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The academia, the media, and the ideal professional: a generalist- multimedia journalist

Abstract

The journalistic ecosystem in the twenty-first century presents major challenges to journalistic practice as well as the process of training future professionals. In a constantly changing environment, what kind of education should the future journalist receive? What kinds of skills should a journalist in this ecosystem master? Through a survey, for the first time in Puerto Rico this research compares how academia and the media perceive the kind of education that a journalism student should receive. In particular, this study compares the perceptions of directors of academic programs and journalism professors with the directors and supervisors of the mass media on the island. This study found that academics' and professionals' views are very similar, contrary to the general perception; however, their perspectives are consistent with research findings in other countries. Academics and professionals believe that the university should train students to become generalists who can competently work with multimedia platforms for alternative and commercial media. Traditional skills –writing, critical thinking, and general culture– remain very important in the formation and recruitment of a new journalist, and academia is perceived as a space in which to train media professionals. Although leaders in the industry give weight to journalism education when recruiting new journalists, academic training is perceived to be distant from what the media require.

Keywords

Education, journalism, Puerto Rico, media, press, Internet, digital

1. Introduction

Journalism education has been, for many years, the subject of ongoing reflection in academic and professional circles, however, never before has thinking about such training been so urgent, due to the constant challenges that the journalistic ecosystem faces during this century. Today's constantly mutating media environment is marked by abundant information, a reduced amount of time to make decisions regarding

items' newsworthiness, and the elimination of geographical barriers, all of which are defined by a diverse multimedia and interactive production (Salaverría, 2003). In light of these changes, many academic programs around the world have reviewed their curriculum in order to integrate a journalism education that reflects those transformations (Deuze, 2004, 2006; Royal, 2005; Salaverría, 2011). Nevertheless, in this context, what kind of education should a future journalist receive? What kinds of skills should a journalist in this ecosystem master?

Through a survey, this research comparatively explores the perception of academia and the media in Puerto Rico regarding the type of education that a graduate of journalism must obtain. In particular, this study compares the perception of the directors of the academic programs and journalism professors with the directors and supervisors of the mainstream media on the island.

2. The journalism education field

Research, theory discussion and production, and teaching professional skills have traditionally been the goal of the journalistic academic field in Latin America, the United States, several countries in Europe, and elsewhere in the world (Vassallo de Lopes, as cited in Pereira, 2005; López García, 2010; Blom & Davenport, 2012). From the perspective of the media in these regions, however, the objective of these studies is to provide professional training (Reese, 1999: 71).

Not all countries in the world, though, have primarily depended on university education for the training of its journalists (e.g., Finland, Spain, the United States, Canada, South Korea, Egypt, Kenya, Puerto Rico, many Latin American countries and, increasingly, Britain and Australia). In some, such training takes place either in universities and autonomous specialized schools (e.g., France, Portugal, India, China, Brazil, Nigeria, Turkey, South Africa and Germany) or only in the autonomous specialized schools (e.g., Italy, Netherlands, Denmark). In others, such training only happens in the media (e.g., Britain, Japan and Austria). Also, some countries or regions exhibit a combination of all previous models (e.g., Eastern Europe, Cuba, North and Central Africa and the Middle East). Social, political, cultural and media contexts shape the training strategies adopted by each country, even though many nations are progressively adopting higher education or the mixed system (academia with specialized schools). This indicates an increased level of professionalism, standardization and educational formalization of the journalism profession around the world (Deuze, 2006).

The idea of diagramming a formal education in journalism originated in the late nineteenth century in France with the creation of a specialized school, *École supérieure de journalisme* (1895) (ESJ, Paris). Nevertheless, the establishment of the academic field of journalism began in the United States in response to media companies' training needs. The aim was to produce and "legitimize certain professional practices" that contributed to the newspaper business authentication (Orozco in Fuentes Navarro, 1992; Donsbach & Fiedler, 2008: 3).

Since 1904 and in the context of the early modern American journalism, Joseph Pulitzer advocated that universities should assume the task of training journalists, while he and his colleagues questioned whether or not the professional skills -news judgment, ethics, among others- could be taught in the classroom (George, 2011). The institutionalization of university education in journalism began in 1908 in the United States at the University of Missouri in Columbia (Hansen, 2005; Hedges, 2006; Donsbach & Fiedler, 2008) with a strong professional orientation, while the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 1912, adopted a research perspective. Reese (1999) remembers how the founder of the school in Madison, Williard Bleyer, conceived the essence of journalism education as the "cultivation of an

informed and critical intellect, one infused with a sense of social responsibility” from where the profession itself should be the object of reflection (Bronstein & Vaughn, 1998: 17).

Starting in 1908, journalism schools began to proliferate the world and many of them adopted a vocational training approach. In the case of Puerto Rico, the first academic communication program—a graduate one—was created at the University of Puerto Rico (“UPR”) in 1972. This was more than five decades after the practice of modern journalism began on the island, and nearly four decades after the first academic journalism program in Latin America was established at the National University of La Plata, Argentina (Fuentes Navarro, 1992; López García, 2010; Grisales, 2012). In 1975, the UPR started to offer undergraduate education on the island with the goal of preparing professionals in the communication field (School of Communication, nd). Since then, some twenty programs have been created, with the main purpose of training communication professionals (Escalante Rengifo, García de Jesús & Oropeza, 2010).

Journalism education faces significant challenges as a result of the transformations that have impacted the professional field. These changes have been shown in the media business, organizational structures, newsfeeds, the way in which news is produced, the hybridization of media, and the relationships with audiences, among others. At the same time, the power of social media has been increasing while traditional media’s power has been reduced. In addition, the cell phone has become an indispensable tool with which to access information, as pointed out by the 2015 Pew Research Center report about the United States, but its findings are applicable to other countries such as Puerto Rico. According to Brown (2013), this situation puts great pressure on journalism education, which can no longer focus only on training for traditional media, which do not have enough jobs to offer; in turn, education should prepare the students for platforms that are constantly evolving.

Academic education in journalism has been the subject of constant debate and criticism, particularly from the professional field. It has questioned professors’ capability and the quality of the academic curriculum for not providing the necessary skills in order to properly practice journalism, either because it puts too much emphasis on theory or simply because it only teaches professional skills, leaving aside culture and general knowledge. Also, whether it is necessary to study journalism or if it is more appropriate that the future journalist receives a more rounded education in various disciplines, such as economics and politics, which has led to a dispute regarding where the field is placed academically (School of Journalism, 1987; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1988; Fuentes Navarro, 1992; Reese, 1999; Dickson & Brandon, 2000a, 2000b; Deuze, 2004, 2006; Dates, 2006; Pierce & Miller, 2007; Nolan, 2008; King, 2008; Hirst, 2010; Du & Thornburg, 2011; Mellado, 2011). More recently, discussion has addressed the topic of what kinds of skills a journalist should master in a digital and multimedia ecosystem and how the skills that a future journalist learns in academia are detached from the practice, critiques that describe journalism education as falling behind and being marginal to the profession (Carnegie -Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism, 2011).

The critiques of journalism education aim to create a false dichotomy between theory and practice, which does not acknowledge that the academic training of journalism is built at stake and tension both as a field of knowledge and as one of vocational training (Deuze, 2001, 2004, 2006; Burg, 2003; Pereira, 2005). The union of the liberal arts (Humanities and Social Sciences) and the professional techniques show the trans-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and the hybrid nature of journalism education (Reese, 1999; Pereira, 2005; Fuentes Navarro, 2007; Blom & Davenport, 2012). However, it is precisely the academic and the professional nature of the field that leads to the creation of constantly opposing views (Blom & Davenport, 2012).

3. Previous studies

The different perspectives of academia and the media on journalism education led Starck, Schwarz and Sabine to survey, for the first time, in 1975 in the United States, the perception of publishers and educators about the skills, knowledge and qualities that a reporter must have. Although several differences were shown, both publishers and professors agreed that writing simple and complex stories and producing clear and interesting news reports are very important skills. They also thought that grammar, punctuation and research— typical skills of the journalistic profession— were very important (Starck et al., 1976).

Four years later, Gaddis (1981) surveyed the editors of U.S. national newspapers with a circulation of 100,000 or less and a group of educators. It was found that editors are more critical of journalism education than academics. Although the study did not measure the perceived skills that new journalists should espouse, as did Starck et al., it did find that publishers understand that academia should provide students with more professional experience in the use of electronic equipment, a better understanding of how local government works, and practice in the area of reporting. All of these findings should be viewed within the context in which television news reached an important place among audiences.

Unlike previous studies, other academics think that professional skills must be subordinated to those of critical thinking. Hirsch argues that “narrow professional education, adjusted to the needs of the moment, is made ever more obsolete by constant technology.” Therefore, Kurfiss (1988) stresses the importance of emphasizing critical thinking because it provides the skills with which to analyze and construct arguments and meanings (as cited in Huang et al., 2006: 235).

The dissatisfaction that is derived from the professional field led the American Society of Newspaper Editors to conduct a survey in 1990. This research determined that only 4 percent of the editors in the United States gave an *A* to the academic programs in journalism, with opinions based on their recent hires. In addition, they found that publishers understood that it was not important whether a newly hired employee had a degree in journalism, as they felt that those editors with education in this area were the worst, particularly in the skills they considered most important: writing, spelling and ethics (as cited in Dickson & Brandon, 2000a, 2000b, and Pierce & Miller, 2007). With these findings coincided a study published in 2004 in Latin America, which showed that most journalists thought that academic programs in journalism were poor (Franco, 2007).

In the interest of understanding which skills the professional field requires, the Associated Press Managing Editors surveyed its members in 1994 and identified five skills that a recent graduate of journalism should have: to think critically, present information correctly, to understand the numbers in the news, to listen to readers and write concisely (Ceppos, as cited in Dickson, 2000a). This research reaffirms that, for some professionals, practical skills must go hand in hand with critical thinking, as was thought in the early twentieth century.

Since 2000, transformations in journalism have led several researchers—in Latin America and Europe as well as the United States—to explore whether, in this context, the skills required for new journalists have changed. Research with academics and professionals have identified that traditional skills (i.e., critical thinking, writing, ethics, etc.) remain important (Huang et al., 2006), but many other researchers, and to various degrees, say it is necessary also to adopt an education that takes into account the new digital and multimedia ecosystem (Pierce & Miller, 2007; Du & Thornburg, 2011; Arroyo Hair, 2011; García-Santamaría & Barranquero Carter, 2014; Poynter Institute, 2013). This line of thought was also shown in a 2008 survey in which U.S. editors working in digital media were asked to identify what skills a new journalist would need in five years. The respondents predicted

that traditional skills would be invaluable: the ability to learn, edit, and report; spelling; research; writing; teamwork; and interviewing skills. However, these attributes will need to be combined with knowledge of technology and various media platforms (Fahmy, 2008). In this line, Salaverría (2010) points out that, without sacrificing the traditional values of the profession, journalism schools should not only integrate online journalism courses, but must also “incorporate resources and digital logic” that allow students to practice professional skills “in, on, and through the Internet” (2010: 248). This preparation must provide theoretical training that shows students how to work on any platform in “a constantly changing reality that requires higher doses of interpretation” (as cited in Sánchez, 2013: 55).

Other scholars emphasize the need to develop general and specialized knowledge in this ecosystem, beyond traditional and multimedia skills, taking as a starting point the origins of education in journalism. Gans (2004), for example, believes that academia should move beyond the objective of training generalists who can help communicate, but who do not serve the 21st century audiences very well. Therefore, academia should train specialized journalists who can cover important issues with deep knowledge. That is, to teach them to analyze, explain and report. Reports from Harvard and Columbia University coincide with this line of thought. The first one stipulates that journalists must have general knowledge that allows them to integrate context and specialized information into their stories. Also, journalists should understand the influences that affect the news product and the ways to avoid ethical conflicts (Donsbach & Fiedler, 2008). In the second report, Anderson et al. (2012) outline the skills that a journalism graduate must have today, which they distinguish as *soft skills* and *hard skills*. Soft skills include the ability to maintain a network of contacts and sources, personal presence, accessibility and accountability, and the ability to commit to constant change. They must also possess “hard skills,” along the same suggestion as Gans (2004) and the Harvard study: expertise, data management and statistics, an understanding of metrics and audience, the ability to encode (technical), the capability to tell stories using various technologies, and project management. Not all of these skills can be learned from academia, but these are skills that journalism programs must consider.

George (2011), meanwhile, understands that journalism education should go beyond the goal of professionalization in a time when much of journalism is produced outside news organizations; therefore, the curriculum should include semi-professional and non-professional practices. He says that journalism should be seen as a human right, according to Article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights. Journalism is exercised based on the notion that its goal is to represent the citizens. Due to the fact that media commercialization has moved away professional practice from citizen’s interests and because of the proliferation of a form of journalism that is not tied to the traditional media, this profession should be treated as a set of communication skills that all citizens have the right to apply.

In a new journalistic ecosystem, and given the lack of studies in this area in Puerto Rico, what kind of academic training should a future journalist receive, according to academia and the media? What kind of skills should the media seek in a new journalist? What weight, if any, does journalism education have when recruiting new professionals? How do the news media perceive journalism education?

4. Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, this study surveyed the opinion of the academic and professional community in Puerto Rico. The instrument was sent as a link in an email message.

Within academia, all directors and journalism professors of the eleven academic programs in communication on the island that offer some degree in journalism or

incorporate this topic into their curriculum were surveyed. Nine other programs do not offer any kind of journalism studies, so they were not included in this research. Each of the directors provided the researcher with a list of part-time and full-time professors in charge of any course that integrates journalism. The study surveyed the directors of academic programs because they are the ones who are in charge of the curriculum changes, as well as the administration of the programs and the professors, because they are tasked with providing the knowledge that will contribute to the training of journalists. Seven of the eleven directors (63.63%) and 27 of the 39 teachers (69.23%) answered the survey.

Within the professional field, all directors or persons in charge of the news organization and supervisors (or persons who oversee the work of other journalists, such as chief editors, publishers, sub-publishers, supervisors, etc.), of the main commercial news platforms (public and nonprofit) of daily production, were surveyed. The researcher contacted each of the seventeen editors or directors and asked them to provide a list of people who oversee the work of other journalists in the newsroom or department, or who are in charge of setting editorial policies, such as chief editors, publishers, sub-publishers, supervisors, etc. The directors and supervisors are the professionals who intervene in the work of journalists, so they have to deal with the strengths and limitations that journalists exhibit. Many times supervisors are involved in the process of interviewing candidates to be hired.

All the surveys included the same questions, with the exception of the questionnaire sent to the directors that contain questions exploring whether or not their medium offered an assessment test when hiring and what type. Fourteen of the seventeen directors or editors (82.3%) and 38 of the 67 supervisors (56.7%) answered the instrument as a whole.¹ Sixteen mediums or conglomerates were represented in this study. All traditional media also have a digital platform. Commercial media who responded to the study included a conglomerate and two print media (GFR Media [*El Nuevo Día* and *Primera Hora, Índice*], *El Vocero* and *Metro*; two newscasts (Noticentro 4 [Channel 4] and Telenoticias [Channel 2]), three news agencies (EFE Cyber News and Inter News Service), three news radio stations (Noti Uno, Cadena Radio Puerto Rico 740 AM, and Radio Island), and an online diary, NotiCel. Also, four non-profits participated in the study: two television stations (Tele Oro [Channel 13] and TV System [Channel 40]), the Center for Investigative Journalism, and the government television station newscast, *Noticias 24-7* (Channel 6).²

5. Findings

5.1. Competencies in a multimedia era

Seventeen skills were presented to media directors and supervisors and directors of academic programs and journalism professors in order to determine how important it is that a future journalist acquires each of them in an academic program. With different emphases, the four groups felt that practically all of the skills presented are very important or important in the formation of a future journalist, using a scale from 1 to 4, in which one means “not important” and four “very important” (see Table 1). *A prima facie*, all the respondents desire a journalist who promises to be a “superjournalist” or “hyperjournalist” and who possesses a wide variety of skills, such as De Mendonca, Pereira Leal-Adghirni (2012) state. However, some nuances surfaced when the results are reviewed in more detail.

¹ In applying the FPC, the standard error was close to zero in the entire study sample because the sample size (n) approached the population size (N). This had the effect of eliminating the error completely. When N = n, the sample becomes a census; the sampling error is irrelevant.

² WAPA Radio was the only commercial radio station that did not answer the survey.

With no significant differences after conducting a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), all groups agreed to identify, with no less than 3.80, the following skills: good writing, critical thinking, time management and knowledge of current events. Also, with a minimum of 3.60, all groups identified: news judgment; teamwork; multimedia production; general culture; digital technologies; knowledge in areas such as politics, economy, etc. In this group of skills, the respondents highlighted those related to the multimedia production along with many others that have been traditionally associated with the journalistic practice; to which specialized knowledge was added.

All groups surveyed gave the lowest score to audiovisual production, work with cameras, and design. The score assigned to design shows a statistical difference in an analysis of variance within each group surveyed, with the exception of the directors of academic programs. Statistically significant, the work with cameras or microphones and audiovisual production also lost primacy for supervisors and journalism professors. Supervisors likewise gave, significantly, a lower score to second-language and oral skills.

Table 1. Skills to be acquired by a future journalist in the academia

Skill	Job Position			
	Supervisors n=46	Media Directors n=15	Journalism Professors n=30	Academic Program Directors n=8
1. Good writing	3.98	3.93	3.90	3.88
2. News judgment	3.96	4.0	3.96	3.75
3. Critical thinking	3.84	3.93	3.97	4.0
4. Time management	3.83	3.80	3.83	4.0
5. Knowledge of current events	3.83	3.80	3.90	3.88
6. Teamwork	3.83	3.60	3.86	4.0
7. Multimedia production	3.80	3.93	3.69	3.88
8. Interviewing techniques	3.78	3.47	3.93	3.88
9. General culture	3.76	3.87	3.97	3.75
10. Digital technologies	3.73	3.80	3.72	3.88
11. Knowledge in areas such as politics, economy, etc.	3.70	3.93	3.90	3.75
12. Research	3.70	3.53	3.97	4.0
13. Oral skills	3.64*	3.93	3.76	4.0
14. Second language	3.54*	3.73	3.72	3.75
15. Audiovisual production	3.48*	3.53	3.49*	3.38
16. Work in front of cameras or behind microphones	3.20*	3.33	3.07*	3.38
17. Design	3.02*	2.87*	3.21*	3.13

Within group: *p<.001

Source: own elaboration

Moreover, media professionals and journalism professors (not the directors of the academic programs) were asked, by an open-ended question, to mention one new skill that a future journalist must have today in order to be successful in the field: 57% of the directors of the media, 70% of supervisors, and 61.53% of the professors identified professional skills tied to the digital world. Professionals and professors agreed that multimedia skills, management of social media, and knowledge of technology for informational purposes are important skills. Supervisors and professors added to that list interactivity with audiences and digital research. Supervisors also identified ethical knowledge of technology, programming, writing for multiple platforms, cell phone use as a journalistic tool, and audiovisual skills, among others. The remaining percentage in each category mentioned that those skills that have traditionally been associated with journalism, research and writing. In that sense, for the groups surveyed, multimedia and digital skills occupy an important place alongside the traditional skills that have been linked to journalism.

5.2. *Multimedia generalists*

Discussions regarding whether or not the academia should train generalists or specialists or if it should emphasize critical thinking or professional skills take on a new meaning when many news media demand that new hires master multimedia skills (Huang *et al.*, 2006).

This study showed that both universities and the media agreed that higher education institutions should train generalists that work competently on multiple platforms, and that vocational training should take precedence over general culture.

In a question, the respondents were asked to choose which statement they thought to be more correct: Academia should train generalists with multimedia skills; it should train specialists in particular media; or it should not focus on professional skills, but in providing a solid foundation of liberal arts or general education or in specialized areas such as politics and economics, etc. Directors of the academic programs (75%), professors (67.66%), media directors (60%), and supervisors (86.67%) mostly understand that academic programs must prepare students with a multimedia training that allow them to work competently on multiple platforms, with a greater emphasis among supervisors.

In another question, 100% of the respondents agreed that it is “very important” or “important” that students should be able to write for different media or platforms, with less emphasis among supervisors, although no significant differences in an ANOVA were seen. In addition, this time with less emphasis among professors but with no significant differences in variance, respondents mostly think that it is “very important” or “important” that journalism students receive a multimedia training. Such preparation would allow them not to just learn to write for different platforms, but also to edit, produce for radio and television and manage photography, newspapers and website design (see Table 2). In that sense, writing on different platforms became more relevance over audiovisual production.

It is not surprising that respondents were less forceful when asked to calibrate how important it is for students to specialize either in writing for radio or television, photojournalism, printed or digital media. With the exception of the directors of academic programs (85.71%), supervisors, media directors and professors were divided on this premise. Despite differences toward this position, no significant differences in the ANOVA were shown (See Table 2).

5.3. *Critical thinking versus professional skills*

Respondents perceive that a new journalist must master a lot of skills and should have a multimedia profile; however, when given a choice, they felt that academic programs should mainly emphasize critical thinking skills versus professional attributes. That was evident when they were asked to select between two premises (where should the emphasis lie at the

university education: critical thinking skills or professional?). Among directors of the academic programs, 100% think that studies should primarily emphasize critical thinking skills; professors of journalism and media supervisors, 70 percent; and media directors, 71.43 percent. There is a marked difference between academics and professionals regarding this position, except from academic program directors, whose views were much stronger.

Between 59 and 86% of respondents also tend to feel that it is “very important” or “important” for journalism students to spend more time learning critical thinking skills over the professional skills. In terms of percent, the positions of the respondents were weaker than the previous question, particularly among supervisors and professors, but there were no statistical differences in the ANOVA. Additionally, all respondents understand that it is “very important” or “important” that a future journalist learn skills in online research and web site design, while learning critical thinking skills and obtaining knowledge about ethics and history (directors of media and academic programs, 100%, and supervisors and teachers, 94%) (See Table 2).

Table 2. Type of education a future journalist should receive

Premise	Respondent	M	(4) Very Important %	(3) Important %	(2) Fair %	(1) Not important %
1 The journalism student must be able to write for different media or platforms.	Academic Directors	3.86	85.71	14.29	-	-
	Professors	3.86	85.71	14.29	-	-
	Media Directors	3.93	92.86	7.14	-	-
	Supervisors	3.80	80.00	20.00	-	-
2. The journalism student must receive a multimedia training that teaches him or her to write for different platforms, but also to edit, produce for radio and television, manage photography, and learn newspaper and web design.	Academic Directors	3.71	71.43	28.57	-	-
	Professors	3.46	60.71	25.00	14.29	-
	Media Directors	3.79	78.57	21.43	-	-
	Supervisors	3.66	71.43	22.86	5.71	-
3. The student must specialize by medium, either in writing for radio or television, photojournalism, printed or digital media.	Academic Directors	3.0	28.57	57.14	-	14.29
	Professors	2.46	21.43	21.43	39.29	17.86
	Media Directors	2.57	35.71	14.29	21.43	28.57
	Supervisors	2.49	20.00	31.43	25.71	22.86
4. A future journalist must learn skills in online research, as well as in website design, while learning critical thinking skills, ethics and history.	Academic Directors	3.86	85.71	14.29	-	-
	Professors	3.75	82.14	10.71	7.14	-
	Media Directors	3.86	85.71	14.29	-	-
	Supervisors	3.63	68.57	25.71	5.71	-
5. The journalism student should spend more time learning critical thinking skills rather than professional or technical skills.	Academic Directors	3.0	14.29	71.43	14.29	-
	Professors	2.85	29.63	29.63	34.04	3.70
	Media Directors	3.36	57.14	21.43	21.43	-
	Supervisors	2.86	17.14	51.43	31.43	-

6. School curricula should be restructured to meet the industry demands toward integration or multimedia.	Academic Directors	3.57	71.43	14.29	14.29	-
	Professors	3.75	75.00	25.00	-	-
	Media Directors	3.64	64.29	35.71	-	-
	Supervisors	3.94	94.12	5.88	-	-

Source: own elaboration

5.4. *Should journalism education respond to the media industry?*

The respondents not only understand that university education must form a multimedia generalist journalist with critical thinking skills, but that academia must respond to the practice that the media industry dictates. This variable was operationalized in three questions and, in all of them, the answers were similar. The position of supervisors was stronger toward professional training than the other respondents, but without significant statistical differences in the variance analysis (ANOVA).

In the first question, more than 85% of all groups think that it is "important" or "very important" that academic programs should be restructured to respond better to the demands of the industry toward integration and multimedia (see Table 2). In terms of percentage, the strong stance of supervisors is most obvious; the least strong opinion comes from the directors of the academic programs.

In a second question, the respondents were asked to indicate how much they agree that journalism schools or departments should integrate professional practices required by the media industry on a scale of 1 to 5, in which one means "definitely disagree" and five signifies "definitely agree." Both the media (directors, 4.36; supervisors, 4.67) and members of the academia (professors 4.24; program managers, 3.75) tend to "agree" and "definitely agree" with this premise. The directors of academic programs tend to show a less strong tendency toward this position and supervisors revealed a stronger one as was indicated by the response to the previous question.

Consistent with these results, the majority of the respondents thought that they would have liked to learn in their university education, and not at work, the technical skills and practices that are needed in journalism today (media directors, 85.71%; supervisors, 91.87%; directors of academic programs, 83.33%; teachers, 92.86%). Academic directors continue to adopt a less professional perspective of education, but with very little variation, and professors and supervisors, a little stronger.

When they were provided a space, as an opened question, to explain why they would have wanted to learn the professional skills within academia, prevailed, for all respondents, that such training would facilitate the possibility of being hired in a media company. Journalism professors added that it is important that the academic community respond to industry changes. Media directors and supervisors stressed that the media do not have the time to train new journalists, and the university training would also facilitate retention and promotion within the company. Supervisors added that training students professionally should be the purpose of education, the reason why some took the opportunity to criticize the university education to describe it as far behind and that it does not prepare future journalists very well.

5.5. *What kind of journalism?*

Both academics and professionals mostly agreed that university programs should emphasize teaching commercial and alternative journalism. The academic directors supported this premise by 100%, while media directors and supervisors, at 85.71 and 94.59%, respectively. Professors, meanwhile, thought in this way by 75.86% (17.24% thought that education should

only emphasize alternative journalism and 6.90% felt that the focus should only be on the commercial side of it). Despite this variation, it was shown that, for both academics and professionals, journalism education should incorporate the teaching of alternative and commercial journalism.

5.6. *The weight of journalism education*

Beyond the skills that academics and professionals expect from a new journalist, this study explored whether the media consider journalism education as a hiring requirement, and how professionals perceive journalism education. Both media directors and supervisors perceive, with no significant differences in variance analysis, that education in journalism has a lot of weight when they hire a new candidate. On a scale of 1 to 5, in which one means “definitely disagree” and five “definitely agree,” both media directors (4.36) and supervisors (4.08) “agree” and “definitely agree” that studies in journalism have much weight when hiring a new journalist.

Despite the said importance they attach to journalism education, the respondents tend to think that the academia is distant from what the industry requires. Using the previous scale, directors showed a trend toward “agree” with this statement (3.86), while supervisors (3.44) were ambivalent, closer to “neither agree nor disagree,” although no significant differences in the ANOVA were shown. In that sense, journalism education has weight when hiring a new journalist, but the media leaders are somewhat ambivalent about whether schools are updated with the professional skills required by the industry.

When media directors and supervisors were asked, by an opened question, why many professionals perceive the university is detached from the professional practice, the following seven reasons prevailed in their answers: the university is not in tune with the constant technological changes and how they have impacted journalistic practice (31%); it places too much emphasis on theory and too little in practice (20.68%); it incorrectly focuses on certain areas of journalism and leaves out many others (*i.e.*, too much emphasis on printed media, little human interest approach, does not specialize in journalistic topics [*e.g.*, sports, economy, etc.], etc.) (17.24%); it hires professors with no professional experience and current knowledge (13.79%); it inadequately prepares students in the basic skills (*e.g.*, writing, identifying what news is, etc.) (10.34%); it accepts students with few skills (.03%); and it cannot form a journalist because such formation can only be achieved in practice (.03).

5.7. *What do hiring tests measure?*

This study also explored whether the media skills that respondents identified as important are also required when the media are hiring new journalists. Among the media outlets that were surveyed, 78.57% provide hiring tests to evaluate a candidate who is being considered for a position. Most assessment tests tend to emphasize the skills that have been traditionally linked to the study of journalism: grammar (71.42%), spelling (71.42%), journalistic writing (71.42%), news judgment (64.28%), knowledge of current affairs (64.28%), and knowledge of general culture (64.28%). Meanwhile, the skills that are mostly related to digital and multimedia journalism are evaluated on few mediums: reporting skills for digital media (28.57%), web literacy (28.57%), and knowledge of various technology platforms (14.28%). Reporting skills for radio and television, such as, for example, announcers, are evaluated in the media traditionally associated with this work.

6. Discussion

Media leaders and academics in Puerto Rico perceive that university education in journalism should respond to the demands of the industry. They see academia as a training center to form a generalist-journalist who can work competently in various platforms and

manage multiple skills, including multimedia and digital production. They think that this is achieved both by mastering the skills that have traditionally been tied to the field (i.e., critical thinking, writing, general culture, etc.) and by those that are mostly related to the current journalistic ecosystem (e.g., digital, multimedia, etc.), as earlier studies have established (Huang et al., 2006; Pierce & Miller, 2007; Fahmy, 2008; Du & Thornburg, 2011; Arroyo Hair, 2011; García-Santamaría & Barranquero Carretero, 2014; Poynter Institute, 2013). Despite this, the hiring tests that media provide grant more importance to traditional skills—writing, news judgment, and knowledge of general culture—than to multimedia and digital skills.

The ideal professional profile delineated by the academia and the media coincides with what Deuze (2004) has noted: in multimedia times, it is no longer valid to know things one-way. According to Salaverría and García (2008), today's journalists tend to undertake professional duties that were previously exclusive to certain specialists in the journalistic field. To the extent that increases the level of media convergence, increases the demand for a polyvalent journalist, who produces and distributes content across multiple platforms and in multiple languages (i.e., print, audiovisual and digital). In addition, this kind of journalist should be able to use the Internet as an investigative tool and as a means to access multiple sources that add depth to journalistic content within a production environment that distinguishes itself by constant, immediate and updated information.

The four groups surveyed agree that critical thinking is very important. However, critical thinking loses emphasis for journalism professors and supervisors. This leads to the fact that there is a difference, not between academia and professionals, but among certain sectors of academia and certain professionals: academic directors and media directors agree a little more with each other, as well as journalism professors with supervisors. Professors and supervisors tend to assign to the academia a much stronger training function compared to the other two groups.

It is questionable whether a new journalist with technical and professional knowledge and without critical thinking can maintain or improve the quality of journalism, whether or not this is a possible goal, or if it can be conceptualized through various platforms, as Deuze (2004, 2006) identifies that should be one of the most important skills in multimedia times (e.g., social networks, microblogs, blogs, writing, etc.). Rather than choosing between one emphasis and another, vocational education should be fundamentally integrated with critical thinking skills, consistent with the results of Huang et al. (2006). Therefore, García-Santamaría and Barranquero Carter (2014) warn that the academic community's prioritization of "the use of new technological tools and other skills of the profession can even distort the essence of what must be a university training: comprehensive teaching to help students analyze and decipher complex processes and to prepare them to do their work in diverse environments and even away from the object of study" (p. 9).

The training provided by the academia, respondents understand, should include the study of both commercial and alternative journalism. This broader perspective concurs with George (2011), who says that teaching alternative journalism or citizen journalism is part of the commitment to see this profession as a human right. Alternative journalism shows different attachments to the core values of the profession. While commercial journalism and any kind of journalism should be rooted in the truth and ethics, alternative journalism takes different stances on balance, justice and what is news. To Atton, precisely, the public service mission of journalism should be put in a radical praxis in journalism schools through the practice of alternative journalism, which opposes the "hierarchical, elite centered notions of journalism as a business" (as cited in Macdonald, 2006: 758).

The perspective that the academic community acts as a training facility is possibly linked to the importance that media managers give to journalism education when recruiting a new professional. Despite this position, media directors and supervisors show

ambivalence to say that the programs are updated to the requirements of the industry and, following this position, some of them even express harsh criticism for academia. These results coincide with those of other studies in the United States and Latin America that show that the media negatively perceive journalism education (Dickson & Brandon, 2000a, 2000b; Pierce & Miller, 2007; Franco, 2007).

While many media professionals identified some problems in the academia linked with the current journalistic practice, many of the criticisms are directed in order to point out deficiencies that have been previously identified in investigations in other countries. These criticisms articulate a false dichotomy between theory and practice as mutually exclusive, and foreshadow, as evidenced in this study, that for media professionals, academia must respond to the job market. They understate the knowledge that is derived from the reaching of a diverse background professorship and the importance of the theory on building critical thinking. All these point out the differences between what it means for the training for a profession and not for a trade. As Meyer states, “[l]earning the craft by emulating a journeyman is not sufficient. He or she must learn the underlying principles upon which the craft is based in order to be ready to adapt to whatever is ahead. A craftsman trains for the first job, a professional for a career” (Dennis et al., 2003: 295).

7. Conclusions

This study demonstrated that, in Puerto Rico, academics want to train and professionals want to receive, from universities, a new generalist-journalist with multimedia skills who can work for commercial and alternative platforms, although hardly any medium evaluates these skills in their recruitment tests. It is no wonder that both sectors, academics and professionals, have the expectation that the university should mimic the practices of the trade. Although leaders in the industry give weight to journalism education when recruiting new journalists, academic training is perceived to be distant from what the media require.

These findings conflict with certain working scenarios of the journalistic ecosystem itself, which, in turn, present several challenges. First, the expectations to receive from the academia a *hyperjournalist* occurs in a work environment that is characterized by lower wages, particularly for those who start their career (Dickson, 2000a, 2000b; Macdonald, 2006; Salaverría & García Avilés, 2010). In the case of Puerto Rico, a journalist will begin earning a salary close to the federal minimum wage. Clearly, there is a gap between expectations, requirements, and pay.

Second, it is imperative to rethink the vision of the academia as a training center; therefore, a greater understanding of what should be the role of a university is achieved, as it is debated in Australia and New Zealand, where they make a call to pay more attention to the differences between training and education. Training refers to teaching to accept “norms that may remain unexplored,” while education is “learning of norms in order to disrupt them creatively” (Dunn as cited in Hirst, 2010: 88). Therefore, as Pereira (2005: 424) writes, one should be careful with the task of teaching trades and practices in order to not to “fall within the exclusive trap of playing the work place, or the professions, in the classroom, and in focusing education on the primacy of the technical-instrumental reason.” The size of the trap is enhanced when the journalism professors are part of it.

Third, many studies around the world, and Puerto Rico is no exception, have shown how journalistic quality has suffered because of the market demands and the extreme commercialization of journalism that manifests itself in the banality and the spectacle orientation of the journalistic information (Lugo-Ortiz, 2015). It is necessary to think of journalism in and out of the demands of the industry to propose innovative ways of doing and, in this sense, the academia is postulated as an ideal stage to undertake such work. Future qualitative research on this topic could account, in greater depth, to the how and

why of the positions presented in this study. Exploring, comparatively, the students' perspectives also will help to understand how those expectations are linked to the academic community and the media.

The journalistic ecosystem of the 21st century not only demands a new professional profile, but also increased quality of the media product. "Quality production requires a degree of specialization," as noted by Salaverría and García Avilés (2010: 40). The specialization should be thought of beyond the specific knowledge of platforms, but in terms of the specialization in content, as Gans (2004) and other scholars suggest. Integrating this perspective requires the university to be conceived as an educational center, and not as a training center. From there, academia can forge professionals who contribute to betterment of journalism. In addition, it is necessary to rethink whether or not the goal of university education should be to produce beginners in the profession who are able to place a foot in the door of the medium, or to produce well-rounded subjects that raise the quality of journalism and the public debate.

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