



Journalism Education in Brazil

Afonso de Albuquerque^{1*} and Camila Quesada Tavares²

¹Department of Cultural Studies and Media, Federal Fluminense University, Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

²Department of Social Sciences, Health and Technology, Federal University of Maranhão, São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil

*Corresponding author: Afonso de Albuquerque, Department of Cultural Studies and Media, Federal Fluminense University, Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, E-mail: afonsoalbuquerque@id.uff.br.

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Description

“Corporatism, Fragmentation, and State Interventionism” is part of a series of articles published in *Publizistik* journal. Each article focused on journalism education in a particular country. The cases of the United Kingdom [1], Spain [2], and Australia [3] were discussed in other articles. Our article explored journalism education in Brazil.

The literature on journalism education often describes it from a US perspective. This is the consequence of the hegemony that the United States media acquired in the world, especially after the 1990s. Until then journalism organized in different manners across the world. In continental Europe, for instance, journalistic organizations had close ties with party politics.

The globalization of the media changed this situation. It led to a homogenization of journalistic practices and values worldwide. Media assistance initiatives help to provide the US model of journalism (and journalism education) with a global status. However, journalism education is not the same everywhere. History, culture, and specific forms of social organization impact how journalism education develops in a given society [4].

Brazil provides an interesting case in this respect. The influence of the US model of journalism occurred much earlier in Brazil than in most other countries. It dates from the 1950s [5,6]. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect that the Brazilian journalism education model was close to the US. The first factor to consider refers to the persistent postcolonial character of Brazilian society. Here, postcolonial has two different and complementary senses. First, it refers to the fact that Brazil is a former Portugal colony. Second, it refers to the permanence of a colonized self-perception in Brazil, even after two centuries of formal independence. Contrary to what happened to Spain, Portugal did not create universities in Brazil. Brazilians who wanted to obtain a university education should attend university courses in Portugal, especially in Coimbra University [7].

Brazil’s late development of universities contrast with the early creation of Journalism university courses. Paradoxically, this was a consequence of Brazil’s postcolonial identity, too. At the end of World War 2, the United States replaced Europe as the referential for modernity [8]. For this motive, Brazil was among the first countries to develop Journalism university programs, following the US example. In 1950, *Diário Carioca* was the first Brazilian newspaper to claim to reorganize its practices around the ideal of journalist objectivity [5,6]. The first university course of Journalism was created in 1950, by Casper Libero College, in São Paulo. In the following decades, Brazilian journalism education developed as a specific “habilitation”, under the umbrella of “Social Communication” programs. Other habilitations included Advertising, Public Relations, Radio and Television, and Cinema Studies.

Communication research also developed early in Brazil (as in other Latin American countries). It dates from the 1970. Again, this reflected the US influence in the region. However, Latin American researchers often adopted a negative instance with respect the United States. They reacted against its influence as being illegitimate, a sort of cultural imperialism [9]. Latin American researchers often adopted a critical approach to communication, in contrast with the empirical orientation prevailing in the United States [10,11]. As influential US model of journalism can be, other factors impacted decisively in the manner that journalism education developed in Brazil. Our article highlighted three of them: State interventionism, corporatism, and commercialism. Both state interventionism and corporatism have limited the faculties’ autonomy in defining the curricula of journalism and communication studies [12]. In their view, the mass media were a fundamental resource for regime legitimation. Yet, they believed that many professionals working in these media were communists [13].

Journalist unions perceived this rule as an opportunity. For sure,

they did not share the military's political agenda. Despite this, they believed that associating professional practice to a university degree would increase journalism's professional status [14]. This never happened, however. One of the practical consequences of this ruling was making journalism programs attractive from a commercial standpoint. The number of journalism programs grew from 42 in 1970, to 63 in 1980, 76 in 1990, 201 in 2000, and 445 in 2010. Therefore, the practical result of this measure was making the value of journalism labor cheaper than before.

Journalist unions tried to deal with the problem by expanding the field of work for their associates. One solution was to broaden the definition of journalism, in order to include other activities. One example is the activity of press agents (assessor de imprensa), whose exercise would be exclusive for people holding journalism degrees. This led to a problem, given the distinction between the competencies of press agents and public relations professionals is unclear. Another effort for enhancing the professional market for journalism degree holders had a more direct impact on journalism education. In the late 1990s, they engaged in a campaign to take journalism out of the umbrella of Communication studies [12]. In order to open additional slots for journalists in the universities, they advocated for more professional-oriented journalism programs [15].

Journalist unions lobbied the Ministry of Education for changing journalism programs. By 2013, they got successful, and faculties were obliged to change their curricula. First journalism, then the other habilitations became programs independent from the Social Communication umbrella. The new, state-sponsored curriculum privileged practice-oriented disciplines in the detriment of those with a more theoretical feature. A new era of specialized journalism education began [15,12].

Conclusion

In synthesis, our article explored the particular manner how journalism education organized in Brazil. Analyses about journalism education across the world have been often US-centered. For sure, the US-born model of journalism became influential on a global scale. However, the reference to this model does not cover all the relevant aspects of journalist education. Local variables are to be taken into consideration too. The case of Brazil is particularly interesting on this respect. Systematic US influence in Brazilian journalism occurs since the 1950s, decades later than in most other countries. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect that the US influence on Brazil was especially significant. Still, this does not happen. In conclusion,

our article suggests that is necessary to pay more attention to the local factors in order to understand how journalism education organizes in different countries.

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