engaged in defending the scientific autonomy of the discipline, the institution has stood out for encouraging work fronts that are still little explored in departments in the area, such as applied research (Machado and Teixeira, 2016), as well as for continuing long-standing projects, for example, on changes in the professional profile of journalists (Mick and Lima, 2013).

Although they are not necessarily two-way, such initiatives, it is true, contribute to the maintenance of relations between academic and union organizations. It is observed that there is traditionally an alignment of purposes between the Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers, the Brazilian Association of Journalism Education and the National Federation of Brazilian Journalists, if we consider what their spokespeople have historically expressed both on the issue of a specific bachelor's degree in journalism and on the issue of a diploma for working as a journalist (see FENAJ, 2008).

This articulation, however, was not enough to maintain the obligation of this second item, in force since 1969. In 2009, the Supreme Federal Court overturned by eight votes to one the requirement for a diploma for journalistic activity in Brazil. For the rapporteur of the case, Minister Gilmar Mendes, the diploma decree was unconstitutional, being an attack on freedom of expression inherited from the times of the military dictatorship. He also suggested that the media companies themselves begin to exercise the control mechanism for hiring their professionals, since

> when it comes to journalism, an activity closely linked to freedom of expression and information, the State is not legitimized to establish conditions and restrictions regarding access to the profession and its professional practice (Mendes, 2009).

The interpretation of the Brazilian Judiciary is in line, it is worth noting, with that of the Inter American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) which, in 1985, when consulted by the government of Costa Rica regarding the requirement for a specific degree to practice journalism in the country, had spoken out against the issue, understanding it as an infringement of the basic human principle of freedom of expression, since every citizen

should have the right to both be informed and to inform, including through journalistic means (Calderón, 2008).

In Brazil, despite being a minority among their colleagues, important academics identified with the left-wing and respected by class entities did not disagree with this, such as Bernardo Kucinski and Eugênio Bucci. The first retired professor from USP, collaborator of the Workers' Party (PT) and journalist working in the alternative press; and the second, also a professor at USP, former editorial director of Editora Abril magazines and president of the public communications company Radiobrás, during the first Lula government (2003–2006). "Will someone who took a philosophy or economics course be more correct or more incorrect in dealing with information than someone who has a journalism degree?", replied Bucci (2012) when asked about the subject.

Leonardo Sakamoto (2012), an award-winning human rights journalist in the country, argued along similar lines, saying that "having a degree in journalism does not mean practicing the profession with more or less ethics" and that "it is past time for our category to accept in their unions, definitively, those who do not have a diploma." He, who is a professor of journalism at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), saw components of elitism and social exclusion in the old law:

> I met, walking around Brazil, many people who have never seen a diploma, but who are more journalists with a community radio microphone in their hand, writing a small newspaper or with a small news blog than some who spent four years in the university benches and today they rest behind business cards, letterheads and a well-known name — whether from a large or small newsroom (Sakamoto, 2012).

But the defeat of the union movement was followed by a victory for the academic movement, when associations of journalism educators and researchers managed to ensure that undergraduate journalism programs regained their autonomy within communication schools. Thanks to a reformulation of national curricular guidelines by the Ministry of Education in 2013 — at the time, the Dilma Rousseff government (2011–2016) —, journalism courses across the country stopped being a qualification of the bachelor's degree in communication and returned to constitute an independent degree, as it was between the 1950s and 1960s.

The guidance was applied to the 385 undergraduate journalism programs operating in the country, which in the following years made changes to the curricular structure and their teaching staff to adapt to new pedagogical demands. Among those celebrating the reform is Eduardo Meditsch, professor at UFSC and one of the founders of SBPJor, for whom the new guidelines are a reunion of journalism education with the profession of journalist:

> Journalism is an internationally recognized profession, regulated and described as such in the Brazilian Occupations Code of the Ministry of Labour in Brazil. Communication is not a profession in any country in the world, but rather a field that brings together several different professions. It is also an academic area that encompasses several specific disciplines, as is also the case in other areas of applied sciences such as, for example, Health, which brings

> together within its scope the professions (and respective disciplines) of Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Physiotherapy, etc. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to consider Journalism as a qualification for Communication, since this, as a profession, does not exist, just as there is no generic Health profession (Meditsch, 2017: 102).

For Rogério Christofoletti, also a professor at UFSC and former coordinator of the doctorate program in journalism, in addition to specific professionals, journalists "have their own deontology that helps to circumscribe the limits of their activities in the social field of work" (Christofoletti, 2002: 107). Therefore, the objective of its academic community would be "exactly to work for the quality of journalism courses, […] defending journalism as knowledge and as its own scientific field," in the words of Marluce Zacariotti (2023), president of ABEJ, the Brazilian Association of Journalism Education.

Despite the achievements of this agenda, postgraduate studies continued to develop nationally under the framework of communication. The area has more than 50 postgraduate programs and, even so, the Federal University of Santa Catarina remains the only institution in the country with a specific doctoral program in journalism. The other exceptions are the State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG) and the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), which maintain, respectively, an academic master's program and a professional program in journalism. The FIAM-FAAM University Center and Higher School of Advertising and Marketing (ESPM), which had also created their master's programs in journalism, later closed them.

Unlike postgraduate programs that are mostly established in state and federal public institutions, the majority of undergraduate students are enrolled in private institutions (Lago and Romancini, 2010), due to different regulatory and incentive to expand access to higher education in recent decades. Nonetheless, because they often operate merely as businesses, these establishments frequently carry out restructuring to adapt to the demands of a market weakened by successive economic crises, combined with the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence the recent waves of closure of in-person courses in favor of distance learning, as well as the dismissal of professors even at the most traditional colleges (see Ratier, 2022), which denotes the advance of neoliberal logic over humanism.

In the end, both the end of the diploma requirement for journalists and the separation between the bachelor's degree in communication and journalism produced effects that were at least questionable. Firstly, there is no evidence that the end of the market reserve has provided better conditions for schools that prioritize quality, by eliminating those that are "opportunistic," as the group against the mandatory diploma law supposed. On the other hand, at this point, curricular division and autonomy, as articulated by associations of journalism educators and researchers, are no less debatable in a context in which the majority of graduates are employed less and less in positions typically as journalists and more in private or public organizations that require knowledge and varied techniques in marketing, social media, computing, etc.

Conclusions

As explained throughout the article, the Brazilian case is marked by paradox and the comings and goings of broad reform projects. Between 1969 and 2013, there was resistance to the framing of journalism in communication, as well as tensions surrounding the mandatory university degree for its professionals, defended by unions and academic associations. Paradoxically, the curricular autonomy of journalism was approved by the Ministry of Education and imposed on universities across the country after the Supreme Federal Court removed the requirement for a diploma to work as a journalist.

In other words, at the same time that Brazil implemented, in terms of journalism education, a measure that apparently goes against the international trend, by claiming disciplinary autonomy instead of benefiting from an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary teaching project; on the other hand, beyond the academic sphere, the country followed the trend observed among democratic nations to make the profession more open, with less interference or protection from the State and other entities, disregarding how this relates to the scenario that emerged: deterioration of journalistic work conditions, discreditation of civil society, increase in attacks on reporters, as seen during the government of Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022).

The Brazilian case demonstrates that it is limiting to treat the licensing or accreditation of journalists as a standard policy against press freedom, just as North American lenses tend to frame countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia (e.g. Friendly, 1984; Strasser, 2010). Although in Brazil the law was enacted during the military dictatorship, its development was associated with market reservation and the search for expansion of labor rights, as occurred in other parts of the continent, being strongly defended by regional trade unions and academic organizations, although criticized by US-based press associations and privileged sectors of the regional media that appropriated foreign discourse.

Journalism licensing/accreditation systems around the world are not the same and therefore produce different effects. Where licensing or accreditation has been based on professional practice, the influence on the growth of journalism education tends to be smaller, compared to systems with academic qualification requirements. Given the diploma law, Brazil has seen a growth in the opening of journalism/communication schools that is much higher than that of most emerging and even developed countries. This gave the South American country one of the highest percentages of professional specialization in the world: 90.8% of Brazilian journalists have a degree in journalism and/or communication, while in countries like Germany, United Kingdom and Italy, this number varies from 36.6% to 50.1% (Worlds of Journalism, 2018).

The international comparative perspective must, however, always be handled with care so as not to lose sight of the contradictions and disputes that occur within the respective contexts. The "war" against the journalism degree was not waged homogeneously by all media companies and sometimes placed journalists with different ideological positions on the same side. For example, some of the most renowned Brazilian names in both the mainstream and alternative press ended up, in common, disqualifying the area of professional education. The comments ranged from: "journalism schools are bad, just as education in general in Brazil is bad" (Lins da Silva, 2009), to: "I see from the curricula

that communication schools are monopolizing the minds of student for four or 5 years without putting in there content that would be necessary for him/her to be a journalist" (Kucinski, 1986: 19).

In the opinion of some who oppose the obligation (e.g. Bucci, 2012), with the end of the measure and, consequently, the market reservation for journalism graduates, the positive consequences would be at least twofold. The first would be a natural selection through which "bad courses end" and "only courses that produce a difference in training, theory, technology and thinking will survive" (Oliveira, 2008: 11). At the same time, since future journalists would have the freedom to pursue any degree, interest in postgraduate studies in journalism could increase. This would open up the possibility for the development of high-level professional master's programs within Brazilian universities, following the example of the Columbia Journalism School in the United States.

More than a decade after the law was overturned, there does not seem to be clear evidence that this has resulted in any significant improvement for journalism schools, putting the "reputable" ones in an advantageous position. In a crisis scenario, more traditional private universities and colleges also made drastic cuts in teaching staff, adapting in-person courses with more hours of distance learning to make operations cheaper. In relation to postgraduate studies in journalism, two of the three professional master's programs were closed (see COMPÓS, 2022). This contrasts, therefore, with the prediction that the Pulitzer postgraduate standard would simply be replicated in Brazil and highlights that, even when appropriate, there are no guarantees that foreign models will be successful when applied to the local reality.

Finally, by judging the requirement of a university degree for professional practice as anti-democratic, this group ignored any beneficial effects that may have arisen. Some scholars point out, for example, a direct relationship between the mandatory diploma and the feminization of the profession. Since the 1950s, inequality between men and women has tended to be much smaller in the classrooms of undergraduate journalism courses than in newsrooms. When applying the rule that a diploma is mandatory, it can be argued that there was a tendency for this situation of greater gender equality to be reflected in the job market, with the best women representing 64% of professionals working in the national sector (Mick and Lima, 2013).

Inconsistencies, however, also exist on the other side of the front. The professional benefits of journalism's curricular emancipation are no less questionable when considering the current context, in which the majority of graduates are increasingly less hired in positions exclusive to journalists. In this sense, the Brazilian case seems to go against the international trend, in which "journalism schools have sought to professionalize contingency, first, by dismantling boundaries between journalism and other fields like public relations" (Besbris and Petre, 2019: 17). But it also distances itself from alternatives against the technicalization of journalism education and in favor of rescuing humanist culture, through greater exchange with social sciences (see Neveu, 2014).

The recent curricular reforms observed in Brazil, depending on the point of view adopted, it can be argued, fail to strengthen the connection between undergraduate and postgraduate projects. While bachelor's degrees have supposedly become more segmented — solely in journalism, or advertising, or public relations, etc. —, master's and

doctoral programs have moved in the opposite direction, with a general focus on what is called "communication" and, in most cases, without having — or deactivating — "areas of specialization" or "research lines" in journalism or advertising, or in public relations.

In conclusion, the present case study provides elements to reflect on how there is not necessarily a continuous overcoming of the gaps between academic work and professional practice, and there is still much to be done not only in terms of transacting university and industry, but also, within the communication/journalism schools themselves, in the sense of articulating undergraduate and postgraduate education and research.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES)

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